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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A SPRING WALK IN PROVENCE ***

A SPRING WALK IN PROVENCE

[ii]

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE HOUSE OF MERRILEES
RICHARD BALDOCK
EXTON MANOR
THE SQUIRE'S DAUGHTER
THE ELDEST SON
THE HONOUR OF THE CLINTONS
THE GREATEST OF THESE
THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH
WATERMEADS
UPSIDONIA
ABINGTON ABBEY
THE GRAFTONS
THE CLINTONS, AND OTHERS
SIR HARRY
MANY JUNES
A SPRING WALK IN PROVENCE
PEGGY IN TOYLAND



EVENING AMONG THE OLIVES

[iii]

A SPRING WALK IN PROVENCE

BY

ARCHIBALD MARSHALL

AUTHOR OF "EXTON MANOR," "SIR HARRY," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS



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1920

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RAHWAY NEW JERSEY

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To
SIR OWEN SEAMAN

PREFACE

The following pages owe a considerable debt to what others who have been over the same ground have written. Mr. T. A. Cook's^[1] "Old Provence" (London: Rivington's, 2 vols.) is a most valuable record of the history of the country as it attaches to the innumerable places of interest to be visited, and his taste and knowledge when brought to bear upon its architectural remains have greatly enhanced my own appreciation of those rich treasures. I know of no book, either in French or English, from which a visitor to Provence could get so much to supplement his own observation, and I have made constant use of it. To Mr. Thomas Okey's^[2] "Avignon" in Dent's "Mediæval Towns" series, I also owe a great debt of gratitude. The Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould's "In Troubadour Land" (London: W. H. Allen), though slighter than those two works, contains much interesting information. Mistral's "Mes Origines" (Paris: Libraire Plon), translated from the Provençal, is of course invaluable for its pictures of Provençal life, and from that book and from M. Paul Mariéton's "La Terre Provençale" (Paris: Ollendorf) one can get the best information about the movement of the Félibrige, which has done so much to revivify the old life of Provence. A good deal of desultory information is afforded by M. Louis de Lancel's "La Provence" (Paris: Oudin), and some of the stories that linger on Provençal soil are well told in M. Charles-Roux's "Légendes de Provence" (Paris: Bloud). These books, and the French translation of Mistral's "Mirèio," which is a mine of Provençal lore, besides being a noble poem, have been my chief "authorities," but they have been very usefully supplemented by the various pamphlets to be picked up locally. Some of these have been excellent, and I have made mention of their authors in the following pages.

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The photographs are of my own taking, except those very kindly given to me by Mr. Hope Macey, whom I was fortunate enough to come across in Avignon in the course of an expedition that coincided with mine at many points. The one of Mistral's birthplace I bought at Arles, and those of the picture and tapestry at Aix in Paris.^[3]

This account of my spring journey has been finished under the shadow of the great war, which might have caused me to look upon the *jours de conscription* with which I fell in on the early days of the walk in a light much sadder, if I could have foreseen it. I left Provence in a train full of young soldiers going to their homes in various distant parts of France for their Easter furlough. Of those who crowded the carriage in which I travelled from Arles to Lyons the faces come before me as clearly as if I saw them in the flesh, and I can hear their songs and jokes and laughter. They seemed to have been drawn from all classes, but to mix in the readiest frankest comradeship. Whenever I read now of the French in action I think of those light-hearted boys in their holiday mood, and wonder what they are doing, and how many of them are still alive. One has somewhat changed one's view of the toll that France has taken of her manhood since those days that now seem so far off.

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CHATEAU D'OEX, August, 1914.

The world has changed since this book was written, but I hope that the record of an expedition made in the happy days before the war may still be read with pleasure, now that the great shadow is in part removed. I have been over the manuscript again and made a few alterations here and there, but have altered nothing that shows it to have been written five years ago.

BURLEY, HANTS, August, 1919.

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A SPRING WALK IN PROVENCE

CHAPTER I

Hills and Olives

I was to walk through the country from the Italian border, but it rained so heavily on the first day that I went to Mentone and took the mountain tramway to Sospel, where in any case I had intended to spend the night.

Two years ago, before this tram-line was quite finished, I motored up to Sospel to play golf. It was a pleasant experience, though not without its thrills, for the road zigzags and corkscrews up mountain sides and across deep gorges in a way to make one thankful for strong brakes and a reliable driver, especially on the return journey. The hillsides are cultivated everywhere. The precipitous slopes have been terraced with infinite labour, and orange and lemon groves surrounding pretty little lodges and cottages, only give way as one mounts higher to the grey-green of olive plantations.

When you have climbed up 2,300 feet, the road, as if tired of twisting and turning, boldly attacks the mountain side, runs through a tunnel pierced in the solid rock and comes out on the other side of the peak. Then it takes a turn so sharp that not long ago a car coming too fast through the tunnel went over the precipitous edge and all its occupants were killed. [2]

The crowning danger safely surmounted, you drop down into a green mountain valley, surrounded by what Smollett, who passed through Sospel on his way from Nice to Italy a hundred and fifty years ago, described as "prodigious high and barren mountains." The valley is all verdant pasture, watered by a broad, shallow, tree-shaded river, which, to quote the same authority, "forms a delightful contrast with the hideous rocks surrounding it." All mountains were "hideous" and "horrid" in the eyes of our ancestors. We, as we play along the grassy meadows, and cross here and there the clear river rippling over its pebbles, have come to think that the towering rock-ramparts, upon which the sun and the clouds play with infinite gradations of light and colour, have as much to do with the beauty of the scene as the verdant valley itself, or the little old huddled Italian-looking town which hugs both banks of the river.

It was that little old town, which the golfer coming up from Mentone only skirts on his way to the links, that had remained in my memory, even more than the unusual charm of the links and the excellence of the greens. It stands curiously aside from the wave of modernity that has washed up to it from the wealthy delocalized coast. Turn to the right when you reach the corner, and you are still in the atmosphere of the Côte d'Azur, although you are fifteen miles inland from Mentone; turn to the left and you are in southern provincial France, in a street of little shops and little *cafés* and *buvettes*, and pick your way amongst a crowd of peasants and townspeople, buying and selling, talking of their crops and their commerce, and as little concerned with what is going on half a mile away as if they had never seen a mashie or a putter, and none of them had ever shouldered a bag of clubs for a curiously-garbed curiously-spoken foreigner. [3]

Probably it is only the caddies or the ex-caddies who ever mention golf in the town of Sospel. It stands so aloof that even its prices have not yet been affected by the lavish ways of the holiday coast, with which it has formed this late new connection.

So I turned to the left. I wanted to have done for a time with everything English, and more particularly with the sort of hotel that has an English-speaking waiter, or indeed a waiter at all. Sospel was to provide me with my first genuine experience of a French inn, as used by the people of the country and not by the tourist.

Sospel rose adequately to the occasion, as I had thought it would. I found an hotel facing the market stalls and the river beyond them. I went up a flight of stone stairs and into a kitchen, which was also the bureau of the *patronne*. Yes, I could have a room for the night, and the charge would be two francs. I went up to see the room. It had a tiled floor, which was very clean, a large four-poster bed hung round with muslin curtains, and a few old cumbrous pieces of furniture besides—just the sort of room I wanted. [4]

I had a good dinner, which I ate in company with four *commis voyageurs* and an engineer, all of whom were cordially interested in my coming expedition, and none of whom had a word of English or seemed to have any idea in their minds of connecting Sospel with golf. I felt that I had fallen plumb into it by taking that left-hand turn, and it needed an effort to call to mind the great new hotel at the other end of the links two miles away, where no diner had tucked his napkin inside his collar, or would soak his dessert biscuits in his wine; where the waiter brought a clean

knife and fork for every course, and the proprietor would have requested me to leave if I had sat down in the clothes in which I intended to walk on the morrow. I felt happy, as I went to bed at nine o'clock, after a look at the rapid-flowing river on which the moon was now shining through the parting clouds. The fun had begun.

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I felt happier still at six o'clock the next morning, when I took the road with my pack on my back. The clouds had blown away from the mountain tops, though wisps of them hung about the lower slopes, and the cup of the valley still held a light mist. It was going to be a lovely day, and perhaps hotter than would be altogether comfortable for a walker habited and burdened as I was. For it was still early in March, and I had come down from Alpine snows. Moreover, the replenishments of clothing that I had sent on ahead were at least a week away, and I carried "changes" to a rather nervous extent; also some reading matter, which is a mistake, for books weigh heavy, however light their contents, and if your day on the road is not filled with walking, eating and sleeping, and whatever recreation in the way of talk may come to you, you are not throwing yourself enough into the spirit of your adventure.

The road wound and turned and twisted, always going uphill, but never very steeply. I was on the old high road from the north, where it enters on its last stage of about five and twenty miles to Nice. I thought I must have come near to its highest point when I had climbed up on a level with the heavy fort that frowned on me from a hill near by, and sat down to take my last look at the green valley now lying far beneath me.

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It showed as a level carpet of vivid green, broken by the grey mass and outlying buildings of the town, with the river threading it lengthwise. The hills rose up sheer on every side. Their lower slopes were so regularly terraced that at this distance they had the effect of horizontal "shadings" in a pencil drawing. Above that they were grey, and dark green, and red as with heather, and the summits of some of them still held snow. White roads jagged them here and there, but the flat valley floor had the effect of being completely cupped and confined by the rugged heights, as indeed it is, except just where the river, having filled up the bottom of the cup with a rich layer of alluvium, must have broken through at some time, and left the fertile plain all ready and waiting for cultivation. It was like looking down on a miniature Promised Land, so marked was the contrast between the fresh green of the valley and the sombre tones of its encircling hills.

This southern country flushes to tender spring green only here and there. The cultivated hillsides keep their darker colours, though they may be most sweetly lit with the pink of almonds. March would be a glorious month in Provence if it were only for the almond blossom. Mixed with the soft grey of the olives it makes delicious pictures, and it is to be found everywhere. And the wild rosemary is in flower—great bushes of it, lighting up the rocky hillsides with their delicate blue. They were all around me as I sat on this height, and there were brooms getting ready to flower, and wild lavender, and thyme. The air held an aromatic fragrance, and as I walked on between the pines and the deciduous trees, not yet in leaf, the birds were singing and the water rushing down its channels from the snowy heights very musically. There were primroses and violets by the roadside, as if it had been spring in England, and juicy little grape hyacinths to remind one that it was not. There was something to look at and enjoy at every step.

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I was nowhere near the top of the pass, as I had thought, but reached it at last at the Col de Braus, where I found a rude little inn, and entered it not without reluctance in search of refreshment.

I found myself in a vaulted stone kitchen, its floor below the level of the ground outside. An elderly woman sat by the hearth, winding wool, with a child playing at her knee; a younger woman brought me wine and bread and cheese. The place was very dirty, but the wine was good and the viands eatable.

The older woman was a picture of grief as she sat under the great stone chimney and told me how hard life was in that exposed spot, especially in the winter, when they were sometimes flooded out of the lower rooms. And now they had taken away her only son, for his military service, and what she should do without him she could not think. It was a hard tax on poor mothers. In three years, when he had done with the army, who knew? She might be dead.

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"But you have a husband, madame, isn't it so? Otherwise they could not take him."

Yes; she had a husband. She nodded her head slowly with infinite meaning, and as if to interpret it there entered the room an extremely unattractive person, dirtier even than his dirty surroundings, who addressed her, or the younger woman, or perhaps me, in a flood of intemperate speech, of which I could not make out a single word. Nobody answered him, and he slouched out of the room again.

"Is that your husband, madame?"

She nodded her head slowly up and down, without speaking. I could see for myself.

We talked about the little child, and her face lighted up. Presently the husband came in again, and expressed himself in his unrecognizable tongue with as much freedom and fervour as before. Again nobody took any notice of him, and again he went out. I don't know whether he was drunk or not, but am inclined now to think that he only wanted to be. I was sure that he was annoyed with me, for some reason, by the way he glared at me, and as I was a customer and prepared to pay for my entertainment it must either have been because I did not offer him any or because I was interfering with the hour of his own repast. I think it is likely that his bark, which was strident enough, was worse than his bite, that he was merely a ne'er-do-well with an unusual gift of self-expression, which had ceased to interest those about him. His wife took no steps to carry out whatever may have been his wishes at this particular juncture of circumstances, and her attitude of frozen grief, effective at the time, thawed enough to enable her to make a mild overcharge when I came to settle up. She gave me permission to take a photograph of the room

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and its occupants if I wished to do so, but I said that the light was not good enough, and came away.

Now I changed my view for a different set of hills, and began to descend on roads that zigzagged more than ever. There was a good deal of quarrying going on. Great blocks of stone were lying by the roadside ready to be built up into the parapet, and presently I came upon a group of Italian workmen busy with their picks and crowbars. I don't know why, after all these years, the enormous work of protecting this old road should be taken in hand, but certainly there are places in it at which a fall over the edge can hardly be thought of without a shudder, and with the surface in the muddy state in which I found it a motor-car might easily skid with danger. At one place, if you stand where it rounds a point and look down to where it takes another slope, it looks just like a temperature chart, where the thermometer has taken a series of rises and drops and at last runs off steadily downwards.

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This long downward slope led me at last to welcome shade, and I found a little lawn under olive boughs, below the road and above a river gorge which was an ideal place for a siesta. If food and drink are so good when one is on the long steady tramp, sleep is no less so. There are those who scorn it except at night between sheets, but when one has made an early start, and has covered many miles by the time the sun has reached its greatest power, it is pleasant enough to sleep for an hour under the shade of a tree, and to wake up refreshed for what remains to be done of the day's journey.

The sound of the river beneath me, and the birds singing all around, lulled me to sleep. But for this there was no sound, except a very rare noise of wheels, and once a motor-car, on the road above, to arouse me for a moment and to make the sinking back into sleep more blissful. The first time, on an expedition of this sort, that you take your pack for a pillow, mother earth for your bed and green leaves for your canopy, there is something that falls away from you of the troubles and irritations of the world. You are as near to nature as you are ever likely to be in this sophisticated age, and nature will smooth things out for you if you trust yourself to her.



THE ROAD DOWNHILL "LOOKS JUST LIKE A TEMPERATURE CHART"



I "POSED" HIM AMONG THE RUINS

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I dropped down to L'Escarène, a picturesque old town with an ancient bridge straddling across the quick-flowing river. But before I reached it I was met by a man with a drum and several intoxicated youths carrying a flag, who cried "Vive la République" and "Vive l'armée," with the most patriotic fervour. I had begun my walk just at the time when the conscripts were being called up from their homes all over France, and lived in the thick of the concomitant disturbances during the next few days. These rather pathetic little processions of service-old boys, usually accompanied by middle-aged men more drunk than they were, trailing out of a town and back again, became a commonplace. They shouted at me frequently, but never rudely.

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I sat under a naked vine-trellis on a raised terrace outside an inn and drank wine. A talkative damsel, with needlework to occupy her hands, but nothing to keep her fine eyes from noting everything that happened in the *place*, for the observation of which this was a vantage-ground, kept me company. She explained to me, with much shrugging of shapely shoulders, some of the differences between the *patois* used in this part of the country and the true French, but she

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disclaimed knowledge of Provençal. I was in Provence, but not yet among the true Provençals—unless I mistook her altogether, which is quite possible.

She gave me excited and exhaustive instructions how to reach the hill town of Berre, where I had thought to spend the night. I had had a description of it from the engineer in whose company I had dined the evening before, and when I came within sight of it, perched on its rock summit, an hour or two later, its high walls and dominating church tower lit by the westering sun, it gave me a little thrill—it was so beautiful, and so just right.

It was just right to look at from a distance, or for a walk through its narrow twisting alleys, part staircase, part passage, part drain. There is nothing more picturesque than these little rock-perched towns and villages that lie behind the Italian and French Riviéras. They are as untouched as anything in the way of congregated buildings can be in these days, and carry your imagination right back into the past. And I had thought that a night spent in some old inn in one of them would strengthen that touch of romance for me. [13]

But in Berre there was no inn such as I had pictured, where one would sleep in such a room as I had slept in the night before and awake to a glorious view as from some commanding tower. There were two *cafés*, and I penetrated one of them in search of dinner and a bed. Militarism was being celebrated with much consumption of fluid, and much singing and shouting, and the place was very dirty, and had that air of hard discomfort and newness which is the peculiar property of French *buvettes* of the poorer sort. I was not sorry to be told that it was impossible for me to have a bed there. I think I could have got one by pressing for it, but I did not press. The romance of Berre was oozing out fast, and I still had in me the four miles or so that would take me to Contes, in the valley below.

The revellers here were all men of middle age, or at any rate long past the age at which the new three years' service could affect them personally, but their enthusiasm for it was very great. One of them, who had detached himself from the rest while I had been making my enquiries and was reeling down the road waving a branch of mimosa and singing loudly, showed me the way to Contes; for I already knew better than to follow the road, which always approaches these high-perched villages in an over-deliberate fashion for pedestrians. He was very amiable about it, and I rather feared that he would offer to go with me. But he only came a little way, to where he could point me out a mule-track, and during our walk together I understood him to be persuading me, and possibly himself, that he was on the eve of gaining much military glory. But he was bald and pot-bellied, and I think that he was only touched by that noble and unselfish enthusiasm which takes patriotic men when there is question of other people doing their duty. [14]

Dusk was falling, and I went down stony paths between olive gardens, which are very peaceful and mysterious in twilight. I met some of the inhabitants of Berre mounting slowly to their little town after their day's work. Most of the women carried cut olive boughs on their heads, and some of the men drove asses laden with them. It was the time of pruning, and olive leaves are very acceptable to most animals as food. By and bye I had the track to myself, and sometimes lost it, but I did not much mind. I could see the lights of Contes below me, and whenever I found myself on a path that seemed to lead aside from them I took a straight line over the terraces till I found a more suitable one. I was rather tired, but rest and refreshment were not far off, and it was soothing to the spirit to walk in this odorous dusk, and in such quietness. [15]

It was quite dark by the time I came to Contes, and I was quite ready for my dinner. But I did not reach it for some time yet. When I had gone down long, steep, paved paths between walls to what seemed to be the heart of the town I had to go down much farther still until I thought I should never come to the end of things. But at last, there was the bottom of the hill, and an hotel, no less, with a garden in front of it.

I sat down in the *café*, since, although a room was promised me, there was no suggestion of taking me to it, and at the moment I had no wish to mount stairs even for the sake of a wash. There are certain habits of civilization that are very easily dropped. One comes to the end of a day's march, and one's first desire is for rest, one's second for food and drink; and in these little inns this sequence of desire seems to be well understood. It seemed quite natural to exchange my heavy dusty boots for a pair of slippers out of my pack, sitting by the table, to pass at once to the consumption of wine, and as soon as might be to the consumption of food, without any further preparation. [16]

The wine was very good, with a slight tang that was almost a sparkle in it, and as I sat blissfully at rest with it the room was invaded first by a man with a drum, then by a man with a cornet, then by several more men with very loud voices. I was immediately whisked away by the youth who had received me, and who seemed to be in sole charge of the place, into another little room across a passage, where he presently served me with dinner, consisting of soup, an omelette, beef, potatoes and carrots, cheese, oranges, and biscuits, and another litre of the good wine. Soon after that he showed me a clean little room, in which I slept deeply, hardly disturbed by the voices of the *jour de fête* beneath me, and was only once thoroughly awakened, at about one o'clock, by a great bustle of arrival in a room adjoining mine.

The busy young man was still as active as possible at that hour, but he was quite ready to give me my coffee at six o'clock the next morning, at a little table in the garden. He had also thoroughly cleaned my boots, but before I left I heard him called a marauder for something or other he had omitted to do for the two gentlemen who had arrived in the night.

For the whole of this entertainment I paid five francs and a half, and the helpful and willing young man explained that the charge was rather high because I had drunk two litres of wine. [17]

And so I came happily to my second day, in the bright spring sunshine.

Flowers and Scents

If you look at a map of this coast, before it begins to run south from Cagnes and Villeneuve, you will see that the hills stretch down to the sea like the fingers of a hand spread out, and the main roads run down between them. I should have preferred to keep away from the coast and cross the remaining ranges by tracks and footpaths, but I wanted to see a relative who lives at Nice. Otherwise I should never have gone near such a place, for which I was quite unsuited, both in spirit and attire.

Contes is only fourteen miles or so from Nice by a good road, and I thought I might pay my visit, and in the afternoon get back into the hills again. But crowning the ridge opposite to the one I had come down the night before was the old deserted town of Châteauneuf, and in the soft early morning sunshine it looked so attractive that I thought I would go up to it, and walk down to Nice along the valley on the other side.

It was a steep and stony climb. When I got a little way up I was already glad I had embarked upon it, for if I had gone down by the road I should have missed the glorious view I had looking back upon Contes, and upon Berre on its wooded height far above it. I saw now that Contes itself was a most picturesque little town on a hill of its own, crowned by the spire of its church, that its outlying houses ran straggling up the higher slope down which I had come, and that the inn at which I had slept was in another little group right at the bottom of the hill. It was not nearly so large as it had seemed to me in the dark, but it was wonderfully picturesque, from whatever shifting point of view I saw it. [19]

I sat for half an hour outside a little inn before I climbed the last steep slope to the ruins above me. They loomed big and massive, and I asked why the place had been deserted. Owing to lack of water, they told me, but there was still a woman who inhabited it with her children, and had some small "lands" to cultivate thereabouts. There were a few little pocket handkerchiefs of terraced soil among the lower ruined walls, and some tall cypresses growing among the scattered stones. But it was a scene of desolation when one went along what had been a street or lane of the village. The ruin was too far advanced to tell many stories, and only the glorious view, which embraced the sea to the south and all the great panorama of the hills and distant mountains elsewhere, made the reward of the climb. [20]

A ragged child came running towards me over the stones. I "posed" him among the ruins which were his habitation, and asked him questions about them, which he did not answer. I found his mother, with some smaller children, in a dwelling not so very uncomfortable, and she was pleasant with me, and said there was no lack of water at all in Châteauneuf, and it was a convenient enough place to live in, and cheap.

There was not much to stay there for. The ragged child was instructed to take me to some grotto or other which his mother said was well worth seeing, and he did accompany me a few hundred yards on my way down the other side of the hill; but I saw nothing of any grotto, and presently he went back again.

A depression of spirit came upon me as I walked down the road to Nice, which, however, was picturesque enough, passing for some distance through a narrow gorge with a foaming river running along the bottom of it. But there were people in carriages and motor-cars, and presently there were tram-lines and untidy-looking buildings such as always hang on to the skirts of a French town. I was coming into a sort of civilization that I wanted none of at that time. I cut short the approach by taking a tram, and I will say nothing more of Nice except that I spent the rest of the day and the night there. [21]

It took me a long time to get out of it the next morning, and in fact its atmosphere seemed to hang about me all day. I walked along the pavement of the interminable Promenade des Anglais, drank coffee at an *auberge* somewhere at the end of it, and then took a tram to Cagnes, where they play golf. I must not be taken to throw scorn upon Nice because it did not happen to be the sort of place I wanted at that particular time. It is the chief of the pleasure cities of that sunny flowery coast, and was so when all the rest were mere fishing villages. It is bright and gay, and fronts its curving shore with a flaunting elaboration of architecture that spells wealth and luxury down to the smallest eccentric pavilion. And this wealth and luxury spreads its influence for miles around.

It was evident in the little *café restaurant* at which I rested early in the afternoon, which was just off the dusty high road to Grasse, and was continually passed by motor-cars speeding along in either direction. It was not a place at which any of them were ever likely to stop, but I was charged at least double prices for the mild refreshment that I took, and when I had paid for it was requested to leave as soon as possible, for the lady of the house wished to shut it up and go and wash at the fountain. I was sitting outside, and could only have carried off a chair and a table if I had been minded to carry off anything, but I was not to be allowed to sit there a little longer. She had got my money and wanted to see my back. [22]

I walked on, into the land of flowers—flowers grown not for their beauty but for their scent, and grown in terraced fields, just like any other crop. Grasse, the centre of the industry, draws supplies for its scents and soaps, pomades and oils, from miles of country around it, and I was getting near to Grasse.

There were great plantations of roses, all carefully pruned and trained on low trellises, but not yet in flower. Sometimes the rows were interspersed with vines, and many of the fields were

bordered with mulberries. There were ledges covered with the green foliage of violets, and great double heads of purple, scented bloom peeping out of it. There were fields of jasmine, of tuberose; terraces of lavender, of lilies of the valley, carnations, mignonette; gardens of orange trees, grown more for their flowers than for their fruit; and of course groves of olives, of which the oil forms so important a part in the local manufactures. This day and the next day I walked for miles with the scent of flowers all about me.

I climbed up to another Châteauneuf; there must be a round dozen of them in Provence alone, and they are all very old. This was another most picturesque hill town, and again I thought I might get a bed there. But I could get no such thing, and after sitting for half an hour on a terrace and enjoying the wide view I set out again as the sun sank behind the hills to walk to Grasse. [23]

I had come up by a wide sweeping road, and took a short cut down through the olive groves to where I thought I should strike it again. But my sense of direction, never very strong, failed me altogether, and I don't know where I might have wandered to if I had not frequently caught sight of the lights of Grasse in the distance. Presently I seemed to be going right away from them, but between me and them there was a deep valley, and I knew that the road which I ought to have taken, or found again, kept to the level on my right. So I turned, to round the slope of the hill which would take me on to it.

I wandered for an hour up paths and down paths and along the edges of terraces where there were no paths, but keeping my face generally to the right quarter. The lights of Grasse shone more and more plainly between the tree-trunks, but were still a very long way off. Sometimes I came across little secluded farms, and in the garden of one of them a great stretch of yellow jonquil shone in the dusk like a square of sunshine left behind from the departed day, and its fragrance followed me for a long way. From another a dog barked and somewhat alarmed me, for dogs are not to be lightly regarded in this country. Later on I should have been more alarmed still, for reasons which will presently appear. But this dog did no more than bark savagely, and bye and bye, when it was quite dark, I came out onto the road, not so very far from Châteauneuf, round which I had walked almost in full circle. [24]

I was still four miles or so from Grasse, but had no wish to walk there if I could find my dinner and bed closer at hand, and just beyond where I had come out onto the road there was an inn, in which I got both. I think this place was called Pré du Lac, but am not sure.

I dined in the *café*, which was so large as to take up nearly the whole of the ground floor. There was a billiard table in it, but it was in a corner and seemed to make small impression on the floor space. As I sat at my table against a wall, the people of the inn dined at another one, pushed up against an iron stove, and at such a distance from mine that we had to raise our voices in talking to one another.

They were an interesting group, but I had some difficulty in making out their relationship. There was a woman at the head of things, bustling and voluble, who brought me one special dish, which she said was a *plat du pays*, and not given to every guest. I have forgotten all about it, except that it was good. There was a man with one eye who may have been her husband, but I think he was only a friend of the family. There was a married daughter, rather handsome, with a small child who went to sleep over his macaroni. These sat at the table. But there were besides, a son, who was to be off on his military service the next day, and a girl who may have been a younger daughter. She wore a boy's cloth cap and a black skirt, and looked very much like a Kentish hop-picker. These two hovered about the scene. There were also people coming in now and then, to bring something or to take something away, and they all stayed for a word or two before going out into the night, and slamming the door. [25]

One man, who had just cut his beard very short, or else had not shaved for a week, came to fill a bottle with wine. He stood for a minute or two by the table, talking loudly, and then made for the door, still talking. By the time he reached it he had found something to say that took him back to the table, where he stayed for another two or three minutes. Then he went to the door again, stood there as before, and came back. He did this six or seven times. He first came in as I finished my soup, and finally left us as I was peeling my orange, and I am quite sure that he pictured himself as having stopped just to say a word, and told his wife so when he got home with the wine for their meal. [26]

I watched them as they sat and stood there, talking vociferously, and frequently all at the same time, and thought how different they were from our northern peasantry. They live far better; the poorest of them have well-cooked food and wholesome natural wine as a matter of course. Their ideas flow more freely, and they take a great delight in imparting them. They are not so much under the domination of richer men. One could not, in England, walk through the country and drop down to the way of life of the peasantry without a conscious and possibly irksome process of self-adjustment—as irksome to them as to oneself. There one lives exactly as they do, and lives better than in most middle-class houses in England; and they will talk to you freely, and interest you.

I went over and sat at their table, while the one-eyed man and the married daughter played a game of cards, which they explained to me but I did not understand, and offered me most fragrant coffee, from the stove at the lady's elbow. The *patronne* came in, and gave me a liqueur glass of rum, which she said would be good for me. A handsome young man in the clothes of a plasterer came in and watched the card game, and another rather older man joined the circle, together with the son and the girl in the cloth cap, who had carried off the sleeping child and put him to bed. She was smoking a cigarette. I suggested that the rum should go round to my order, but only the *patronne* herself, the one-eyed man and the young plasterer accepted it. The budding soldier would have done so, but his mother forbade him. [27]

The talk was of military service, as it had been throughout the evening. They all disliked the new three years' law, except the one-eyed man, who said that soldiering was all fun and no work, and you saw the world. But they cried out at him that he had never done military service, and he subsided and helped himself largely to counters out of the pool.

They were all as genial as possible with me, looked at my map with interest, and suggested various places that I might visit. The conscript presently showed me up to my room, which was bare but clean, and asked me how many handkerchiefs I had with me. I thought it was rather a personal question, but showed them to him, and he deluged each one with a different scent. He said they were the best scents that could be obtained in or around Grasse, and they were certainly very strong. For some days thereafter my "essences turned the live air sick," and one of the handkerchiefs now, after several washings, retains a faint commemorative odour. But the attention I valued, though the scent I came to dislike extremely. [28]

They were nice people, all of them, though a little greedy, as next morning's settling up showed. But I was still on the high road between Nice and Grasse, and I suppose was fair game.

The weather was still lovely as I set out early in the morning, and Grasse was a sight to see, with its towers and roofs lit up by the sun, as it stood on its dominating height over the wide valley, in which the light mists still lingered.

I walked right through the town, but if I had not already seen something of the processes by which the scents from the miles of flowery fields through which I was passing are extracted and hoarded, I think I should have stayed to do so. For I am so constituted that every manufacturing process remains a complete and insoluble mystery to me until I have seen it, and yet arouses my curiosity and my willing interest.

It was about this time of the year that I had visited one of the light, airy factories of Grasse. I remember a huge, scented mass of the heads of violets heaped up on a white sheet on one of the upstairs floors. It was half as high as I was, and smelt divinely. These were the only flowers in evidence, for the full harvest, when all the great space of this chamber would be covered with gathered blossoms, was not yet. But there were sacks of lavender there besides, and bundles of sweet-scented roots—orris, and patchouli, and *vétiver*—which can be turned into essences as sweet as those taken from the flowers themselves. [29]

I remember in other rooms boiling vats, very clean, and bright copper vessels, and great stills; and casks full of the fine grease which is used to catch and hold the distilled essences. It is spread on sheets of glass, framed in wood, like school slates, which are stacked in tiers; and other tiers hold the wooden trays for the flower-heads ready to be treated. And of course there were great stores of attractive flasks and bottles, all labelled and ribboned, and ready to take their places in the shops of Bond Street or the Rue de la Paix, and every other place where there is a market for them.

There was a room, too, with machinery for turning out scented soap. You saw a soft fat pink deliciously-smelling roll squeezed out of a press, and in no time sections were cut off and stamped in another press into cakes ready for the toilet table.

I must confess that I have only the dimmest idea now as to the actual details of the various processes by which the scent of the flowers is stoppered up into the aristocratic bottles, but I have seen it all done, and the impression remains on my mind that any scent that bears a label from Grasse does come from the flowers themselves, and with no adulteration that I could see anywhere. [30]

CHAPTER III

In Old Provence

I now finally left behind me the cosmopolitan coast, and came into the true Provence.

My objective was the old city of Aix, which lay almost due east, across country in which there are not many places standing out on the map as of any importance, but which seemed to me rather more attractive on that account.

Once at Aix, one would be in the thick of it. Avignon, Nîmes, Arles, and a score of points of interest lie within a few miles of one another. When I reached this rich and crowded corner, the adventure of walking through unknown country would take second place. But at least as long as the weather held I wanted to be on foot, and in the country that lies apart from the main tourist routes.

When I had passed beyond the sphere of the villas with their flowery gardens the road became rather lonely. The fields of blossom became rarer, but there were vines and olives everywhere. The earth was red, and looked rich, and the hills on either side of me took on all sorts of lovely shades of orange and purple and blue, as the light changed and shifted during the day. I could still see, when I turned round, some of the higher mountains from among which I had come, and the country did not sensibly change its character until I had crossed another pass later on in the day. [32]

I walked for some miles, hoping to come across an inn where I could get something to drink. I had had nothing since the bread and coffee of the early morning, and had walked straight through Grasse, only stopping to get my letters and buy some provisions.

I believe that most people on the tramp find it enough to have one good meal at the end of the day. Some of them find it necessary to start with a stout breakfast, but that is hardly possible outside England, and for my part the coffee and roll of France or Switzerland carries me on very well for two or three hours, when I am ready for something more substantial.

You need not trust to an inn for this second collation, and if you do they will only send out to get for you what you could have got for yourself, and charge you rather more for it. They quite understand your bringing your own *vivres* with you, and eating them to the accompaniment of their wine. Even the wine you can buy and carry with you, but it is hardly necessary to do that as long as you are in a country where you can get it anywhere. [33]

You go to a *boulangerie* and buy a crisp, newly baked loaf for a penny. Then you go to an *épicerie* and buy cheese or sausage, or both; also oranges and chocolate to amuse yourself with at odd moments during the day. Here is food fit for the gods, and all you want is wine to wash it down with. My own preference is for a great deal of wine at such times, but there are some who may be content with water. I want water, too, and a great deal of that, and carry an aluminum folding cup with me, filling it almost anywhere without regard to possible germs. It may be dangerous in some places, and possibly so in Provence; but I have never taken any harm from it, there or anywhere.

It was on this morning that I realized for the first time that it was not necessary to find an inn in order to find wine. Everybody makes wine in Provence and almost anybody will sell it to you. I got my litre at a blacksmith's; they brought me out a chair under a tree, and I ate and drank to the ring of the anvil. The wine cost fourpence halfpenny—I like to present these little sums in English money—and was drinkable, but no more. I was beginning to get rather tired of the ordinary red wine of the country, though I never drank white that was not good. But it is mostly red wine that the peasants make, and it is only occasionally that it is anything more than a mere beverage. [34]

That afternoon I came to a beautiful place. The road had been falling for some time, and at last entered a deep and narrow valley of verdant meadows through which flowed a very clear river. I had walked a long way, and it was very hot. The idea came to me to find a sheltered spot and bathe in these clear waters. Perhaps fortunately, there was an inn at the point at which the road crossed a bridge and doubled back on the other side of the gorge, and when I had refreshed myself there bathing did not seem such a reasonable undertaking. The river, though invitingly clear, was rapid, and must have been fed by snows not so very far away; and it was still early March, in spite of the hot sun.

There were motor-cars in front of this inn, and a party had finished a late and from evidence a long *déjeuner* at a table in the open. They were flushed with food and wine and other liquors, and chattered like parrots before they packed themselves into their cars and made off in the direction of the coast. I disliked them one and all, and felt vastly superior to them—a feeling which no doubt they also experienced towards me, if they took any notice of me at all. Their sensation of superiority would be based upon the fact that they were showing themselves in command of quite a lot of money, and would be heightened by the mild delirium that comes from over-feeding and being carried along swiftly in that state, with no call for bodily or mental effort. Mine arose from the pride of living frugally and feeling particularly well from having walked a good many miles and being ready to walk a good many more in about half an hour's time. I'm not sure, now that I have drawn the comparison, that the one feeling was any more laudable than the other. [35]

I crossed the bridge, which was called the Pont de la Saigne, and began the long ascent to the Colle Noire. When I had reached it the scenery began to show a change. I had left the high rugged hills behind me at last, and was dropping down into a fertile valley, which spread out into a plain. The hills, more rounded now, bounded this plain to the north, and were dotted at

intervals with little towns that showed up picturesquely from a distance on their blue and purple slopes. I was making for one of them—Fayence, where I had been assured that I should find a good inn. It was still a long way off after a few hours' walk, and still hidden from me by an intervening hill, and I had walked quite far enough that day.

I sat down on the coping of a bridge as the dusk began to steal over the fields and hills. It was a peaceful, soothing scene. An old shepherd came slowly towards me with his flock following him to their night's shelter. It was like a picture by Millet. There was not enough light for a photograph, but I took one of another shepherd with his flock later on. They watch their sheep as the Swiss watch their cattle in the mountain pastures, never leaving them alone; and I never saw a flock of sheep in Provence that numbered above thirty.

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When I had walked on a little farther I got a lift in a cart drawn by an old white horse that was jogging along my way. It was driven by a good-looking young man with a wonderful set of teeth and a pleasant smile. He was a sort of general carrier. He dropped a large bundle of what looked like washing at one cottage and a basket of provisions at another, and a man stopped him on the road to hand in a lantern for repair, and a woman at a railway crossing asked for medicine to be brought the next day. There was a little conversation on general topics at every stop, and the tongue was the true Provençal, which he told me they all talked among themselves, though most of them talked French as well.

Provençal is soft and sweet. It is not difficult to make out its meaning in print if one knows some Latin and some French, but I never succeeded in catching more than the glimmer of an idea of what was being talked about. Of Provençal as a literary language there will be more to say later on.

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As we rounded the hill that had hidden Fayence, there came into view a castle with two towers that stood most imposingly on a summit overlooking the valley; but as we approached it turned out to be, not an ancient ruined keep as it had seemed in the dusk, but a not very ancient unfinished château of enormous proportions. It had been built so far, my friend informed me, by a General Fabre, or Favre, and, as I afterwards learnt, about the year 1836. I made up my mind to visit it the next day, for it showed up as a most lordly pleasure house, with terraced gardens commanding the great stretch of country between the range of hills on which it stood, and the mountains of the Estérel and the Maures towards the sea.

Fayence lay just beyond it. My carrier was going on to Seillans, and dropped me at the foot of the hill, and I made my way slowly up a winding road to my night's shelter.

I found a good inn where they gave me an excellent dinner and a delicious white wine. The dinner consisted of pea soup, a spit upon which was impaled alternate morsels of liver and bacon, a dish of little sausages with succulent cabbage, a dish founded on beef or mutton, I forget which, cream cheese, biscuits, oranges, and nuts, and the charge for this, including the wine, of which I drank a large quantity, was two francs. My bed, in a small clean room, was also two francs, and coffee and rolls the next morning fifty centimes. This comes to about three shillings and ninepence for a day's living, apart from what one consumes upon the road; and this was the chief hotel in a town of fifteen hundred inhabitants.

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Such hotels are common all over southern France, and easy enough to find in a town not too large or too small. They are not so well furnished or so comfortable as an English inn of the same class, but it would be rare indeed to find an English inn where the food would be so good. An evening meal would have to be ordered or cooked specially, and one would consider oneself charged moderately in a bill that came to no more than three times as much. In the bigger towns such hotels are more difficult to find, but they are there if one knows where to look for them, and has learnt exactly what to look for. In the smaller places to which tourists go, and there is no choice, the charges are considerably higher; but one can usually get a bath, which is an unknown luxury in the ordinary way of things.

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I wish very much that I had not left these wanderings on foot over foreign countries until middle age. I can imagine no more delightful experience for a young man, either alone or in company. If I could go back to undergraduate days, I would spend some part of every spring and summer vacation on foot in this way. Ready money is apt to be scarce at that happy age, but it need cost so little.

My own experiences, for various reasons, are no particular guide, but Mr. Hilaire Belloc, who is pastmaster in the art of seeing fresh country, is worth quoting on the subject. He wrote to me when I asked him for advice before setting out on this expedition:

"I think the thing is quite easy if one only remembers that the conditions, upon the Western Continent at least, that is, in France, Italy and Spain, are so different from those in England that no one asks questions and no one dreams of interfering with one's liberty. The rule is as simple as possible. Any inn whatsoever in France and almost any inn north of Naples in Italy gives you a tolerable bed, and on entering it you ask the price of a room and of coffee the next morning. They are accustomed to the process and bargain with you. I have been to dozens of places where I was charged no more than a franc.

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"For your mid-day meal you will be wise to carry a leather bottle which the French call a *Gourde* and the Spaniards a *Bota*, holding wine, which again you must have filled in shops where wine is sold retail. You will again do well to ask before it is filled at what price the wine is sold. I have carried a half-gallon *gourde* of this kind over many journeys. It is slung from the shoulders by a strap and is purchasable in all the mountain countries. Bread is purchasable everywhere, and that kind of sausage which the French call by various names, which the Spaniards call 'Salpicon' and the Italians 'Salami' is common to all countries and is with cheese the accompaniment of the meal. Your night meal you must make the principal meal of the day, and if you wish to save money eat it at some place different from the place where you sleep. Thus accoutred you can live indefinitely at a rate of five francs a day and see all that there is to be seen. Always carry upon your person in such

countries one good 'piece,' as they call it, for identification, the best of which is a passport issued by the British authorities wherever you are. Be careful to have it *viséd* by the consul of the countries where you are to travel. It is the *visa* that counts more than the passport. For instance, if you are starting from Switzerland get such a document *viséd* by the consul in some principal towns of France, Italy and Spain, then you have nothing to fear.

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"Remember that telegrams or letters sent to you at one place *poste restante* do not tie you to going to that place. You have but to send a message to the post office to have them forwarded to another, and it will be done. But you cannot get your letters, still less your registered letters, at a *poste restante* without some such 'piece' as I mentioned.

"It is a good rule not to carry personal luggage except in the smallest amount in your sack, and to buy things as you need them. It is cheaper in the long run."

Now five francs a day is not quite thirty shillings a week, and for the price of a few days' revel "in town" an enterprising youngster might spend a fortnight walking through almost any beautiful stretch of country in nearer Europe, including his journey there and back to England. However it may have been in the past, it is now possible to travel third class on the Continent in no more discomfort than in England, and indeed in the holiday season third class is apt to be a good deal less crowded than second, on the fast trains in which third-class passengers are carried. They are not carried, of course, in all trains; but where the saving of shillings is an object it is no particular hardship to spend a few hours more on the way, and unless the journey is a very long one the time lost is small and the money saved considerable.

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The burden to be carried is a more debatable matter. Mr. Belloc's advice is worth a good deal more than mine, but his early training in arms must have used him to a less fearful regard of discomfort than is possible with most of us. The less you carry the easier your walking will be, and I would never hamper myself with any protection against rain. Unless you can keep your legs as well as your body protected you must occasionally expect to be under the necessity of having something dried before a fire, and while you are about it you may as well go to bed and have everything dried. But I should not care to be without a spare shirt, at least one pair of spare socks, and a pair of light felt slippers, and with other small necessaries for comfort and a reasonable degree of cleanliness this already makes up a fair weight. Let every one choose for himself. My experience is that one very quickly gets used to a moderate pack strapped upon one's shoulders, and hardly notices it, except for a time after one may have taken a day off and walked about carrying nothing.

I took a day off at Fayence. It was Sunday, although I had no idea of it until well on into the morning.

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I came down at about half past seven, and found that the three *commis voyageurs* in whose company I had dined the night before had already finished their breakfast and gone out; but two of them came in again as I was finishing mine, and transacted serious business with some townspeople whom they brought with them. They keep early hours in France.

I walked up to the top of the hill upon which the town is built, and found an old and very solid tower with a clock in its face and a bell in a cage of wrought iron on the top of it. The clock had a date on it—1908—and I took some little trouble to discover whether it could be seen from any part of the town except by climbing up to it as I had done. I found that it could not. Then I made my way to the Château du Puy.

I approached it along a sort of drive, and stood in a doorway looking down three stories deep into the stone-built husks of enormous rooms, and up into three or four stories more. There was a series of great halls, one above the other, in the main part of the building, and many rooms opening out of them in both wings, which were carried up into imposing towers; and there were lateral extensions besides. The house seemed to have been designed for the accommodation of a regiment rather than one solitary general.

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The gardens to the south of it were on a level two stories lower, and the gate to them was locked; but by a little scrambling I reached them. The terraces had been laid out on a grand scale, and gardening had been begun at some date or other. There were overgrown beds of iris getting ready to flower, and in one corner a *pièce d'eau*, without which no French garden is complete. A tall palm grew in one corner, and there were fig-trees and bushes of hibiscus. In an extension of the main building there were signs of habitation, and an orange-tree bright with fruit grew in the middle of a chicken-run. Olives and almonds had been planted where the ordered garden should have been, and most of the ground had been made use of.

I had been able to get no information about the building of this great pile; the tradition seemed to have departed. I do not know whether it had been stopped by the death of the owner, or, as seems not improbable, by a lack of money to go on. I imagined him, as I sat and smoked in the deserted garden, as having thought continually of this glorious site in his native country, and coming back to it when his fighting was done to build himself the finest house for many miles around. I think he must have enjoyed himself enormously while it was in the building, but not without some doubts as to the way in which it was to be lived in when it should at last be finished.



A PROVENÇAL SHEPHERD

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FAYENCE COULD BE SEEN ON ITS OWN HILLSIDE

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HOW THEY PRUNE THE PLANE-TREES

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THE DOLMEN NEAR DRAGUIGAN

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His site must have given him continual pleasure. From his terraced garden the wide fertile plain was spread out before him, in front and on either side. As I saw it, it was all browns and greens, threaded with white roads, and punctuated by dark cypress spires. Miles away it was bounded by pine-clad mountain slopes, beyond which lay the sea. At the back of the house the little town of Tourettes showed its huddle of old roofs and walls a mile away, and behind it the hills rose until snow could be seen on distant summits. From the little side garden with the fish pond, Fayence could be seen on its own hillside, and a range of blue and purple hills beyond it. The sun came out as I sat there, and the shadows of clouds played all over the beautiful scene. It

was the true Provence, which gets into the blood of those who are born in it, and makes them think that no country in the world is fairer.

I walked back to the town and went into the church, a large eighteenth century structure of some dignity, with an unornamented tower that looks much older. The curé came in as I was looking about me. He was as handsome and dignified as his church, with his white hair and portly presence, and reminded me of Parson Irvine in "Adam Bede." He was inclined to deprecate my admiration of his church. It was large, yes, not particularly fine, he thought. But I was judging by other standards. A church as large as this would hardly have been built in England in the eighteenth century for a thriving town; for one of the size of Fayence the idea of it would have been laughed at.

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It would hardly have been built in Fayence a few years later. When I had gone out on to the little *place* in front of it, where there were busy market stalls under a row of giant planes, and a view past the Château du Puy to the rich plain and the mountains beyond it, I went back into the church and watched the congregation arrive for Mass. It was not until then that I made it out to be Sunday. One enjoys a blessed disregard of the calendar on such expeditions as mine, walking on from day to day.

Women and children—they filled about a quarter of the seats provided, and these filled hardly more than half the church. There were two old men besides, and one middle-aged one, who came in with his family with an air of importance. The rest of the male population of Fayence was buying and selling outside in the market, or in the shops, or talking together on the terrace steps above the *place*, or in the *cafés*, or walking up and down the steep streets.

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In the late afternoon I walked over to Seillans, and saw the populace of that town enjoying themselves on a fine promenade that they have on the edge of their hill. It is planted with the ubiquitous shady plane, and overlooks the magnificent view to the south.

A good many of the men were playing their game of *boule*, which needs only a few yards of hard ground, and some wooden balls about the size of a cricket ball, studded closely with nails. They throw a "jack" about fifteen or twenty yards and then follow closely the rules of our game of bowls. But they throw the ball with the back of the hand up, and give it a spin which makes it run on after it has fallen. When all of them do no more than this the game is dull enough, at least to watch, although the inequalities of the ground give it some interest to the players. But the good players will aim at coming right down upon an adversary's ball and punching it away out of danger. They bend down very low with the right leg curiously crooked, and then run forward fast and spin the ball in the air. It looks a most difficult shot, but I saw it brought off many times by these players at Seillans.

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CHAPTER IV

Draguignan and Saint-Maximin

Early on Monday morning I set out to walk to Draguignan, which lay on the other side of a range of hills to the southwest, at a distance of about twenty-two miles. I kept to the high road all the way, but did not pass a single village, although the land was cultivated almost everywhere, with olives, vines, mulberries and cereals. The only episode of a rather dull walk that remains in my memory is a chat with a very stout proprietor of vineyards, who sold me a litre of his *bon vin* for fourpence. He said that his wine was very wholesome, and I had no fault to find with any of its qualities, except possibly that of taste. He talked to me about Mistral, the poet. He had seen him, and said he was a very great man; but he did not seem to have read his poems. There was to be a big Provençal *fête* at Draguignan in May, and Mistral would be there, as gay as any of them, in spite of his eighty-four years. But alas! Mistral's death was to move all this country for which he had done so much in little more than a week from that time.

It was on that day that the wind, from which the poet's family took its name, and which so vexes the plains of Provence, began to blow. I did not recognize it at first. The sun still shone brightly in a blue sky, and I was rather glad of the strong clean wind that cooled me as I walked. There is something about the name *mistral* that had seemed to me to connote an unhealthy fever-bringing air. I suppose I had unconsciously connected it with the word "malarial." But the *mistral* of Provence is the *magistral*, the great master-wind from the north or the north-east, which rushes down from the Alps and Cevennes to replace the hot air that rises from the sun-baked plains in the great Rhône delta. It is like our east wind, keen and strong, and seems to deprive the air of all moisture, and to make even a cloudless sky look cold.

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I first saw Draguignan some four miles away, as I rounded the shoulder of a hill. It is the capital of the Department of Var, having replaced Toulon, which now has more than ten times its population, at the end of the eighteenth century. Baedeker describes it as an *assez belle ville*, but it was not *assez belle* for me. I thought it the dullest possible sort of town, although there were picturesque "bits" in the streets of the older quarter. The first thing that struck the eye as I neared it was an enormous range of new barracks, with a huge barrack square. The bugles were blowing gaily, and when I came to the town it was alive with soldiers in dirty white, with dark-blue waist sashes, puttees and tam-o'-shanters. As I walked up the narrow streets of the old town into the untidy-looking newer part, I could not help comparing it with another French military city that I had visited some months before. This was Besançon, the brightest, cleanest, pleasantest large town that I have seen in the whole of France, and I have seen a good many. Perhaps it was hardly fair to compare the two, for I was in Besançon on a fine mellow September day, and Draguignan must have been about at its worst, with the *mistral* tearing along its streets, filling the eyes with dust and making the pavements look as if all the waste paper and light rubbish of the town were habitually thrown on to them.

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And they were pruning the plane-trees. No one who has not visited the south of France when this operation is going on can form any idea of what it means. These trees are planted everywhere, and in summer give a most welcome shade to the hot streets and the wide squares of the bigger towns. They grow to an immense girth, and those in Draguignan were especially fine. The way they prune them, from the very first time of their planting, shows that they know very well what they are about, for they get a wide spread of branch and an even and impenetrable roof of green. The trees are never allowed to get out of hand, and are kept at school when they have passed the span of the longest human life. With ladders and saws and ropes they remove great branches with as little concern as one cuts into a rose-bush. The reward comes in the summer, but an avenue or a "square" of these trees in March, when the saws have been at work upon them, is a desolating sight. Those that I photographed the next morning are umbrageous compared with some. I have seen far bigger planes than these kept to three branches, each as big as a good-sized tree.

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I read in the official Directory of the Department of Var that towards the end of the fifth century the town was infested by an enormous dragon (symbol of heresy). The inhabitants had recourse to St. Hermentaire, Bishop of Antibes, who delivered them from the monster. To perpetuate the memory of this happy disencumbrance the town changed its ancient name of Grimum to that of Dragonia, from which has come Draguignan. And St. Hermentaire has been regarded with affection in the locality ever since, though his name is little known outside of it.

I had been recommended by my friends among the *commis voyageurs* at Fayence to an hotel of the right sort. I should certainly have passed it by but for that, for it seemed to be nothing but a large restaurant, not of the first order nor even of the second, and there was nothing to show that it had much accommodation elsewhere. But when I asked for a bedroom, and suggested two francs for it instead of two and a half, I was introduced to a noble apartment, which reminded me of the pictures one sees in the illustrated papers, when His Majesty the King is put up for a few days at an Embassy abroad. It was very large, and the furniture was old, and some of it handsome, especially the bed, which had more in the way of canopy and curtains than I am accustomed to. The lady of the house told me afterwards that she kept a shop of antiquities in the town, which accounted for some of the unusual splendour. I felt ashamed at paying no more than one and eightpence for the privilege of sleeping in such a room.

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The dinner was the same price, and included a bottle of white wine that was worth thinking about as one drank it. A good many men came in to dine, at any time between half past seven and half past eight. Very few of them looked to be above the rank of a workman, and all of them kept

on their hats as they ate. They sat in groups at different tables, and enjoyed themselves in much the same way as men do in a club in London. Probably they paid even less for the same dinner than I did, and I hope their wives had as good a one at home.

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The *mistral* blew as keenly as ever the next morning, and I determined to cut off a bit of the distance by train. I wanted to get to some of the interesting places, which are nearly all in the west of Provence. It was a two days' march to Saint-Maximin, where there is a noble church, but I thought I would sleep there that night.

The train did not start until half past nine. I had time to walk out a few miles on the other side of Draguignan to see a famous dolmen, the only remains of prehistoric life to be found in this immediate region.

It was a curious well-preserved structure, hard by a little farmhouse just off the road. I paid a youth who said he was the proprietor fifty centimes for the privilege of looking at it, but thought his demand for a further two francs because I had photographed it unreasonable. He blustered, but made no effort to detain me as I walked off the field with the two francs in my pocket instead of his. I had already been asked once or twice if I was travelling for the purpose of taking picture postcards, and probably that was his idea. But he was a potential robber all the same, and I doubt if he was the proprietor at all. I wish I had thought of threatening him with St. Hermentaire.

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It took three hours to cover the thirty miles to Barjols, where I took the road again at half past twelve. Barjols is quite out of the beaten track, although this pottering little line, which eventually reaches Arles, passes near it. As I walked through a very wide *place* I stopped to ask a group of school children playing marbles which was my route. At the sound of my voice they scattered away with every sign of alarm, and I laughed at them and went on, with my vanity rather wounded at being regarded as an object of terror.

When I had gone a mile down the hill I met a man in his best clothes reading a newspaper. I had seen the start of a funeral procession in Barjols, and I supposed him to have the intention of joining it at his own convenience. He asked me where I was going, and told me I could cut off four kilometres if I followed the route he would describe to me. He took immense trouble about it, and it was a kindly thought, but I wished afterward that he had not had it, although I found his interest in me soothing after having so lately been run away from.

I left the road bye and bye and followed the path that he had indicated, but, as generally happens in such circumstances, it soon ceased to be a path at all, and I found myself wandering among the hills with a very small idea of where I was on the map. There was frequent cultivation, but very few signs of habitation, and I saw no living soul until I struck the high road again more than two hours later. It was not the high road I had expected, and left me about eleven miles to do out of what would have been a total of fifteen if my adviser had been punctual at the funeral. The road to Saint-Maximin was quite straight for the last three miles, and I saw the long line of the great church standing high above the roofs of the town from far away.

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I approached Saint-Maximin with an agreeable sense of anticipation. The learned M. Rostan considers that its church shows the fairest page of Gothic art in the South, and to be the only religious monument of real architectural importance in Provence. This is perhaps extravagant praise, but it was at any rate the first big thing of its kind that I was to see. I had surveyed the country at large for a week, and was ready for a different sort of interest, especially as the *mistral* had blown steadily all day long and walking was beginning to lose the edge of its rapture.

It is not only the architectural beauties of this noble church that give it its interest. It is its connection with a tradition that has left its marks all over Provence, and in past centuries has met with such universal acceptance that it is small wonder that innumerable people firmly believe in it to this day. Saint-Maximin was the first place to which I came that had to do with it.

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I read about it that evening sitting before a wood fire in a room more comfortable than is to be found in most French inns. I had come in to Saint-Maximin as dusk was beginning to fall and had gone straight to the church. But it was closed for the night. All I saw was the disappointing west front, which has never been finished. So I betook me to the hotel. Saint-Maximin is a town of small importance in the present day, but it contains a good one, something like an old English coaching inn, both in appearance and custom. It was a pleasant change to dine in a medium-sized parlour instead of a large bare *café*, and to find a fire in it; for the *mistral* had blown away all the warmth in the air and was blowing still.

Possibly it was from this inn that Lucien Bonaparte married his first wife, who was the daughter of an *aubergiste* of Saint-Maximin, where at the age of twenty-one he administered the military provisions of the Revolutionary army. The Revolutionists, disliking any name inclusive of Saint, called the town Marathon, but it reverted later.

So I sat very late before the fire and read about Saint-Maximin and about the legend of the three Marys. It must have been after ten o'clock when I took my candle and went up to bed. Here is the story, adapted from the learned M. Rostan, who made a life study of the antiquities of Provence and especially of Saint-Maximin, and whose memory is deservedly held in honour throughout the country.

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After the death of Jesus Christ and his divine resurrection, the Jews, alarmed by the rapid progress made by the new faith in Jerusalem, began a terrible persecution, for which the martyrdom of St. Stephen was, so to speak, the signal. They threw into a boat, without sails, oars or rudder, the following saints: Mary Magdalene,^[4] Lazarus and Martha with their servant Marcelle, Sidonius, the man who was born blind, Maximin, one of the seventy-two disciples, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary the wife of Zebedee, also called Salome, and several others, including Sarah the black servant of these last two Marys, Trophimus, and Joseph of Arimathea.

(The list extended itself as the legend grew, for it almost certainly began with three only, as

we shall see later. But M. Rostan includes most of the above.)

The illustrious confessors were exposed to what seemed a certain and horrible death, but the sacred barque, far from being overwhelmed by the waves, floated in a calm that spread immediately around it, and protected by the mercy of Providence on its long and perilous voyage, touched at last the shores of Provence at the mouth of the Rhône, at the place now called Saintes-Maries, or Notre Dame de la Mer.

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Mary the mother of James the Less, and Salome stayed in that place with their black servant Sarah. The other holy men and women spread themselves over different parts of the country and diligently preached their religion. St. Maximin went to Aix, of which he was the first bishop, St. Martha to Tarascon, which she delivered from the ravages of a horrible monster, St. Lazarus and St. Mary Magdalene to Marseilles.

Now although the church and town of Saint-Maximin bear the name of that illustrious saint their chief glory is of a still greater. St. Mary Magdalene made herself celebrated at Marseilles, then one of the chief cities of the world, by her preaching. After having made numerous converts and performed striking miracles, she went to Aix, where she was named in the charter of the Church of St. Saviour as co-founder with the bishop, St. Maximin. After some years she formed a wish to take refuge from the eyes of the world, and betook herself to the heart of the mysterious mountain forest now called Sainte-Baume, because of the cave in which she passed the last thirty years of her life in the practice of the most austere penitence. Seven times a day angels came to her in this wild retreat and exalted her to the summit of the mountain, so that her ears might be ravished by the celestial harmonies. As her last moments approached they transported her some distance from Sainte-Baume near to an obscure spot in which St. Maximin was then in retreat. She received the last sacraments at his hands, and a few days later breathed her last sigh, leaving behind her, says the Golden Legend, "an odour so sweet that the oratory was perfumed by it for seven days." Her mortal remains were reverently interred, and her tomb became thenceforward an object of remarkable devotion. Shortly afterwards the holy Prelate himself, with others of the blessed saints, was buried at her side, and above these sacred remains arose a church that became from that time a place of pilgrimage and deep veneration.

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It is unfortunate that the invasions of the Saracens in the eighth century should have made it impossible to produce documentary evidence of any of this earlier than that date, for those barbarians devastated everything. Seven or eight hundred years is a big gap to cover, and when we begin to look into profane history the gap becomes much bigger; for the legend cannot be traced earlier than the translation of the relics of St. Trophimus in the twelfth century, and did not receive general acceptance until three hundred years later still. But since that time it has exercised an immense power upon the imagination of Christendom.

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M. Rostan, who was an antiquarian of note, believed in it. He summons in evidence the stones of Saint-Maximin itself. In 1859, when the church was undergoing restoration, he examined a brick-built tomb which was incontestably of the date of the early Christian era, and "might well be the primitive burial-place of one of the holy personages venerated on this spot." It is true that the tomb was empty, but the sacred relics are stated to have been removed after the persecutions of the fifth century into the sarcophagi which are there to this day. The walls of the crypt also, exposed in course of further restoration thirty years ago, convinced M. Rostan, who saw them uncovered, that this was "the veritable Cubiculum, the sepulchral chamber of St. Magdalene, not only in its plan and dimensions, but in its still living reality, as it existed when the celebrated penitent was buried there, and where they placed her sarcophagus in the fourth or fifth century after the triumph of the Church. The vaulting alone is not the same."

Out of all of which the sceptic may at least accept the fact, interesting enough, that the crypt as it stands is of the date at which St. Mary Magdalene probably died.

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When the Saracens were burning all the churches, and scattering all the sacred relics that they could lay hands upon, the Cassianite monks who had been in charge of these peculiarly holy ones for three hundred years, filled the crypt of their church with earth so as to hide it, and for further precaution moved the bones of St. Mary Magdalene from their tomb in the place of honour into that previously occupied by those of Sidonius, where they remained for five hundred years.

So far, then, we have in evidence the tradition of the landing of this company of saints on the shores of Provence and their subsequent missions, not from St. Maximin alone, but also from Aix, Marseilles, Tarascon and Saintes-Maries, in each of which places are monuments to their glory. We have also the evidence of a burial-place of the first century which was an object of veneration at that time and remained so thereafter.

It is true that during the epoch of the Crusades the magnificent church of Vezelay in Burgundy, in which Bernard of Clairvaux preached and Richard Cœur de Lion took the vows, attracted to itself great honour by its claim to possess the true relics of St. Mary Magdalene. But M. Rostan points out that this belief on the part of Vezelay, so far from being in flagrant contradiction to the Provençal tradition, confirms it; for the monks of the Abbey of Vezelay attributed the possession of these sacred relics to the piety of their founder, Gérard de Roussillon, who was Count and Governor of Provence under the Emperor Lothair. "But as the body of St. Magdalene had not been visible at Saint Maximin for a long time, and the precise spot in which it was hidden was not known, the statement of Vezelay was believed, and conferred great celebrity upon it as a place of pilgrimage, until the moment when it entered the designs of Providence to clear up the mystery that enveloped the tomb of the glorious saint and dispel all uncertainty upon the subject of her relics."

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The instrument of this discovery was the Prince of Salerno, known later as Charles II, King of Sicily and Count of Provence, who was the son of Charles of Anjou, the belligerent brother of St.

Louis.

It was in 1279. While Charles I was fighting in Italy, his son, then at Aix, moved by a great devotion towards St. Mary Magdalene and a lively desire to recover her relics, betook himself to Saint-Maximin in order to have excavations made beneath the pavement of the church. He put himself at the head of the workers, and on the ninth day of September had the singular happiness of uncovering the ancient sarcophagus which held the venerated body. Restraining the zeal of his assistants the prince put his seal on the tomb, and at once summoned a convocation of prelates to witness the exhumation of the sacred bones, which took place on the eighteenth day of the same month. In the dust of the tomb was discovered a box of cork enclosing an inscription on parchment or papyrus, which, translated from the Latin, runs thus:

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"In the year of our Lord 716, in the month of December, very secretly in the night, when the most pious Odo was king of the French, at the time of the invasion of the perfidious nation of the Saracens, this body of the most dear and revered Mary Magdalene was translated from its own tomb of alabaster into this one of marble, out of fear of the said perfidious nation of the Saracens, because it is more secret here, the body of Sidonius having been removed."

Contemporary historians unanimously report the miraculous circumstances that accompanied the discovery. All make mention of the delicious odour that came from the sarcophagus when it was opened. They tell, too, how a verdant plant of fennel grew from the tongue of the blessed penitent, whose body had not yet known corruption. The *noli me tangere*, the spot on the forehead which the Saviour had touched, was in a perfect state of preservation. Among the eminent churchmen who vouched for the miraculous events that surrounded the disinterment was the Cardinal de Cabassoles, Petrarch's friend, whose country retreat at Vaucluse we shall visit later.

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Prince Charles caused a magnificent reliquary to be made at Aix to hold the head of the saint. It was of silver gilt, in the form of a hollow bust, into which the skull was fitted. The face and the hair were of gold, and it was surmounted by a gold crown set with precious stones.

In the next year Prince Charles was taken prisoner by Peter of Aragon, and shut up in Barcelona for four years. He attributed his deliverance and the restoration of his kingdom—his father having died in the meantime—to the influence of St. Mary Magdalene, and set in hand the building of a church at Saint-Maximin which should be more worthy of the holy relics it contained. But it was not until more than two hundred years later that it was finished.

Charles carried to Rome the sacred head, to offer it for the veneration of the Pope, Boniface VIII. We are not told how it had come about, but the head had been discovered deprived of the lower maxillary. The Pope knew that a relic of this sort was honoured at the church of St. John Lateran in connection with St. Mary Magdalene. It was found to fit perfectly, and the Pope presented it to the King, who did not keep it with the greater part of the head, possibly because the magnificent reliquary would have had to be altered to receive it, but presented it in his turn to the nuns of Notre Dame de Nazareth at Aix. There it remained, until the amiable King René, who has left such a pleasant memory of himself in Provence, finally restored it to Saint-Maximin.

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During all the two hundred and forty years that the great church was in the building the precious relics that it enshrined attracted pilgrims without number. Six Popes visited them, to say nothing of two anti-Popes; in one year alone five kings bowed before the shrine; royalties came from as far off as Sweden; the unfortunate Albigenses, after they had "abjured their errors," were compelled to make pilgrimage to it; and finally Louis XIV, with his mother, Anne of Austria, his brother, afterwards Duke of Orleans, and a numerous and splendid following, bent his knee at the sacred tomb, and assisted in the translation of the relics into a magnificent receptacle of porphyry. These relics would not, of course, include the head. Some vertebræ were offered to the Queen, who accepted them with gratitude. The sacred bones were examined by the King's head physician, and immediately placed in a case of lead covered with gold brocade, upon which the King placed his seal in six places. It was carried the next day in procession, and the church was filled with people, who shed tears of joy to see renewed in their own day "a devotion so holy and august in the presence of a king and queen so pious and devout."

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During all these years, however, the relics had not been preserved without vicissitude or diminution. Under the Queen Jeanne, Provence was overrun by brigands, and for three years they were hidden at Sainte-Baume. King René gave part of the lower arm to the nuns who had the lower jaw. In 1505 a Neapolitan monk robbed the reliquary of its jewels, and was caught and hanged. After this mutilation a new reliquary was presented by the Queen of France, Anne of Brittany, as splendid as the old one, and a statuette of herself was added to it in enamelled gold. Louis XIII asked for some fragments of the body, and was refused. Four years later he asked again, on behalf of the Queens Mary of Medici and Anne of Austria, and was more successful, obtaining also a fragment to be presented to the Sovereign Pontiff.

In 1639 a portion of the much venerated *noli me tangere* was stolen from the head, and, whether it is the same or not, a minute particle of the *noli me tangere* is cherished in the church of Mane, in the Basses-Alps. In 1781 Louis XVI ordered a thigh bone to be detached and presented to the Duke of Parma, which was done.

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We have followed the story for nearly eighteen hundred years, and now comes the Revolution, which wrought more havoc than all the successive disturbances that had taken place before it. The church was spoiled and the sacred relics profaned. The porphyry urn was violated, and the documents it contained burnt. The glorious remains of the saint were thrown pell-mell on the pavement, the head was torn from its gold case, and the other bones from their reliquaries. But the piety of the sacristan preserved the chief glory of the church, which was restored to it five years later. The head, a bone from one of the arms, some locks of hair, together with the

reliquary of the Holy Ampulla, and sundry fragments of the bodies of other saints were received back when the storm had passed over, and there the bulk of them remain to this day.

CHAPTER V

The Church of Saint-Maximin

So persuasive was M. Rostan that when I had read his account of all this, sitting in front of the fire at my inn, within a stone's throw of the great church that had been the scene of so many strange and moving happenings, it is small wonder that I was inclined to believe at least a good half of it. It was my first introduction to the legend, which was to colour so much of my future wanderings, and many of the facts that I have given were unknown to me then. I thought, at least, that the main facts vouching for its truth went much farther back than they seem to, and if it was difficult to accept quite that galaxy of New Testament names, or the story of the miraculous voyage, still I thought there might be some truth in the tradition as attaching to some of them.

What emerges as indisputable fact, and what moved me at the time, is that through some centuries countless people did believe in every word of it, and thronged this little town where I was resting from all parts of the then known world. And there in the church which I was to see on the morrow was—no doubt about this either—the very thing that had brought them here—princes and prelates, hard soldiers and lawyers, men and women of every degree, making journeys, some of them, of immense difficulty just for the sake of beholding what I or any other traveller coming into a dull little town could see for a few sous before passing on our way. Or would not even take the trouble to see. A man with whom I had talked at dinner came to Saint-Maximin several times in the year and had never seen it. He was '*bon Catholique*,' too, and said that there was no doubt at all that it was the head of St. Mary Magdalene they had in the church there. Some day he would go and see it, but not to-morrow, for he was too busy.

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You may put your finger on strange gaps in such a story; you may find the first foundations upon which it rests too weak to bear it; parts of it you may refuse altogether to believe. But make what deductions you wish, and what a lot remains.

Some poor tired body was laid to rest in the soil from which this great church has sprung at a time when there were still alive those who had walked and talked with Our Lord; and it was the body of one who was venerated. Out of the dusk of successive centuries come gleams of light that show innumerable people, who differed not so greatly from ourselves, believing that the remains they had knowledge of were those that their forbears had held in honour from the beginning. It becomes hardly more difficult to believe that they were than that they were not.

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Say that there has been error, say that there has been fraud if you like, and what have you denied? Nothing in the way of strong and moving power over those who have believed. There is the church, to which men whose names stand out in history made successive gifts through two centuries and a half, until it stood the splendid monument that it is today. There is the dust that countless pilgrims' feet have trodden for two centuries past. There is the echo of prayers and hymns, sighs from burdened hearts and praise from lightened ones that have gone up through ages from this place. The Revolution, which was to sweep away all error and superstition, might despise these sanctities, and scatter the venerated human dust, but it could not destroy the least particle of the faith that had been. It did not move the iconoclasts, but it had moved the world, and its effects remain in spite of them.

The wind had blown itself out the next morning and the air was cold, but sunny and still, as I paid my early visit to the church.

Its beauty is compelling, and when I had walked round it I sat down and tried to find out for myself in what it consists.

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The first impression is one of austere simplicity. There are a nave and two aisles, with chapels, no transepts, and except for the Renaissance work about the choir and the altar, and the fine pulpit, scarcely any decoration. Rows of clustered pillars carry arches between the nave and the aisles; and between the arches spring from the floor itself successive groups of three very slender pillars, like rods of stone attached to the wall, which run up uninterrupted far above the arcading, until from a simple moulding spring the delicate ribs of the vaulting, all as light as if it were a roof of leaves held up by slim tree-trunks. The sense of lightness is wonderful, gained as it is without the slightest disguise of the solid masonry, by sculpture or other suggestion; and the wonder increases when one remembers that this is not the work of one architectural genius, but the flower of many successive periods of building. It is clean and strong and beautiful, a church with a true religious significance.

The choir contains some very fine wood-carving and metal-work of the seventeenth century, and above the gilt and jasper of the high altar is a rich device of almost life-size angels and cherubs, surrounding and enclosing a little oval window on which the Holy Dove is emblazoned. The morning sun, shining through this window, made a striking effect, though it is perhaps at variance with the pure dignity of the church itself. The celestial figures are wrought with a gay and delightful luxuriance of imagination. They overflow from the main composition with its sweep and spread of angels' wings; delicious cherubic forms perch on the marble of the reredos, on the carved frames of the medallions which it encloses, on the rich screens of the choir itself; and each of them has its own attitude of devotion, or interest, or expectation, or even curiosity.^[5]

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The inspiration of the Gothic had begun to die away when the fabric of the church had come near to completion. We may perhaps be thankful that it was never quite finished, for it has such perfection of life as it stands: life that sprang from an impulse lasting through centuries. No such impulse exists now. It is safe to say that the most understanding and sympathetic architecture

would seem like a dead thing if it were sought to complete what was left undone.

The church lovers of the Renaissance made no such mistake. Their work was alive, too, and they spent their inspiration not on the beautiful fabric of the church but on its rich furnishing. What they wrought is as far away from us as the work of the Gothic builders was from them, and it is almost as unapproachable.

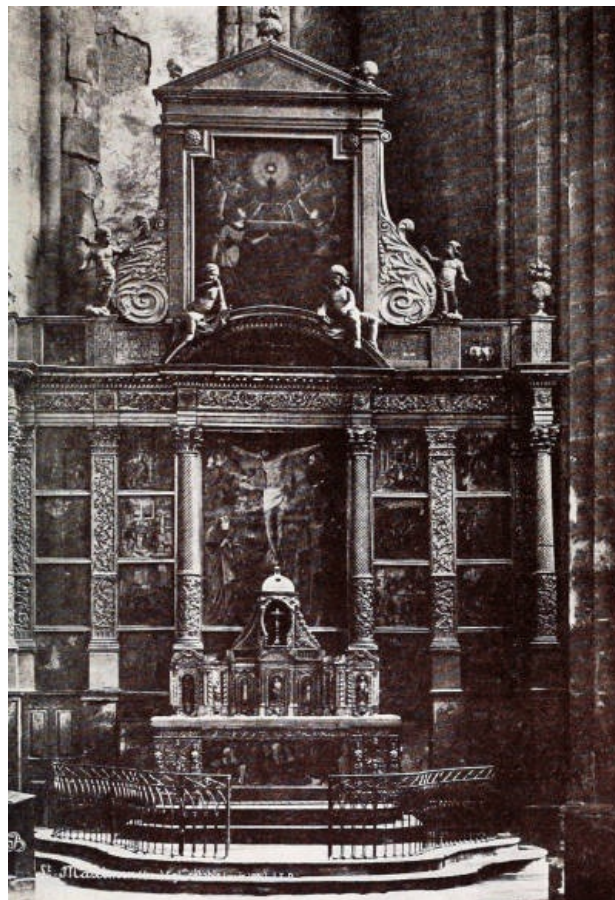
[73]

The iconoclasts of the Revolution wreaked their devastating zeal upon this Gloria, and upon any symbol or figure in the rich carvings of the choir that spoke of power or privilege. The church itself they spared, though you may see a device of *fleur de lys* on a boss of the roof vaulting spitefully disfigured by bullets.

What was it that they hated so? The arrogance of a church that had allied itself too much with the rich and powerful and worked on superstitions of mankind to gain riches and power and glory to itself, when there was so much wretchedness all around that it made small attempts to cope with? They would have said so, and to imagine them possessed only by the spirit of wickedness would be to make the same mistake about them as they made about the Church. In that dark hour the Church reaped the reward of its virtues at the same time as it paid for its sins. To the extent that it had been faithful those who had drawn comfort and consolation from it came to its aid; and if the fury of its attackers had been ten times as great they could not have stamped out the life that persisted through all the years of destruction; and flowered again profusely when the poor substitutes that had been planted in its place had wilted away. Religion could have done everything to heal the wrongs that had been suffered by the people who were now rising up to take the redress of wrongs into their own hands; and religion had done very little. It had been chiefly on the side of the oppressors, not of the oppressed. At its best it had given consolation in trouble that it had not sought to remove, at its worst it had committed crimes unspeakable. No wonder that a blind, insensate fury against the outward tokens of such a system seized those who thought that they had a mission to remove all oppression from the world. The buildings that enshrined it they could put to other uses, and the churches themselves were spared. But sacred relics they scattered to the dust with bitter contempt, and the treasures of art which spoke of an impotent faith that they despised, they destroyed or mutilated.

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One of the minor glories of Saint-Maximin is the Altar of the Crucifixion, or the *Corpus Domini*, at the end of the north aisle. The high reredos, with gilded columns and pilasters, frames two large paintings and a series of sixteen smaller ones on wood, which are of the utmost interest. It has only comparatively lately become known that these are the work of a Venetian painter of the early sixteenth century, Antonio Ronzen, who stayed at Saint-Maximin two years and a half to execute them, together with the reredos itself.



ALTAR OF THE CRUCIFIXION, SAINT-MAXIMIN



THE FIELD OF THE GREAT BATTLE, WITH MOUNT OLYMPUS IN THE BACKGROUND

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Though Ronzen came into Provence from Venice, it seems unlikely that he was an Italian. His name is Dutch, and so is his style of painting; and a striking resemblance has been pointed out between one of these paintings and an engraving of the same subject executed by Lucas van Leyden ten years before. Wherever he came from, Ronzen was a great artist, and left behind him at Saint-Maximin a great treasure.

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The sixteen panels are of different scenes in the Passion. The light was not good when I was in the church, and some of them are too high to be seen easily; but most of them are wonderfully fresh and vivid and suggestive, crowded with figures, and creating that sense of intimacy which has always been the mark of the Dutch school. Each of the scenes is set in a characteristic landscape. You can pick out the Ducal Palace at Venice, the Palace of the Popes at Avignon, the Coliseum; and the figures include all the types of the period, from the aristocrat to the peasant. Many of them, no doubt, are portraits of people very well known in their time, who came in and out of the church, or wherever the artist did his work, to see how he was getting on, and had a great deal to say about the painting and about the magnificent present that the Seigneur de Semblançay was making to the church, and what a fortunate thing it was that so clever an artist had been available to undertake the commission. Perhaps they used a little flattery, so that he should offer to "put them in."

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He was an important person, this Jacques de Beaune, Seigneur de Semblançay. He was superintendent of the finances of Francis I, whose finances wanted a good deal of looking after, and lived at this time chiefly in Paris. But previously he had been Treasurer-General of Provence, and it might have been well for him if he had stayed in his own country. For he fell into disgrace, and was put to death seven years after Ronzen had finished the pictures he had ordered from him. Probably he found time, during the period from the end of 1517 to July, 1520, when Ronzen was at Saint-Maximin, to pay him a few visits and see how he was progressing. According to the custom of the time his portrait would almost certainly have been included among the figures that still appear so lifelike after five hundred years, and remains there, if we could only tell which of them all it is. Did he have any premonition or dread of the fate that was hanging over him, and did the people who were taking such a lively interest in the work he was inaugurating think of him as having attained to the pinnacle of success, and much to be envied in comparison with themselves, living humdrum lives in their beautiful Provence?

Saint-Maximin has a fine Sacristy, furnished with presses and panelling of beautifully carved walnut, of the seventeenth century. Before the Revolution it contained many rich treasures, gold cups and chalices, silver reliquaries, ornaments jewelled and enamelled. Kings and Sovereign Pontiffs had showered gifts upon it; but in 1793 everything was rifled.

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"Barras and Fréron came to carry out the spoliation. Barras presented himself to the Popular Assembly to announce his mission, and a simple peasant, Jean Saurin, who died in 1842, Member of the Club, alone rose before the representative of the Convention to protest against the act of vandalism. He spoke honourably and with energy, but without success: the church was despoiled. Some rare and precious fragments, however, were saved from the wreck by the care and devotion of the sub-sacristan, Joseph Bastide, whose name deserves to be held in grateful memory by archæologists; for besides the sacred bones that the Church of Saint-Maximin can still offer, thanks to him, to public veneration, he was able to withdraw from the revolutionary spoliation a few rich ornaments, some ancient reliquaries, and a textile specimen of great value, the cope of St. Louis d'Anjou, Bishop of Toulouse. This cope, of the end of the thirteenth century, left by the holy bishop to the convent founded by his father, is one of the most beautiful and curious ornaments of the period."

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Thus M. Rostan, who proceeds to describe it. But alas! it is no longer there. The sacristan, worthy descendant of the pious Joseph Bastide, told me the sad story after he had made me admire the beautiful woodwork and shown me how the long drawers in the presses that held the vestments drew in and out, as if they had been made yesterday instead of two hundred and fifty years ago.

He had taken such care of the treasures under his charge, locking up everything whenever he left the church, and seeing that all was fast when he went home for the night. And often he would look out of his window, in the little ancient house in which he lived hard by, to satisfy himself that no marauders were about.

But ten years ago—how well he remembered it—the marauders had come. He pointed to the iron-barred window through which they had made their entry. They had taken I forget what from

the sacristy, but not the precious cope. I think he rather wished they had. Then they had broken into the church and into the crypt, and from there they had stolen the Holy Ampulla.

"This name is given," wrote M. Rostan, some years before the theft, "to a tube of crystal bearing the characters of the fourteenth century, and containing little fragments of glass, the remains of a phial still more ancient, which enclosed, according to tradition, some of the precious blood of the Saviour, collected by St. Mary Magdalene on Mount Calvary, brought by her to our country and discovered with the remains of this illustrious penitent."

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The thieves had broken into the iron-protected case in which this relic was kept, together with the skull of the saint in its rich and heavy reliquary, and a bone from the arm. They had stolen the bone, too, but had left the chief treasure intact, possibly because it was too heavy and bulky to bear away with safety.

What was the meaning of this strange crime? As far as I understand what happened, the breaking in was difficult, and nothing of great intrinsic value was taken, though many things might have been. Much money, certainly, would be paid for such relics as were stolen, if they could have been bought openly; but if the fact that they had been stolen would have to be disclosed, as it would in order to attach even a damaged authenticity to them, of what value were they to anybody?

Protestant zeal, which sometimes indulges itself in a similar way in England, may be ruled out. In France it does not act with those impulsions, and in any case destruction or contemptuous mutilation would be its object rather than theft, and I think the people who had done the damage would be rather inclined to advertise it, and themselves. The sacred skull was not damaged.

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Is it not forced upon one to believe that their value to the thief, or to those who may have encouraged the theft, was precisely that which they had always had; which was not represented by money at all?

"If our tradition is well-founded," wrote M. Rostan, "the *Sainte Ampoule* is evidently the most precious relic of the Church of Saint-Maximin. It has enjoyed wide celebrity throughout centuries, and frequent miracles have been attributed to it. On Good Friday, after the reading of the Passion, the traces of the divine blood were seen to liquefy, to rise and fall, bubbling, and to fill the whole phial. It was called the 'holy miracle.' A great crowd of pilgrims came each year to witness it."

Where is the relic hidden now? Does the thief who risked so much to possess it cherish it in secret, with his sin on his conscience, but hoping from its possession one knows not what in the way of preservation or blessing? Or is it hidden fearfully in some church—a priceless treasure that may never be displayed, but may be expected, by its secret presence, to sanctify its resting-place above other places? Do those who hold it still watch with strained attention on Good Fridays for the "holy miracle" to be performed? Do they perhaps persuade themselves that they see it, as many others must have done before them? For even M. Rostan, good and believing Catholic that he is, does not assert that the liquefaction has been plain to see within living memory.

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I asked the sacristan whether the theft had been held to be the work of religious enthusiasts, but either he misunderstood me or his grievance overshadowed all such questions.

They had taken the wonderful cope out of his care. It was a unique specimen of thirteenth century needlework, and is now in safe keeping in Paris. After so many years they might have trusted him to look after it, he said, ignoring the fact that his care had proved unequal to the preservation of relics still more valuable, at least in the eyes of the Church. The Ministry of Fine Arts, or whatever authority had deprived Saint-Maximin of the cope, had been quite content that it should keep the sacred skull, showing some cynicism, it may be thought, as well as indulgence.

With much unlocking of iron grilles and doors, we descended into the crypt, the storied place that has seen so much during centuries past, where kings and popes have bent the knee, and before which so many princes and nobles have put off their arms.

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It is almost square—a vaulted chamber about fourteen feet wide and a little longer, with an apse containing the altar, behind which is the reliquary enclosing the skull. The staircase leading down to it, and the side walls of the crypt itself, have been decorated with marble, comparatively recently, but the form of the chamber remains much as it always has been.

The sacred tombs, heavily carved with Biblical subjects, in the manner of the fourth century, are ranged on either side. They are said to be those of St. Maximin, St. Marcelle, St. Susan, St. Sidonius, and St. Mary Magdalene herself. They have been a good deal mutilated "by the piety of pilgrims," and in some degree made up, for the covers do not always belong to the sarcophagi on which they are fixed, or indeed to any other here.

The head of the Magdalen is contained in an elaborate gilt reliquary of the year 1860, of small artistic value. Under a heavy canopy four angels hold up a hollow metal bust with flowing hair, into which the head has been fitted.

What can one say of it? The sacristan pointed out to me the *noli me tangere* on the forehead, and I tried hard but could not distinguish it, though he said that it was quite plain to him. He was a believer, and I, frankly, was not, although the great antiquity of the relic and its stirring history aroused at least an endeavour to put myself in the mood of one who believed. But he, the believer, made it all appear so commonplace, holding up his stump of a candle here and there to exhibit a great curiosity, but showing no sign either in manner or speech of being moved to veneration or awe, or to any feeling outside those attaching to his customary occupation, that it is little wonder that I was scarcely able to produce any emotion at all.

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One asks oneself many questions. Are not all the signs and wonders wrought by such relics as these a matter of self-deception, induced by crowds and movement and the atmosphere of

enthusiasm? Or, in the rare instances in which they have been experienced by one alone, arising out of some state of ecstasy, hardly to be accepted as convincing testimony? If not, then how vaguely and arbitrarily these occult powers work! Faced by a known, even if half understood, power of nature, one knows the power to be there, and it will be felt beyond question if contact is made with it. Here, with a supposed spiritual power, there is only deadness of spirit, even with those who have the faith.

With one's facile modern veneration one is inclined to shudder at the iconoclasm of the Revolutionists, who laid rude hands on such objects as this. But may they not have been right after all? Long periods of deadness of spirit are a heavy price to pay for an occasional and questionable exhibition of arbitrary activity. And there are spiritual powers that do react to an exercise of faith, neither occasionally nor questionably, nor arbitrarily, which belief in tangible sanctities tends to obscure.

We locked and barred the grilles and doors and came up into the sunlight, leaving the much venerated relic to keep its watch in the dark crypt. With whatever lack of emotion it may be faced now, even by a believer, there has been no lack of it in the long past. And whatever view you may take of it, it is the seed from which sprang this strong and beautiful church.

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CHAPTER VI

Caius Marius and the Great Battle

It was still early when I had finished with these sights and took the long straight road to Trets on my way to Aix. The sky was very clear and cold, and the country was flat and open. For a long time, whenever I looked back, I could see the great church standing up across the plain, and it was a long time before I ceased thinking about it.

But gradually another interest began to take its place, for I was passing through country where scenes had been enacted that changed the current of history long before the legend of which my mind had been full had had its beginning. Indeed, centuries were to elapse before the legend was to emerge out of the twilight of rumour and tradition and to rest upon documentary evidence, and yet the one story seems to go back to the dim ages of history while the other far earlier one is as plain in its main facts as if it were of yesterday. For it is of the Roman occupation of this country, and our feet are on the solid rock of history.

After two thousand years, the name of the great deliverer, Caius Marius, is still alive in Provence. Twice alive, indeed, if the very legend of the Marys which permeates the country can be traced back to the tradition of the Marii, of which there seems little doubt. But to that we shall come when we visit Les Baux and the monuments there. [86]

In the year 102 B.C. Caius Marius gained a great victory over the Ambrons and Teutons at a spot between Saint-Maximin and Trets which I was to pass that morning. It was one of the decisive battles of the world, and to judge by the number of the slain one of the fiercest. You may read all about it in Plutarch, and here on the very spot you may follow the details of the parallel march of the Romans and the barbarians until they came to the place of the great slaughter, with recognition at every step, finding indeed here and there actual traces of the battle itself. Certain doubtful points have been cleared up and the story told by the Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould, who went over the whole ground, Plutarch in hand, and published his results in a chapter of his interesting book, "In Troubadour Land."

In the year 113 B.C. the northern frontiers of Italy were threatened by a vast horde of barbarians, of whom the chief were the Cimbri and the Teutons. They did not, however, cross the Alps, but swept westwards into Gaul, carrying with them other tribes, among whom were the Ambrons. [87]

They reached the Rhône three years afterwards and defeated the governor of the Roman province. Three successive consuls were sent against them from Rome, and were also defeated. Their chiefs exalted by success consulted as to whether they should march into Italy and exterminate or enslave the Romans, but although they devastated the province they could not yet make up their minds to march upon Rome.

The Cimbri divided from the rest and poured into Spain, which they ravaged. A few years later they returned, and it was now decided to invade Italy. The Cimbri were to enter it by way of the Brenner Pass, the Teutons and Ambrons by the Maritime Alps.

The menace of the barbarians had been hanging over Rome for ten years, and the utmost consternation now prevailed. Marius was despatched into Provence, as the only man who could cope with the danger there. The barbarian horde had not yet reached the Rhône on their eastward march, but were moving slowly in that direction, and Marius had a winter in which to organize the demoralized Roman troops and to choose his positions.

In the spring, when the grass had grown enough to provide food for their horses and oxen, the barbarians put themselves in motion. Marius left the Cimbri to take their agreed-upon route to the north-east, and waited for the Teutons and Ambrons. He allowed them to cross the Rhône, and they drew up before his fortified camp at St. Gabriel on the westernmost spur of the Alpilles, and shouted defiance and insult to his troops. But he restrained the Romans from attacking them. Their ambition, he told them, should not now be for triumphs and trophies but to dispel the dreadful storm that hung over them and to save Italy itself from destruction. [88]

The barbarians made a half-hearted attack upon the Roman camp, which was easily repulsed, and then moved on. It was said that though they moved forward without pause it took them six days to pass the camp, so vast were their numbers. They were indeed nations and not only armies on the march. The cumbrous house-wagons with which they moved were their homes, for their wives and families were with them, and none had been left behind.

The hot-blooded Romans were by now inured to their insults, one of which was to shout the question whether they had any commands for their wives in Italy, for they would shortly be with them. One can picture them sulkily watching from the high ground, where they were encamped, the interminable rabble moving on day after day, and wondering whether they would ever end. But directly the barbarians had passed Marius struck camp and followed them, not by the straight Roman road which they had taken along the valley, but by the heights to the south, and observed all their movements, himself out of sight. [89]

At Aix the Ambrons detached themselves from their allies to make a descent upon Marseilles. Marius had fixed upon a hill for his camp at Les Milles, four miles to the south of Aix. It was unexceptionable in point of strength, but afforded little water. By this circumstance, says Plutarch, they tell us he wanted to excite his soldiers to action, and when many of them complained of thirst he pointed to the river Arc, which ran close by the enemy's camp, and told them that thence they must buy water with their blood.

It was this lack of water that precipitated the contest. The soldiers obeyed the order first of all

to fortify their camp, but the servants of the army could not be restrained from going down to the river for water. Some of the enemy were bathing in the hot springs that well up in this place, others were eating. These were cut off by the camp-followers, others came to their assistance, and the Roman soldiers rushed down from the hill to rescue their servants. The engagement became general, and the Ambrons were beaten with great loss, the river being choked with their dead.

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This was a good beginning, but the Romans spent the night in fear of attack, for their camp was not yet fortified. "There remained yet many myriads of the barbarians unconquered; and such of the Ambrons as escaped mixing with them, a cry was heard all night not like the sighs and groans of men, but like the howling and bellowing of wild beasts. As this came from such an innumerable host the neighbouring mountains and the hollow banks of the river returned the sound, and the horrid din filled all the plains. The Romans felt a sense of terror, and Marius himself was filled with apprehension at the idea of a tumultuous night engagement."

Fortunately, however, the barbarians did not attack, but after a day and a night moved on and joined the Teutons, who were passing along the road to the north of the river Arc. At this point Plutarch's narrative becomes confused, for he does not effectually distinguish the fields of the two battles, which were fought two days apart. It is here that Mr. Baring-Gould's careful investigations are valuable in elucidating the narrative.

The barbarians halted at the Roman station Tegulata, now the hamlet of La Petite Pugère, a day's march from Aix. Marius crossed the river and kept to the south of it till he reached Trets. At his rear he had a fortified camp on Mount Olympus, to the north of the barbarians was another fortified Roman camp, Panis Annonæ, still called Pain de Munition. To this he had sent the day before an officer with three thousand men, who had made their way to it protected by the range of Mont Victoire. His plan must have been made long before, from a careful consideration of the route the enemy was likely to take, and the commanding positions fortified and provisioned. The barbarians were in a trap, but did not yet know it.

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In the morning the enemy awoke to see the bulk of the Roman army drawn up on the slope of a hill to the south of their camp. They could not contain their impatience until the army advanced into the plain, and received their first setback by rushing up to attack it. Marius sent his officers among the troops with orders to stand still and await the onslaught. When the enemy was within reach they were to throw their javelins, and then, sword in hand, press them down with their shields. He knew that the slope was so slippery that the blows of the enemy would be delivered with no great force and that they could not keep any close order.

When this attack had been repulsed the Romans crossed the river and fell upon the main body of the enemy, who was beginning to form again. But at the same time the ambushed troops descended from Panis Annonæ in the rear, and panic seized the barbarians. The slaughter was terrific. Plutarch gives the number of killed as a hundred thousand of the enemy alone. Some accounts double the number, and give that of the prisoners as another eighty thousand. It is said also that three hundred thousand of the camp-followers and women were either killed or sold into slavery. It was the extermination not of an army but of a nation.

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So frightful was the carnage that the field of battle was known as Campi Putridi, and the neighbouring village is still called Pourrières. It was said that the inhabitants of Marseilles walled in their vineyards with the bones they found in the field, and that the rain which fell the winter following soaked in the moisture of the putrefied bodies and the ground was so enriched by it that it bore a prodigious crop.

"After the battle, Marius selected from among the arms and other spoils such as were elegant and entire, and likely to make the greatest show in his triumph. The rest he piled together, and offered as a splendid sacrifice to the gods. The army stood round the pile, crowned with laurel; and himself, arrayed in his purple robe, and girt after the manner of the Romans, took a lighted torch. He had just lifted it up with both hands towards heaven, and was about to set fire to the pile, when some friends were seen galloping towards him. Great silence and expectation followed. When they were come near, they leaped from their horses and saluted Marius as consul for the fifth time, delivering him letters to the same purpose. This added great joy to the solemnity, which the soldiers expressed by acclamations and by clanking their arms; and while the officers were presenting Marius with new crowns of laurel, he set fire to the pile and finished the sacrifice."^[6]

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How different from the sort of corroboration brought to bear upon the later Christian history of Provence is the fact that the spot on which this great holocaust took place two thousand years ago has lately been identified by the ashes, melted lead and other metals, and fragments of burnt pottery discovered there!

Here also was erected a monument to Marius, which existed in its entirety up to the time of the Revolution, and was then partially destroyed, one would like to know why. And here was found some five and twenty years ago a beautiful Greek marble statue of Venus Victrix, but without head and arms, which is now in the museum at Avignon. Mr. Baring-Gould considers that this proves that the monument was raised by Julius Cæsar, for there would be an indirect compliment to his own family in it. "Venus was the ancestress of the Julian race, and Cæsar perhaps insinuated, if he erected the statue, that the success of Marius was due to the patronage of the divine ancestress and protectress of the Julian race, and of Julius Cæsar's aunt, the wife of Marius, quite as much as to the genius in war of Marius himself."

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On the top of Mount Victoire, which overlooks the scene of the terrific battle, a temple was erected and dedicated to Venus Victrix. This became a Christian church, and Venus Victrix became St. Victoire. Right up to the time of the Revolution the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages ascended the mountain on March 23rd, bearing boughs of box and shouting "Victoire!

Victoire!" and Mass was celebrated. Then a bonfire was lit, and the peasants with garlands on their heads danced the farandole round it. The beautiful ancient music to which the peasants made their progress is still preserved; so hard does tradition die in this land of long memories.

I should have liked to make a stay at Trets, and to explore this country. There is so much to see in connection with the battle—the ruins of the church on Mont Victoire, the ruins of the trophy on the field itself, the traces of the fortifications on the Pain de Munition, and perhaps the very hill slope of slippery marl upon which the Romans first bore back the attacking enemy. But I wanted to get on to Aix, the first large Provençal city in my itinerary, and thence to Arles and Nîmes and the rest of the beautiful places that are like a cluster of jewels in the country's diadem. So I contented myself with identifying the mountain heights which played their part in that grim struggle twenty centuries ago.

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There was the great range running parallel to the road on the south, with Mount Aurelian rising up and overlooking Saint-Maximin, and Mount Olympus due south from the field of battle. There was the bold rampart of Mont Victoire away to the north, and the hills among which is the Pain de Munition, on the other side of the plain on which the battle was fought. I could picture it alive with the tents and wagons of the vast horde of barbarians, so soon to be exterminated, and then strewn with their dead or mangled bodies. I knew that I was looking upon the same everlasting hills as those thousands upon thousands of dying eyes looked upon centuries ago; and there was more of a thrill in that than in the sight of the blackened skull in the church of Saint-Maximin.

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For this mighty conflict happened here, without a doubt, and the plain and the hills upon which our eyes look today were a part of the happening. There is something for the imagination to rest and work upon.



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CHAPTER VII

Aix

The rain began to fall as I sat outside the inn at Porcieux, and by the time I reached Trets I was wet through. So I went to bed in an inn until my clothes should be dry, and greatly daring ordered a cup of tea. When it came it was of a pale straw colour, and its flavour would not have satisfied the connoisseurs of Mincing Lane. But it was tea, with the astringent quality possessed by that beverage alone among all infusions of herbs or berries. Wine is one of the gifts of God that in this drab world one may be thankful for, but as a beverage it palls. Of all the many drinks I enjoyed in my travels in Provence I think that cup of indifferent tea stands out as the most refreshing.

My clothes were brought up to me in an hour or two's time almost as wet as ever, and I put them on and went down into the kitchen to dry them myself. There was an enormous open hearth, but very little fire on it; but they threw on bundles of sticks, and very soon there was a hot fire. The master of the inn, his wife and daughters, the cook in his white cap and apron, who had just come in to begin his evening's work, and one or two maids, all took the most serious and sympathetic interest in the process. I hung my coat on the back of a chair, which I placed on the hearth itself, and stood by the fire, turning to it first one side and then the other, enveloped in a cloud of steam from my sopping flannel trousers. I should have thought that most people under the necessity of drying their clothes would have done so something after this fashion, but to them it seemed to show an ingenious originality, and people were summoned from tables in the *café* to stand at the kitchen door and see the remarkable sight. When I was fairly dry we all drank wine together, after which we shook hands and I went out to see the town, leaving behind me, by all tokens, an agreeable memory.

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Trets is very old, and has the appearance of being uncared for. One is so accustomed, in France, to seeing remains of historic interest cleaned and furbished up and saved from further decay, that these ruinous gateways and towers and fortifications, and narrow untidy streets with decayed-looking houses lining them, strike a dismal note. The church is partly of the eleventh century, very massive and very dark inside, and has an unfinished tower that adds to the general appearance of decay. Perhaps the rain, which had begun to fall again, had something to do with the impression that the place made upon me; I was glad enough to get away from it and take the train to Aix.

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I dined for a franc at Gardanne, and reached Aix after dark in renewed torrents of rain. But I had something to look forward to—an hotel that I knew, which would provide a hot bath, and a bag of clothes waiting for me. I had been on the road for nine days, and was ready for a little ordinary comfort.

It was dull and cold the next morning, and Aix is a city that has provided itself against heat. Its fine broad central boulevard, the Cours Mirabeau, is shaded by a double avenue of planes, which must be among the largest to be found even in this land of planes. The Place de la Rotonde, at one end of it, has an elaborate system of fountains, and there are three other fountains in the middle of the boulevard itself, one of which is fed by a hot spring. The shade of the giant trees and the splash of the water must be pleasant enough in hot weather, but the bare branches conveyed none of the charm that their foliage would give later on, and Aix seemed to me a little cheerless, though I hasten to say that that is not its true character.

Aix rejoices in the name of "The French Athens." It has always been learned, classical, and aristocratic. The streets are lined with the fine hotels of the Provençal *noblesse*, some of which are still occupied by families whose roots strike far back into history. Many of them are said to contain rare treasures of art, hidden from the public gaze in proud seclusion, and for the most part unknown to the world.

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These things are not for the wayfarer to see, but I think that if I had read M. Paul Mariéton's charming book, "La Terre Provençal," before my walk in Provence instead of after, I should have made an attempt to see some of them.

"In Aix," he writes, "you will find masterpieces in rooms scarcely furnished, mansions mouldering to decay, with staircases of honour bare and cold leading to garden courts uncultivated—unless a few vegetables for the pot are grown between staves in wine casks.

"An undoubted masterpiece, in a mansion neither cold nor bare, but full of laughter and gaiety, is the portrait of Rubens by Vandyke, which the master presented to his friend Peiresc at Antwerp. The existence of this page of genius, the most significant, it seems to me, of the great painter's work, is not suspected by the critics, and scarcely known except to a few amateurs."

In another vast Louis XIV hotel, M. Mariéton mentions a Teniers, two Van Eycks, a Vanloo, a Hobbema, and a Raphael; in another, a superb ivory Christ attributed to Cellini. And he speaks of the store of historic documents, still unpublished, to be found in these ancient houses.

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A wandering Englishman might possibly receive a welcome in some of these houses because of his nationality. Aix used to be a favourite place of residence for English people of rank and wealth. In the cathedral is a memorial tablet which I find inscribed in a guide-book as that of the wife of "sir Dolben, baronnet d'Angleterre," and of his three children, who died, the first aged seven years, the second seven days, and the third seven hours; and there is another to "sir Webb, baronnet anglais."

M. Louis de Laincel wrote thirty years ago of his childhood's memories of a very rich Englishwoman, "my lady Russel."

"This lady had the generous habit of sending magnificent presents to all the children of her acquaintance on New Year's Day. Dieu! what joy for the children, when the lackey of my lady Russel rang at the door of the house, carrying on his arm an enormous basket full of presents! What bonbons, and what delightful toys! Bonne lady!"^[7]

This was in the twenties and thirties of the nineteenth century, but it is quite likely that in this country of long memories the tradition of English generosity still remains. [102]

But there is plenty to see in Aix without invading privacies. The city itself I found not very attractive, partly for the reasons I have already given. But it is lacking in the pleasant public gardens which make so many French towns places of grateful memory: there is only one, rather small and uninteresting, on the outskirts. Perhaps it was the society of Aix that attracted our forbears; otherwise one would have expected them to prefer Avignon, or Nîmes or Arles, of the inland cities of southern France.

The large church of St. Madeleine is of the early eighteenth century, with a rather clumsy imitation Renaissance façade of the year 1860. It faces the Place des Prêcheurs, which opens out into the larger Place du Palais, on the west side of which is the fine Palais de Justice, and behind it the heavy ancient prison. A busy market was going on in this open space, and people were crowding in and out of the church for the Thursday's Mass.

It was being sung at a side altar. From the stacks of chairs by the west door those who entered would take one, slipping the necessary *sous* into the hand of the old woman in charge of them, and put it down in the most convenient place available within view of the ceremony. The organist sat at a harmonium to the left of the altar, with his choir boys about him and the congregation almost jostling his elbows. There was a sort of domesticity about the scene. One felt that all the people who came into the church so busily and familiarly thought of it as a place in which to make themselves at home. [103]

There was no such air about the fine cathedral church of St. Saviour. It gave the impression, more than any French church I have visited, that one gets in an English cathedral: of a noble monument of the past, kept in apple-pie order, but with its religious usages somewhat subordinated to its historic interest. At St. Madeleine, the little votive tablets and pictures and relics that pious souls have brought to their favourite altars for years past are stuck all over the walls of the chapels in great profusion, and with no particular regard to order. The cathedral is not without them, but they are confined severely to the neat oval tablet with a gilt frame and gold lettering on a blue or red ground, and they are disposed upon the walls or over the arches in austere devices. And there is none of the tawdriness about the altars that belongs to churches in which people make themselves at home. Indeed, the high altar, and the choir, might belong to a stately Anglican cathedral, with which the common people have about as much to do as with the furnishing of the Deanery. [104]

This cathedral church of St. Saviour is full of happy surprises. Its component parts have been built in widely different periods, but it has "come together" in the most satisfactory way, and its variety is only equalled by its beauty. The first surprise, upon entrance, is the magnificent octagonal Baptistery. It is said to have been originally a Temple of Apollo, and the eight monolithic columns that support the modern cupola are of the Roman period. Two are of granite, and the rest of porphyry, but the bases and the delicately carved capitals are of white marble. The effect of the whole structure is exquisite; it can be seen from different parts of the cathedral through intervening arches, and adds enormously to the charm of the building.

The Baptistery is to the south of the aisle that was the original church. This aisle was consecrated in 1103. The present nave, with the choir slightly out of axis, and the north aisle, were begun at the end of the thirteenth century and not finished until the sixteenth. The central nave is enclosed by walls almost entirely solid, and the effect of the narrow openings cut through them, with glimpses into the side aisles, is singularly pleasing.

The long rows of carved stalls on either side of the choir are surmounted by some very fine tapestries. The design is attributed to Quentin Matsy's, and although the guide-books call them the "Cantorbéry" tapestry, they state that they came from our St. Paul's Cathedral and were bought in Paris in the year 1656 for twelve hundred crowns. But Dr. Montagu Rhodes James, Provost of King's College,^[8] investigated the whole question some years ago, and read a paper before the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, from which it appears that there is no foundation for the connection with St. Paul's. Nor does he say anything about Quentin Matsy's, though the tapestries are undoubtedly Flemish, and of his date. [105]

In the Inventory of Christchurch, Canterbury, taken in 1540, after the suppression of the monastery, is the entry "Item one faire new hanging of riche tapestrie con(taining) vj peces of the story of Christ and our Lady." Three of them were the gift of a prior, Thomas Goldston, whose device appears in the border, and three of Richard Dering, cellarer; and on the border is part of an inscription, of which the beginning is lost: *celarius me fieri fecit anno domini millesimo quingentesimo undecimo*; ... the cellarer had me made A.D. 1511.

So there is no doubt about it. These fine tapestries hung in the choir of Canterbury Cathedral for at least a hundred and thirty years, and then they were sold and taken to Aix, where part of them hang in the choir and part in the Archbishop's Palace. They have been a good deal cut about, and Dr. James thinks there must originally have been five scenes to a piece, which would give thirty instead of the twenty-six now to be seen. [106]

Katharine of Aragon is said, but not by Dr. James, to be represented among the figures in the "Descent from the Cross," and there is a whole bevy of fair Englishwomen in the first panel of all, which represents "The Birth of the Virgin." They are portraits of ladies of the English court, and might be beautiful English girls of today, so lifelike and characteristic are they; some of them

with the sweetest young faces of a type that is as well known now as it apparently was four hundred years ago.

I tried to get photographs of at least some of this delightful work in Aix, but without success. There are postcards of the whole series, but they are evidently from drawings and not photographs of the original. In that charming picture of the English girls the faces lose most of their character and half their beauty. Let nobody who may happen to receive one of these postcards imagine that it gives a satisfactory reproduction of the original.^[9]



THE CANTERBURY TAPESTRY



THE FAMOUS "TARASQUE"

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Behind the high altar is the Chapel of St. Mitre. The life of this saint is pictured in many of its episodes in a curious painting of the sixteenth century which is to be seen there. His end was remarkable. He was beheaded but rose to his feet, picked up his head, and carried it more than a thousand paces to this very spot. You may see him approaching the cathedral, his head in his hands, and the bishop with his attendant clergy waiting for him at the door. And in the centre of the composition he is represented, still with his head in his hands, with many people on their knees around him, including the whole family of the pious Jacques de la Roque, who did not happen to have been present at the time, but who gave the picture.

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St. Mitre's tomb is upheld by two columns of soft stone, from which is said to exude moisture that cures blindness. There is a little hole in the right hand pillar in which the sweating is supposed to show itself, and during the octave of the saint many people come to do him honour and to anoint their eyes from the pillar.

In the Chapelle de l'Université in the north aisle is a moving representation of St. Martha and the Dragon, the famous "Tarasque," from which she freed the stricken country. The bull's head of this curious monster wears an expression of mildness and mournful surprise, as if it is wondering what it has done to make itself so disliked. It seems to be saying: "I was made like this; I can't

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help it; I have only followed the dictates of my nature." The tradition of the Tarasque is all over Provence, and as most of the early Christian legends are based upon Roman happenings it is probable that the dragon stands for the scourge of invasion by the barbarians, and the various rescuing saints for Marius and his Romans.

The triptych, called "Le Buisson Ardent," famous since it was exhibited in the great exhibition of "Primitifs" in the Louvre, in 1904, hangs on a wall of the nave. It is kept closed, but a few *centimes* will unlock it, and also uncover the beautiful carving of the west doors.

This very fine picture is by Nicolas Froment, a fifteenth century painter from Avignon. It has been attributed to King René, but skilful as that versatile amateur was he could never have painted anything half so beautiful. The central picture, with its exquisite and wonderfully preserved gold border, represents the Virgin and the Holy Child seated upon a great mass of foliage, from which spring little flickering flames. Beneath them is an angel appearing to Moses, who is struck with astonishment and is taking off his shoe. A flock of sheep and goats is pasturing between them, and Moses's dog, resting at his feet, turns his head to the angel with a look of interest and watchfulness. Behind is a rich Provençal landscape, with the Rhône running through it. It is a delicious picture, both in design and colouring.

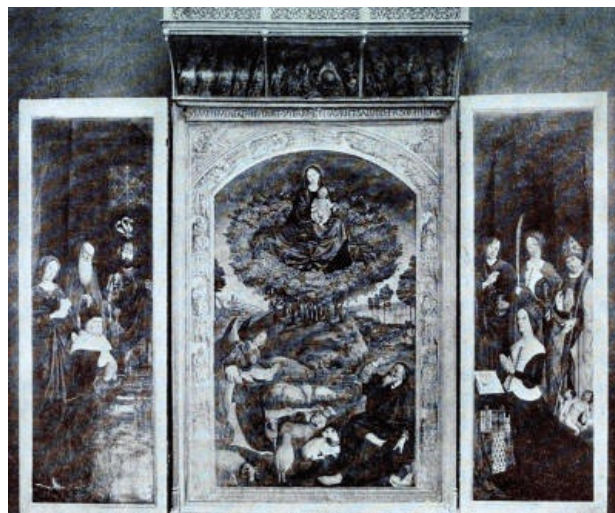
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The side panels contain portraits of King René, and of his second wife, Jeanne de Laval, kneeling—a panel to each. Above the king stand Saints Madeleine, Antoine, and Maurice, above the queen Saints Nicolas, Catharine and John, all of them evidently contemporary portraits. The old king, whose many trials and happy disposition, as well as his love for Provence, have preserved his memory as that of few kings has been preserved, is shown to us here as realistically as if we could look in on him in the flesh. It is a serious moment with him, and his mouth is set tightly above the jutting double chin. But it is not the seriousness of austerity. When he rises from his knees his face will break out into smiles, and he will have much to say about the details of the ceremony at which he has just assisted. For he was well versed in such matters, and a patron of all the arts besides.

He was like a monarch out of a book, this good King René; and he has been put into at least one famous book, though not without a touch of caricature. In "Anne of Geierstein," Sir Walter Scott describes him thus:

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"René was a prince of very moderate parts, endowed with a love of the fine arts, which he carried to extremity, and with a degree of good humour, which never permitted him to repine at fortune, but rendered its possessor happy, when a prince of keener feelings would have died of despair. This *insouciant*, light-tempered, gay and thoughtless disposition conducted René, free from all the passions which embitter life, to a hale and mirthful old age. Even domestic losses made no deep impression on the feelings of this cheerful old monarch. Most of his children had died young; René took it not to heart. His daughter Margaret's marriage with the powerful Henry (VI) of England was considered a connection above the fortunes of the King of the Troubadours. But in the issue, instead of René deriving any splendour from the match, he was involved in the misfortunes of his daughter, and repeatedly obliged to impoverish himself to supply her ransom.... Among all his distresses, René feasted and received guests, danced, sang, composed poetry, used the pencil or brush with no small skill, devised and conducted festivals and processions, studied to promote the mirth and good humour of his subjects."



LE BUISSON ARDENT



PORTE D'EYGUIÈRES

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Of his genuine skill with the brush there is a most pleasing example preserved in the Bibliothèque Méjane at Aix—a Book of Hours, of which the initial letters are beautifully illuminated by his hand. There is also a patent of nobility signed by him in a bold and picturesque manner. Whether the illuminations are authentic or not—and I have no reason to throw doubt upon them—René could sign his name, like a king and an artist.

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At the end of the Cours Mirabeau is a large statue of this merry monarch, of no great artistic value, but showing him holding in his hand a bunch of Muscat grapes, which he first introduced into Europe. It is not his least claim to memory.

We have not quite done with the cathedral. The wonderful carving of the west doors is protected by wooden covers, which have kept them in a perfect state of preservation. They are of walnut wood, and were done in 1504, seven years before Richard Dering, the Canterbury cellarer, gave that commission for the tapestries which now hang near them. In the lower parts are figures of Ezekiel, Daniel, Isaiah and Jeremiah, each under a rich canopy; and above them are the twelve Sibyls, each of a different nation and with appropriate symbol. The borders of fruit and flowers are exquisite. There is hardly a finer piece of wood-carving on a large scale to be seen anywhere than on these massive doors, and they and the triptych should on no account be missed by any one who finds himself in the cathedral.

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The portal that enshrines these beautiful doors is of the same date, and is quite worthy of them. There is a charming figure of the Virgin and Child on a pedestal between the doors. The lusty, well-grown baby is held upon his mother's arm, and she looks at him with smiling pride, as mothers do all the world over.

The cloisters should also be visited, for the sake of the carvings on the double rows of pillars that hold up the arcading, in which the sculptors have let themselves loose in all sorts of luxuriant fancies. They are hardly less interesting than those in the famous cloisters of St. Trophime at Arles.

Aix is rich in pictures, besides those in the churches. I spent a pleasant rainy afternoon in the Museum, and found a great deal to interest me. Not to mention the very fine examples of the "Primitives," there are several pictures by Ingres, including the richly coloured "Jupiter and Thetis," and the very interesting portrait of Granet.

But it was my discovery of Granet himself that gives me my pleasantest recollection of the Aix Museum. There is a whole room devoted to his pencil and water-colour drawings, which contains also many of his best known paintings. His subjects are something of the same as those of Wilkie, who was his contemporary, but in his composition and beautiful effects of lighting he seems to me an incomparably greater artist. He was a native of Aix, and died there in 1849. I was told by an old gossip at Avignon that he was servant in the house of a rich amateur painter, and that he used to lock himself into his garret, whenever he had a moment to himself, to make his own experiments. One day his master looked through the keyhole and saw what he was doing. He might, said my gossip, have been struck with jealousy. But he was of the *noblesse*. He was struck instead with admiration of the work that he beheld—probably after having knocked at the door—, greeted the valet as *his* master, and assisted him to make his career.

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The late afternoon was fine. I walked all about the town, visited the remaining churches, and paid due attention to other objects of interest.

Among the curiosities of Aix is the monument of Joseph Sec, which the owner of that harmonious name caused to be erected on the edge of his garden in 1792. It faces the street, and bears the inscription:

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Venez, habitants de la terre,
Nations, écoutez la loi!

It includes the figures of Themis and Moses, and among other symbols two bas-reliefs of banknotes for a hundred and two thousand francs. The whole erection is rather absurd, although it was the work of the sculptor Chastel. But probably Joseph Sec was one of those patrons of the arts who know what they want and see that they get it. I have not the smallest doubt that Chastel, who was a sculptor of merit, heard from him the phrase: "I pay the piper, and it is only fair that I should call the tune," or its French equivalent.

Joseph Sec called another very curious tune to Chastel, of which M. Mariéton tells.

He was taken into the deserted garden behind the monument—"the Trianon of the bourgeois of Aix," he calls it—and into a little Louis XVI kiosk littered with tools. In it was an old sofa, the seat of which was lifted for him to see the life-sized figure of a naked man in painted marble, with a bloodstained scar on his forehead—a dreadful, realistic representation of a workman who had been killed by a stone falling from Joseph Sec's monument.

How modern he was, this good bourgeois of Aix, who died over a hundred years ago! A taste for the arts, and money enough to indulge it! I own that I should have tried to get a glimpse of this artistic atrocity of his, if I had known of its existence.

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CHAPTER VIII

Salon and the Crau

Ever since I first saw Les Baux, on a motoring trip from the north to the south of France, I had wanted to get back to it. I saw Aix and Avignon and Nîmes and Arles at the same time, and I wanted to get back to them. But Les Baux was the *bonne bouche*. When I contemplated this spring walk it was what I was thinking of as the central point of interest of the whole expedition; and I was thinking of it all the time I was walking through the country during those first nine days.

For it sums up the whole past of Provence. It is connected with the Græco-Phœnician colonies that preceded the Roman occupation; with the Roman occupation itself, and especially with that stirring episode of the Marian defeat of the barbarian invaders; with the Christian Marian legends; almost more than any other place with the romantic era of the Troubadours; with every internal struggle of the many that disturbed the country during the Middle Ages; with the religious wars; and indeed with every movement of significance in Provence down to the time of the merging of the kingdom into that of France. [117]

After that its importance dwindled, but did not expire until much later. When it did, its ruin was so complete that it acquired another sort of interest altogether. It arouses much the same feelings now as the one-time flourishing cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, for it is almost as dead as they, and its ruins tell as eloquently of the time when it was alive. Added to which, it is most romantically situated, in the very heart of the country that is most characteristic of Provence as it is today—the Provence that lives its rich, picturesque life with an eye kept always on its rich, picturesque past; the country of Mistral, and the scenes of that moving epic in which all the poetry and glamour of Provence is garnered up: "Mireille."

I shouldered my pack once more, but was in such a hurry now to get to Les Baux that I took the train early in the morning as far as Maussane. It was well that I did so, for the rain fell heavily when I reached Salon, where I had an hour to wait.

Nostradamus, who was born at Saint-Remy, lived at various times at Salon, and died there. Out of his thousand prophecies it is not surprising that a few hit the mark, and from them he gained an immense reputation. Exactly a hundred years after his death we find Pepys writing: "Amongst other discourse we talked much of Nostradamus, his prophecy of these times, and Sir George Cartaret did tell a story how at his death he did make the town (of Salon) swear that he should never be dug up or his tomb opened after he was buried; but that they did after sixty years do it, and upon his breast they found a plate of brasse saying what a wicked, unfaithful people the people of that place were, who after so many vows should disturb and open him such a day and year and hour, which, if true, is very strange." Probably it was not true, as to the time; but he would not have risked much if he had prophesied the fact. He did, however, prophesy that a new era would begin for France in the year 1792, which was a bold shot, as it was more than two hundred years after his death; and Napoleon is said to have seen predictions that concerned himself in his writings. [118]

M. Mariéton tells of the fashion in which he seized his opportunity in the town of Salon.

Charles IX was making a solemn progress through Provence with his mother Catharine de' Medici and the little Prince Henry of Navarre. The town of Salon made elaborate preparations for their reception, and Nostradamus was asked where he would like to walk in the procession. He said that he proposed to have a little procession of his own. When the royal party appeared before the gates the queen mother looked anxiously about for the prophet, and when she saw him apart from the rest beckoned him to take up his position between herself and the king. He had been counting on something of this sort, for he had already been in Paris, and had gained a considerable ascendancy over Catharine. He was lodged in the castle during the royal visit, and invited to a solemn consultation on the subject of the stability of the royal line. Catharine wanted him to tell the fortune of Prince Henry. He was quite ready to do it, and ordered the child to be undressed, as a preliminary. The little prince thought he was going to be whipped, and filled the castle with his howls. When he had calmed down, Nostradamus boldly announced that he would come to be king. [119]

If this story is true, it shows the prophet to have been a schemer rather above his kind. Catharine had three sons still alive, and could not have been expected to welcome the announcement. Nor would the young king have been particularly pleased with it. Indeed, it may be said to have been a prophecy not altogether free from risk to the man who was bold enough to make it. But he seems to have judged human nature aright. His reputation was vastly increased by the prediction, and Catharine summoned him to Paris for the second time, which was no doubt what he wanted. [120]

The royal visit to Salon took place in the year 1564, and while the great humbug of the time was preparing for his own little private effect there must have been somewhere in the crowd that filled the streets strewn with rosemary and lavender and thyme a young man who deserved far better to be noticed. This was Adam de Craponne, who by that time had already begun his work of fertilizing the Great Crau.

Mr. Baring-Gould, in the book already mentioned, gives an interesting account of this "little Sahara in Europe," which occupies 30,000 acres.

"At a remote period, but, nevertheless in one geologically modern, the vast floods of the diluvial age that flowed from the Alps brought down incredible quantities of rolled stones, the detritus of the

Alps.... This rubble, washed down from the Alps, forms the substratum of the immense plain that inclines at a very slight angle to the Mediterranean, and extends for a considerable distance below the sea.... There is a break in the chain on the south, between the limestone Alpines and the sandstone Trévaresse; and the brimming Durance, unable to discharge all her water, choked with rubble, into the Rhône, burst through the open door or natural waste-pipe, by Salon, and carried a portion of her pebbles into the sea directly, without asking her sister the Rhône to help her. Now the two great plains formed by the delta of the Rhône, and that of the Durance with the Rhône, are called the Great and the Little Crau. They were known to the ancients, and puzzled them not a little. Strabo says of the Great Crau: 'Between Marseilles and the mouth of the Rhône, at about a hundred stadia from the sea, is a plain, circular in form, and a hundred stadia in diameter, to which a singular event obtained for it the name of the Field of Pebbles. It is, in fact, covered with pebbles, as big as the fist, among which grows some grass in sufficient abundance to pasture heads of oxen.'

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The singular event referred to was the fight between Hercules and the Ligurians. Hercules had used up all his arrows, and had retired to a cave in the Alpilles to make his last stand, when Jupiter came to his assistance and rained down a shower of stones which killed all his enemies. When the hero, thus miraculously aided, emerged from his cave, he saw the great plain covered with stones as it is today. Or rather, as it was; for thanks to Craponne and those who came after him the desolate area is now much circumscribed.

This legend, which is still alive in Provence, takes us back to the very earliest times. For Hercules is the Phœnician Melkarth, and wherever his name survives it is in connection with Phœnician trading, before the Greek colonization.

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Craponne's scheme was to bring "some of the waters of the Durance through the gap where some of its overflow had flowed in the diluvial period, by a canal, into the Great Crau, so that it might deposit its rich alluvium over this desert of stones. He spent his life and his entire fortune in carrying out his scheme, and it is due to this that year by year the barren desert shrinks, and cultivation advances."

There are few things more interesting to learn about than the bold works by which man gets the better of nature, or rather sets nature to work to correct, as it were, her own mistakes. About a hundred years later than this, Vermuyden, the Dutch engineer, started draining the Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire fens, a work of even greater magnitude, which gave England some of its richest agricultural land. The draining of Holland was already a thing accomplished; the draining of the Romney marshes in Kent and Sussex was partly effected before the Roman conquest of Britain. Of late years Australia has dammed up a great river, and turned a dry valley into a lake over two hundred feet deep, from which land will be irrigated as many miles away.

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In all these great works, varied in means but the same in intention, the thing to be done is as simple as a child's diversion of water on the sloping sands of the seashore. What he does with his wooden spade, digging his channels and building up his banks, the engineers do with their laborious machinery, trenching canals, and piling up the huge masses of their dams. The waters, obeying the few simple laws of their fall, do all the rest.

The greatest of all these works, and one of the simplest in idea, was the damming of the Nile at Assouan. More than two thousand years before Christ the yearly rise and fall of the great river began to be recorded, but it was not until four thousand years later that the action was adapted to man's more effective use. The natural laws are there waiting, always to be trusted. There is no scale too great, as there is none too small, upon which they can be applied.

The result of this slow fertilization of the Provençal Crau is plain to be seen from the line that skirts it on the way to Arles. There are great plantations of olives, each tree clipped and pruned like a rare shrub in a conservatory, every branch and almost every twig at an even distance from the next, so as to get the maximum of air and sun to the buds and the fruit. And there are wonderful sheets of almond blossom, sometimes covering acres. As far as the eye can see on the level, the plain is of the richest. There are frequent villages and homesteads, and everywhere lines of cypresses, planted very close together and allowed to grow as tall as they please. These are to break the force of the *bise*, which blows so strongly as to scoop the crops out of the ground if they are left unprotected, and once actually carried away the suspension bridge between Beaucaire and Tarascon.

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We pattered along the little single line, while the rain still came down, but the clouds began to look a little lighter. One of my fellow-travellers was a young conscript who was on furlough from his regiment in Tunis. He was a handsome, charming-mannered youth. He said that he liked soldiering, and there was little hardship in the life. He wore his uniform when he was going on a journey, because soldiers are taken at half fares on the railways. He told me with a grin that he was liable to be court-martialled for wearing patent-leather boots, but on this line he thought he might risk it. He was inclined to be facetious at the expense of the line, and told me a story about it that I first heard some twenty years or so ago in connection with one of our own railways. And he said that it was a good deal used by companies of cinema actors; that at any time you might find yourself in the society of desperate characters prepared to do desperate deeds, or slowing down between stations so that somebody might be photographed crawling along the footboard or the roof of the carriages. The railway company had obligingly arranged for a collision not long before, being glad enough to sell some of its antiquated stock for this purpose; and in fact, if it had not been for the money made out of the cinema operators, it would have closed down long before.

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He told me something about the Crau, too. This fertile tract through which we were passing was very unlike the part that was still desert, which I should be able to see from the heights of Les Baux. It is dry and desolate, scorched by the sun in summer, but in winter affording pasturage for flocks and herds that are brought down from the Alps.

The flocks are led by wise old goats, who know every mile of their three weeks' journey; then come the she-goats, and after them the innumerable company of sheep. The dogs of the shepherds surround the flock, and the rear of the procession is brought up by asses, carrying the baggage, and the little lambs that are too young to follow their dams. Every night the great flock is shut in with hurdles, and the shepherds keep guard over them. There are said to be two or three hundred thousand sheep in the flocks that make these yearly migrations, which have been going on for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years. Pliny mentions them, and there is little doubt that the order followed in his day was much the same as it is now. For the primal industries of the world do not change much, and in this ancient land scarcely at all.

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I asked my young soldier if he had ever seen the flights of flamingoes that are said to make lovely the desert of the Crau, but I do not think that he had, although he would not say that they were not to be seen. He expressed himself with admiration and affection about his beautiful country of Provence, and especially about this corner of it, in which he had been brought up. A station or two before we reached Maussane, he got out. There was an open carriage waiting for him, and an elderly, prosperous-looking gentleman in it whom I took to be his uncle, on no grounds except that I liked to think of him during his holiday coming out from Salon to visit relations who lived in some roomy, picturesque "mas," where there was welcome and good cheer for him in the hospitable old-fashioned way of the country.

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CHAPTER IX

Les Baux

As I got out of the train the rain ceased, though there looked to be more to come, and I walked the three miles to Les Baux with the sun shining, and the birds singing among the drenched leaves of the trees.

I was faced by the craggy rampart of the Alpilles, which hang over the great plain, and were once sea cliffs washed by the Mediterranean. They are of white limestone, and rise in places to a height of close upon a thousand feet. Just at this point they thrust themselves forward in a series of fantastic crags, rising up sheer from the plain and crowned by great masses of gleaming rocks that look almost as if they had been placed there by some giant hand.

I knew that Les Baux was upon one of these crags, and thought that I remembered which it was. But there was nothing of it to be seen from the plain. The line of cliffs was quite bare; the road might have been leading over some deserted col to fairer regions beyond. No one could have guessed himself to be nearing the remains of a once flourishing city.

The road led up through a fertile valley in which there were fields and scattered houses and gardens, and some sort of a mill. The cliff rose abruptly to the right, and at a turn of the road—the green valley now lying some way below—there came into view the walls of a few houses. They were perched up high overhead, and seemed to be growing out of the cliff itself, as indeed they were; for half of this strange city is built out of the solid rock, and its ruins remain part of the cliff from which they were hewn. [128]

The road has been remade, so that it now zigzags steeply to an entrance from the north. But the foot passenger can leave it and take a still steeper track to the ancient gateway that was once the chief entrance into this eagle's aerie. It is called the Porte d'Eyguières, and is still in a good state of preservation, with the grooves of its portcullis to be seen, and a stone bearing the arms of the Lords of Les Baux—the star with sixteen rays which marks their descent from Balthasar, one of the wise kings from the East, who brought gifts to the Infant Christ.

A steep and narrow lane leads up through the still inhabited quarter of the town, past the old but rebuilt Hôtel de Ville to the place where the new road comes in and the two inns are situated. So far there is nothing particularly to strike the visitor—nothing at all to compare for picturesqueness with the old hill towns of western Provence, from which I had come. Picturesqueness is not the note of Les Baux, and in the lower quarter of the town the air is rather that of a poor village which contains the bare remnants of some past importance. [129]

But as one mounts up towards the summit of the crag this impression of something like squalor gives place to a very different one. The inhabited cottages are soon left behind. They have already been seen to be interspersed with the ruins of noble mansions, and to be themselves, for the most part, salvage from greater buildings. They line a narrow, winding street, paved with rock in which the ruts of old cartwheels are worn, just as they are in the streets of Pompeii. And now there is nothing but ruin on either side, except where part of a great house has been put into some sort of repair for the purposes of a museum. It is ruin complete and irreparable; but it is not like other ruins. There stands up a bare wall, with apertures for windows and doors; and it is seen to be, not the remains of a structure of built-up stones, but a shell of living rock, from which the inside has been scooped, like a cheese with nothing left but the rind.

Now one is on the summit of the crag. It is a wide, grassy platform, upon which rear themselves huge masses of rock cut into the forms of towers and battlements, like a giant's castle in some fantastic dream. [130]

The castle itself stands back on the northern edge of the cliff. Nearer at hand are the remains of dwellings that are nothing but caves in great jutting masses of rock. But they are caves with a difference. They are carefully squared chambers, with chimney places still showing the marks of fire, with holes into the walls that were once cupboards, with ceilings cut into so as to provide hanging for lamps. They are open to the south, and the entrances blocked with débris; but there is no doubt that they were once merely the back parts of houses, which showed fronts as well built as some of those still standing in the streets below.

The grassy height is strewn with the stones of many buildings quite destroyed, but once it contained the ordered precincts of the great pile that nothing has been able completely to destroy. It stands grim and majestic, towering over the whole mass of tumbled walls and the few roofs and chimneys that are all that remain of the rich city. One can see stone stairs and galleries high up in the rock and can mount up to some of them. The dungeon, cut out of solid stone, shows a yawning hole in the ground. It lies open to the sky, but the ribs of its vaulting are still seen springing from the corners. Two sides of a rock hard by are scooped into cells. This was the great castle dovecot. There is a little ruined chapel, its roof delicately carved.



THE CASTLE RUINS, LES BAUX



THE CASTLE DOVECOT, LES BAUX

From the summit of the castle there is a magnificent view of the great plain to the south. It includes the whole extent of the Crau; and now you can see which part of it has been fertilized, with the threads of canals running through it, and which part still remains in its stony desolation. The great lagoon, called the Etang de Berre, lies a glistening sheet almost on the horizon, and you can just descry the line of the sea beyond it. To the right you see Arles and the famous abbey of Montmajour, and the Rhône rolling its turgid waters through the plain of the Camarque, to where Stes. Maries rears its fortress church on the edge of the sea, and the holy men and women from Palestine miraculously landed. It is very far away, but there is hardly so much as a hillock between you and it.

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From here too can be seen the strange, blanched desolation of the valleys that creep up into the solitudes of these stony hills. They are strewn with gigantic rocks that take on all sorts of fantastic tortured shapes. Part of it is called the Val d'Enfer, and it is said that Dante, who is known to have sojourned in Arles, took from it the scenery of his Inferno. In the spring it is lightened with the delicate flush of almond blossom, and Les Baux is beautiful with the silvers and blues and purples of its surrounding country, and its own wild aspect of strength and desolation. But its appeal is to the past, and without some knowledge of its history it must present itself as an almost undecipherable riddle.

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We need not linger over the importance that this natural fortress had in the time of Marius, who had camps very near to Les Baux, and perhaps on the very spot; nor the story of the Christians who were driven to take refuge here by Alaric the Visigoth. The first of the long line of the counts of Les Baux who is known to history was Leibulf, who lived at the end of the eighth century. From that time, until the year 1426, when the death of the Princess Alix at last brought

it to an end, it continually increased in wealth and importance, until it vied with the rest of the royal houses in Europe. Yes; this deserted, almost forgotten city, which now contains a bare hundred of inhabitants, was the seat of princes who intermarried with the reigning families of England, France, Poland, Savoy, Nassau, Brunswick and many more. It was the centre of a principality that included seventy-nine towns and bourgs, villages, or castles. Its rulers were Princes of Orange, besides, from which our own royal house is sprung; they derived titles from Milan, Naples, Piedmont, Marseilles and elsewhere; they were kings of Arles and Vienne; Princes of Achaia, Counts of Provence, Cephalonia, Spoleto, and other places; finally emperors of Constantinople, and that this was not an empty title is shown by the fact that an embassy was sent to a reigning princess of Les Baux to treat for her rights as empress. In the twelfth century the towns owned by the prince of Les Baux included Aix, Saint-Remy, Salon, Pertvis, and the Bourg-Neuf at Arles. The possessions of "La Baussenique" already made of it a second Provence. Indeed, Raymond des Baux, who died in 1150, claimed, through his marriage with the daughter of the Count of Provence, the whole of the country, and fought for it until his death.

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There was continual fighting, with Les Baux as its centre, during the Middle Ages, and sometimes its lords were on the summit of fortune, sometimes forced to give up some of their lands. They fought with the Saracen corsairs, with the counts of Barcelona and kings of Aragon, with the counts of Anjou and Poitou, the king of Naples, and many more. They went crusading with the rest, and one of them is mentioned with honour in the pages of Froissart.

It was at the siege of La Reole in Gascony. The Earl of Derby lay before it for nine weeks, and the townspeople were so reduced by starvation that they wished the place to be given up. But Sir Agos des Baux, who commanded the troops, would not consent to this, and retired to the castle, with plenty of wine and other provisions. The castle had been erected by the Saracens, and was much stronger than the English had supposed. So they prepared to mine under it, and then the garrison grew alarmed. So "Sir Agous dycscendedde downe fro the hygh towre, and dyd put out his heed at a lytell wyndo, and make a token to speke with some of the host." Lord Derby, Sir Walter Manny and Lord Stafford came to parley with him, and he offered to give up the fortress if he and his troops might retain "our lyves and goodes saved." Lord Derby replied, "Sir Agos, Sir Agos, you will not get off so. We know your distress, and will receive only an unconditional surrender." Then Sir Agos said that he would trust to the honour of the English, and Lord Derby, commending his gallantry, granted honourable surrender to the garrison, with their armour.

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"Then they dyd on their harnesse and toke their horses, whereof they hadde no mo but sixe; some bought horses of thenglysshmen, the whiche they payed for truely. Thus Sir Agous de Baus departed fro the Ryoll, and yelded up the castele to the Englysshemen, and Sir Agos and his company wente to Tholons."

One of the bloodiest struggles of all that had surrounded Les Baux took place when the Princess Alix succeeded to its sovereignty at the age of seven, and it was twenty-six long years before she was able, as a widow, to take up her residence in her much battered but still noble castle.

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She was the ward of the Viscount of Turenne, the "Scourge of Provence," who married her at the age of thirteen to a young noble whom he thought he could use for his own purposes, which were of course to get possession of his ward's property. But Adon de Villers unexpectedly decided to fight him, and succeeded in gaining valuable support, from the neighbouring cities, and from the Pope himself, who was then seated at Avignon. Besides men at arms, the Pope launched a threat of excommunication against Turenne, who laughed at it, and said that for a thousand florins he could get more soldiers than the Pope for seven years of plenary absolution. He was not in the least particular where he got his fighters from. He allowed a robber-chief to seize and sack Les Baux itself and to murder and pillage in all the country round, and he roused the Mediterranean pirates to spread further devastation through the lands of his ward.

But, in the meantime, the Pope who had been deified died, and it happened that the King of France had a quarrel with his successor and sent troops against him under Marshal Boucicaut. When this little affair was settled Boucicaut turned his attention to Turenne, whose daughter he had married. As persuasion was useless, he besieged and took Les Baux and other towns, and Turenne was brought to his knees. He broke out again immediately afterwards, and there is no knowing how much longer the poor Princess Alix could have been kept out of her rights if he had not been accidentally drowned while he was crossing the Rhône.

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Her castle was almost defenceless, but she married again and lived in it in peace for another twenty-four years. When she lay dying, it is said that a bright star descended from the heavens and entered her room, hanging over her until she breathed her last, when it faded away. It was thought to be that very Star of the East which had shone upon the founder of her long race, now extinguished with her.

Mr. T. A. Cook, in his admirable book on Provence, from which I have chiefly drawn for the above facts, gives an account of the inventory of Princess Alix's household effects, made for the crown after her death. It makes a welcome impression of peace and luxury, which no one can feel inclined to grudge this much-tried lady after the strife and bloodshed with which half of her life had been surrounded, and shows the grim castle of Les Baux in a light that is pleasant to contemplate.

"The entrance-courtyard of the château lay to the south. The chapel of Ste. Marie, with its vaulted roof, was in the rez-de chaussée, near several large reception-rooms, with kitchens, bakery, larders, and cellars beneath them. Above were fifteen more out of the thirty-five rooms. That in which Alix died was situated in a tower, beneath a granary. It was furnished with two candlesticks of silver, with plate of silver and of gold, with many lengths of tapestry, and with fine Eastern rugs. In the oaken chests were robes of silk and velvet, of cloth of gold, and 'vair'; furs,

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belts, eight rosaries set with pearls, prayer-books, and books of hours, bound in red cloth of gold, with clasps of silver-gilt. Within the 'Chambre de la Rose' were more books of prayer, bound in cloth of gold and pearls, and set in a case of stamped leather, bound with a silver band all gilt with fleurs de lys. The chapel and its vestry were filled with rich ecclesiastical garments and plate, chalices, pattens, candlesticks, and reading-desks, in gold and silver-gilt, enriched with gems, enamel, and embroidery, a number of illuminated liturgies, and a set of tapestries, showing the adoration of the Magi, with Balthasar, the traditional ancestor of the house. In other rooms were tables with huge legs enriched with carving, long seats that opened to form linen-chests, sideboards in solid worked wood, cupboards let straight into the stone, and lined with cedar. In the larders and cellars were tuns of wine, both white and red, great store of nuts and grain, piles of salt beef and pork, rows of fishing-nets, and stronger nets for hunting the stag and the wild boar; with herds of cattle, pigs, and sheep, in the pastures below, and nearly fifty chickens. In the halls and passages were trophies of arms, cuirasses, helmets, arbalètes, coulevrines, bombardelles, lances; and swords; 'the most of them rusty,' for their day was over; the furniture was partly sold by order of the king, partly bequeathed to the Bishop of Tortosa, and partly sent over to the Château of Tarascon."

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The principedom of Les Baux now became merged in that of Provence, and a few years later the good King René succeeded to its honours. As Les Baux had been famous in the annals of the Troubadours, it is probable that he took considerable interest in the romantic place. He restored the ramparts and the towers of the castle, and made over the barony for life to his second wife, Jeanne de Laval, whose kneeling figure faces him in the Triptych at Aix. There is a charming little reminder of her still to be seen at Les Baux. In the valley beneath the fortress-rock is a square walled-in field which was once a garden. In a corner of it is a little stone pavilion with delicately carved Renaissance work, upon which time and weather have had very little effect. There was once one of these in each corner, but all signs of the others have disappeared, as well as the "knots" and parterres and treillages and the beds of sweet smelling herbs that lay between them. The one that is left is called the Pavillon de la Reine Jeanne, and if it did not, actually belong to her, which it probably did not, for she would have had her pleasure nearer to the castle, it must have given delight to some fair lady of her court, or to the wife of one of the Provençal nobles whose mansions lined the narrow streets of Les Baux. Fine as their remains show them to have been, they had no more ground attached to them than a house in a street of Mayfair, and it is agreeable to think that it was possible at this time for the ladies of Les Baux to enjoy a garden outside the fortifications, and not to be cooped up day after day within the protecting walls.

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Soon after the principality of Les Baux became merged in that of Provence, Provence itself came to the throne of France. Louis XI was on the throne, and in the last year of his reign he ordered the destruction of the ramparts and the castle of Les Baux. It was not the first time that the castle had been destroyed, and it was not to be the last. Its immense strength seems to have given it a sort of vitality that suffered dismemberment without complete destruction, and even now it seems not to be quite dead, though it is long since it was at last rendered uninhabitable. Probably on this occasion it was only the offensive and defensive parts of the castle that were destroyed, for fifty years later, during a royal progress through Provence, Francis I visited it with a brilliant train, and was entertained there by his own High Constable, Anne de Montmorency, to whom he had given the barony of Les Baux. Another royal visit, in 1614, ended in sad disaster. The Duc de Guise was entertained one Sunday in May in the castle, and at every toast that was drunk there was a salvo of artillery. Being probably a little flushed with wine, the prince announced his intention of firing a cannon himself. The cannon exploded and shattered his leg, and a few days later he was buried at St. Trophime in Arles.

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In the sixteenth century Les Baux, still in the thick of whatever strife was going forward, became the battleground of Catholics and Protestants. In 1543 Claude de Savoie, Count of Tende, who was Seneschal of Provence, took up his residence in the castle, and stayed there for a year trying to bring peace between the factions. In 1561 the Protestants got into Les Baux, and made havoc, quite in the old-fashioned way. In three months they were turned out, not at all gently. But two years later they were back again, not only free to practise their religion, but with the governor, Jehan de Manville, a convert to it. He converted part of his house into a chapel to the Huguenots. The house is in ruins, but there is enough left to show what a fine one it was, and among the remains is a pedimented Renaissance window of the chapel, with the famous Reformation motto carved over it in stone: "Post Tenebras Lux," and the date 1571.



PAVILLON DE LA REINE JEANNE



HUGUENOT CHAPEL IN LES BAUX

This family of Manvilles is the most important in the annals of Les Baux after that of its titular princes. They held some sort of seignorial authority for about a hundred years, but in 1621 the fourth and last of them had to resign his rights for continuing to harbour the Protestants.

A few years later the prosperity of Les Baux departed. Louis XIII sent troops against its last seigneur, Antoine de Villeneuve, who was an adherent of the Duke of Orleans, and Richelieu ordered the final destruction of the castle.

This time the work was done thoroughly. But the stout old pile made a resistance of its own. It

took a month to demolish it, and gunpowder had to be used to blow it up. And even now there is a great deal of it left.

After that Les Baux steadily declined until it became no more than a refuge for a handful of peasants, who squatted amongst the ruins, fed their sheep where the grass grew over the castle courts, and cultivated a few fields outside. But it kept one church out of its five or six, and has always had some sort of corporate life. It is a little more prosperous now, because of its visitors; but compared with its rich past the life is a mere trickle, and only the ruins remain to tell of what it once was.

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CHAPTER X

Les Baux (continued)

Mr. Cook had written of the inn at Les Baux that lunch was "a perilous adventure, and any other form of hospitality impossible." This did not frighten me, because when one takes a pack on one's back one drops a good many prejudices. Read what the inns were like when Smollett travelled through France, or Casanova, or Arthur Young. Probably the inn at Les Baux, when Mr. Cook visited it, would have seemed to an eighteenth century traveller a most desirable place of entertainment. At any rate, the reproach is now removed altogether, for there is an excellent inn at Les Baux. It is called the Hôtel de la Reine Jeanne.

The other inn is called the "Hôtel de Monte Carlo," which recalls a curious episode in the history of Les Baux—the last in its long history.

It was after Richelieu had wrecked it, and was caused, says Mr. Cook, by the ambition of Spain to become possessed of Monte Carlo.

"The young Honoré de Grimaldi, seeking the protection of Louis XIII, who had no desire to see the Spaniards conveniently planted between Genoa and Nice, so near to his own territories, arranged by the Treaty of Péronne for the independence of Monaco, and the protection of a French garrison, in 1641, together with sufficient lands in France to compensate for the loss of any Italian revenues confiscated by Spain. Grimaldi got the Spaniards out of Monaco by a cleverly audacious ruse, and was rewarded by lands in France which were called his Duchy of Valentinois; and in 1643 Les Baux was created a marquisate in the possession of the Grimaldis, Princes of Monaco, and Dukes of Valentinois. The title that had been held by Diane de Poitiers, and by Cæsar Borgia, added perhaps the last touch of sinister romance that was needed to complete the history of Les Baux. A little country pleasure-house, beneath the ruins of the fort, was enough for the Grimaldis; and even that was knocked to pieces by the Revolution, which also cut down every forest on the mountain-slopes."

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This "Hôtel de Monte Carlo" used to be called "A la Chevelure d'Or."

Some years ago when the pavement of the church was undergoing repair there was found the body of a beautiful young girl, wrapped in a mantle of her own golden hair. It fell to dust when exposed, all but the long strands of hair which the innkeeper possessed himself of and displayed in his tavern. When he left Les Baux he took the "Cabelladuro d'Or" with him, but a tress of it is now in the Musée Arlaten at Arles. The rock beneath the church is honeycombed with graves of the knights and ladies of old time, and this fair girl is supposed to have been the Princess Stella of Florence, who came to Les Baux to marry the Reine Jeanne's seneschal, but died instead, and was buried beneath the stone on which she would have stood to be wedded. A sad little story, very real at the time, then forgotten for four hundred years, and now again real enough to touch the heart!

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All that afternoon and evening I wandered about among the ruins of the deserted city. I call it deserted because the greater part of it is actually so, and the life of the part that is inhabited is so different from the life it once enshrined that it has little power to change the meaning of the old buildings in which it shelters.

The church is perhaps an exception, for so many churches as ancient as this have survived. But if you sit in its darkness and silence for a time the present drops away from you and you are back again in the days when it rang with the tread of mailed knights and rustled with the silks and satins of their ladies. It has been clumsily enough restored without, but inside it is much as it was centuries ago. The south aisle is the oldest, and it has three chapels, as well as an altar, scooped out of the living rock. Mr. Cook reminds us of Dumas' visit to it. "As he entered the little, cold, dark building (in the days before its restoration) he heard a sound of sorrow at the eastern end. Upon an open bier, before the high altar, lay the dead body of a little girl. Her two tiny sisters knelt on either side. Her mother sat crying in a corner, and continued sobbing after the good Alexandre had thrown her his whole purse. Her little brother tried to toll the bell for a service at which no priest was present. A dozen or so of beggars had looked in to see the sight. They comprised the whole population of Les Baux."

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In front of the church is a terrace overlooking the valley in which is the garden with the pavilion. In one corner of it are the ruins of a chapel of the White Penitents. On the other side the rock rises sheer and steep, and in it is hollowed out a semi-circular cistern called the Deïmo. Into this the vassals of the Lords of Les Baux poured their tithes of wine and corn and olive oil.

One can picture this terrace on a sunny spring morning filled with the people who had just come out from hearing Mass in the church. They would linger awhile to gossip by the stone parapet, or round the steps of the cross in the middle of the little *place*, before they went off to their fine houses in the narrow streets. Les Baux was a favourite residence of the Provençal nobility in its more peaceful days. Hardly less interesting than the ruins of the castle and the older houses are those of the fifteenth and sixteenth century mansions, with their noble proportions and their rich decoration.

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One of them, hard by the church, is still standing, and is used as a school. You can get permission to see its vaulted frescoed hall. It belonged to the noble family of the Porcelets, the origin of whose name is legendary.

A proud lady of the family drove away a beggar woman, rebuking her for bringing into the world more children than she could provide for. The beggar chanced to be a witch, as so frequently happened in such circumstances, and prophesied in return that the lady herself would

bear as many children as there should be little pigs in the litter of a sow that was near them. The sow produced nine *porcelets*, and the lady as many children, who with their descendants were thenceforward called Porcelet.

If only one could catch just one glimpse of the place as it was in the days of high romance! It would be impossible to dip anywhere into the history of song and chivalry in the south during the Middle Ages without coming across mention of Les Baux. Some of its princes were noted Troubadours, knights and ladies thronged its Courts of Love, and the names of its queens ring musically through the poetry that was made there. Passe-Rose, Douce, Etiennette, Adélasie, Briande, Clairette, Barbe, Aybeline, Baussette—how sweet they sound! And there are stories to be told of all of them.

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Characteristic of the times is that of the fair Azalais, wife of Count Barral des Baux. Her charms were sung by the famous Troubadour, Foulquet of Marseilles, but "neither by his prayers nor by his songs could he ever move her to show him favour by right of love." Whether or no he actually transferred his affections to his lady's young sister-in-law, Laura, or only pretended to do so, Azalais took umbrage, and "would have no more of his prayers or fine words." So, "he left off singing and laughing, for he had lost the lady whom he loved more than the whole world." But his homage continued, and we hear no more of Laura.

Barral des Baux grew tired of his countess and divorced her, but Foulquet, in spite of his friendship with her husband, maintained his allegiance to Azalais. At last he wearied of his fruitless sighing, and took the cowl. He rose to be Bishop of Toulouse, and his name lives, not as one of the greatest poets of his time, which he was, but as the cruel persecutor of the Albigensian heretics.

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As one mounts towards the summit of the rock one sees the ruins of yet other churches and chapels, and on the grassy plateau is a wide space that was once used as an arena for bull-fights, but before that was the site of a hospital for lepers, of which there were many in Les Baux during the seventeenth century. In the foundations of the walls that are left can be seen the recesses for the beds of the patients cut into the rock.

It rained a good deal that afternoon, but as I was standing on the summit of the rock in the evening, looking out over the plain, the sun sank into a clear belt of sky between the clouds, and the whole wide landscape, with its encircling hills, was bathed in a glory of golden light. I turned, and almost held my breath at the beauty that was revealed to me. The setting sun had caught the ruins of the castle, and it was glowing in the unearthly light, like a fairy palace, while the walls and roofs below it were still in shadow. The deep blues and purples of the hills beyond were indescribably lovely. I could not expect to get a reminder of their beauty; but the castle, standing out like that—I might get it in a photograph. I turned and ran down the steep street to get my camera. I had carried it about with me all day, but had left it behind for my evening stroll. As I hurried up to the top again, the sun was just touching the lower bank of heavy cloud. As I ran towards the first place from which I could possibly get a view, the light slowly faded from the towers and battlements; as I reached it, it died away altogether. The ruins were once more cold and grim and forbidding.

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It was the more disappointing because it is very difficult to get any view of Les Baux that is characteristic of the place as a whole. The castle stands up boldly from the north-east, but even there the rock on which it is built does not show its height. The view of the town taken from the castle gives some idea of its situation, with the rocks on the other side of the valley and the plain spread out below; but it is only a fragment, after all, and the only photograph I took of it that "came out" was when there was a driving scud of rain that blotted out the view, and shows few details of the foreground.

Another trouble came upon me that night. I was walking through a narrow street in the darkness when a big dog rushed out of a doorway and made for me. I turned quickly to defend myself, and at the same time a man standing in the doorway shouted at the dog and picked up a stone to throw at it. I felt a sudden pain in the calf of my leg, and thought that the dog had bitten me, or a stone had hit me, very sharply. But it was a split muscle, and it kept me laid up in Les Baux for two days longer than I had intended. And that produced the greatest disappointment of all. On Sunday I should have gone to Maillane, on my way to Avignon, and seen Mistral, who was then quite well, and who liked to see visitors. But on Monday I could not walk so far, and put off the visit till later; and on Monday Mistral was taken ill with the illness from which he died on Wednesday.



LES BAUX FROM THE CASTLE RUINS



ONE OF THE BEAUTIES OF LES BAUX

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But this further disappointment was hidden from me at the time, and I spent the next two days hobbling about Les Baux and getting an indelible impression of it, as familiarity with its nooks and corners increased. It became, by degrees, not so much a ruined city as a city of ruined houses, with a character to each. There are many intersecting streets and lanes, and as one poked about them here and there, some faint shadow of reality made itself felt above the destruction. Little bits of staircases, windows, hearths, chimneys, stood out from the mass of heaped stones. One could imagine the houses whole and clean and occupied. From some life seemed only recently to have departed, though they had been left to decay for centuries. The ghosts of the men and women of the past were very near to showing themselves, especially at dark, when what is preserved and what is destroyed was difficult to distinguish.

I spent much time on the quiet grassy summit of the rock. A few sheep are fed there, and the shepherds watch them, as they always do in this country, sitting in the shade of some ruin or leaning over the rough stone parapet to look at the valley below. An old inhabitant came up to read his paper there, as he told me he did every evening when it was fine, and we saw the first swallow of the summer as we talked. The children came to cut plants for salads, busily turning over the stones and filling their wire baskets. They are very friendly, the children of Les Baux. When I had been there two years ago a slim little dark-eyed girl of twelve had shown me the church, and I had taken her photograph sitting on the steps of the cross. Now I found her grown into a young woman, and present her here as one of the beauties of Les Baux. Her name is Martha Montfort and I wondered if perhaps she was a descendant of the great Montforts. For our Simon de Montfort's father was Count of Toulouse, and campaigned it here against the Albigenses.

The people at the inn were very kind to me over my accident, provided me with embrocation and cotton wool and the best of advice, and sent me away nearly cured. Mistral had visited them in the early days of their occupancy, and had written in their visitors' book, in his fine delicate hand, the following poem:

Fiéu de Maiano
 S'ère vengu d'ou tèms
 de Dono Jano
 Quand èro à soun printems
 e soubeirano
 Coune èron autre-tèms
 S'ènso autro engano
 que soun regard courons,
 aurieu, d'elo amourons,
 trouva, j'eu benurons
 vaur fino canvouneto
 que la bella Janeto
 m'aurié donna'n mantèu

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One can get the lilt of the soft Provençal, in which the poet sings so sweetly, and with the French translation, added in his own hand, make out the sense.

Fils de Maillanne,
Si j'étais venu au temps
de Madame Jeanne,
Comme ou l'était dans sa fleur
et Souveraine,
Comme on l'était jadis,
sans autre politique
que son regard brillant,
j'aurais, amoureux d'elle
trouvé, moi bienheureux,
chansonnette si fine
que la belle Jeanette
m'eût donné un manteau
pour paraître au château.

Mistral would certainly have been rewarded if he had appeared at the castle of Les Baux in the time of the Troubadours. He sings in the same tongue, poems at least as beautiful as any that they have left behind them. He was anxious that the *patronne* of the inn should wear the Provençal costume, and I do not wonder at it, for although she is a Swiss from Valais, she has the regular features and the stately bearing of the Arlesiennes who are said to be the most beautiful women in Europe.

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I found an English artist settled at Les Baux. He had bought one of the old houses and restored part of it, a great deal with his own hands. We sat and talked in a large upstairs room with a fine open fireplace and the window open to the western valley and the hills beyond it. And on Sunday we visited the Val d'Enfer together, and the chapel of the Trois Maries, or the "Trémaïé."

The carved stone in front of which this little shrine is built—it lies under the castle rock to the west—supplies the key to much that we have already heard about. It is one of the great limestone rocks with which the hillside and the valley are littered—about twenty-five feet high, and is a semi-circular niche twelve feet or so from the ground containing the weathered carving of these draped figures, nearly life-size.

At first sight they appear to be those of three women, and for centuries the tradition has been that they were the three Marys who landed with the other saints at Stes. Maries de la Mer. But the carving is Roman, and the figures are Roman, dressed quite recognizably in togas and tunics, the right-hand figure facing us is a man, the other two are women, the one in the middle, taller than the others and wearing a sort of turban and carrying a rod decorated with foliage, though this is not easy to make out now. But it is not difficult to identify the three figures. There is a wealth of evidence to show that they are contemporary portraits of Caius Marius, his wife Julia, and in the middle Martha the prophetess who attended Marius in his campaign against the barbarians.

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"For he had with him," writes Plutarch, "a Syrian woman named Martha, who was said to have the gift of prophecy. She was carried about in a litter with great respect and solemnity, and the sacrifices he offered were all by her direction. She had formerly applied to the senate in this character, and made an offer of predicting for them future events, but they refused to hear her. Then she betook herself to the women, and gave them a specimen of her art. She addressed herself particularly to the wife of Marius, at whose feet she happened to sit when there was a combat of gladiators, and fortunately enough told her which of them would prove victorious. Marius's wife sent her to her husband, who received her with the utmost veneration, and provided for her the litter in which she was generally carried. When she went to sacrifice she wore a purple robe lined with the same, and buttoned up, and held in her hand a spear adorned with ribbons and garlands."

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The inscription below the figures has almost entirely disappeared; but enough remains to show its date, and the name of the sculptor, Caldus. Mr. Cook makes the interesting suggestion that this may have been "that plebeian partisan of Marius, who forged his own way to the front, was made tribune in 107 B.C., and won his honours by hard work like his master." For "he was lieutenant at Les Baux with Marius before he went to Spain; and in memory of his Spanish campaigns he struck the gold medals which record his rise to the consulate in 97 B.C."

Here then are the three Marii: Caius Marius, Martha Marii, and Julia Marii; and as is the way of such things they became presently transformed to the three Maries, and a whole new tradition was attached to them. There is little doubt either that Martha the sister of Mary who rid Provence of the scourge of the dragon derived from Martha the companion of Marius, who rid it of the scourge of the barbarians.

Not far from the rock of the Trémaïé is that of the Gaïé which bears the much mutilated carving of two figures which are probably those of Caius Marius and his wife Julia, or possibly of Martha.

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These two stones, and especially the Trémaïé, are from one point of view the most interesting remains in the whole of Provence; for they join on the past to a past still more remote, and a story that took two thousand years in the telling is made plain.

CHAPTER XI

Mistral

I started early on Monday morning to walk to Saint-Remy. It was fine and sunny again, but there was a touch of the *mistral*. The road winds up through the limestone crags to a *col* from which there is a view even more magnificent than that from Les Baux to the south. The undulating plain, all silver and delicate green and indigo and deep purple, stretches away on either hand, and very far away rise the snow peaks of the Pyrenees, like mountains in a dream. The Rhône and the Durance are at about equal distances to the right and left, the Durance flowing on one side of the Alpilles to join her sister at Avignon, and both these together passing the other side on their way to the sea. Beyond Avignon are the heights of the Cevennes and the Basses-Alpes to close in the picture, of which the foreground is the very heart of the rich and picturesque Provençal country.

The life of the soil, as it existed for hundreds of years, and exists still though shorn of some of its character since the days of steam, has been immortalized by Mistral, who was born in the village of Maillane a few miles off the road I was taking that day, spent all his life there, and was to die two days later. All its sweet charm is summed up in the great epic of "Mirèio," or "Mireille" published when he was twenty-five and instantly hailed by no less a critic than Lamartine as a work of genius. I had been reading it at Les Baux, in a version in which a French rendering—prepared, I am told, by Mistral himself—is printed parallel to the Provençal. It was possible to get an idea of the swing and mastery of the original verse. With some knowledge of Latin and French, with a few simple rules of pronunciation, which were given in the Introduction, and with the ear attuned somewhat to the sounds—for I had constantly heard Provençal spoken—I could take a stanza here and there and make it out. But one was carried along by the translation, even though it was in prose, and I could not put it down until I had finished its twelve books. [159]

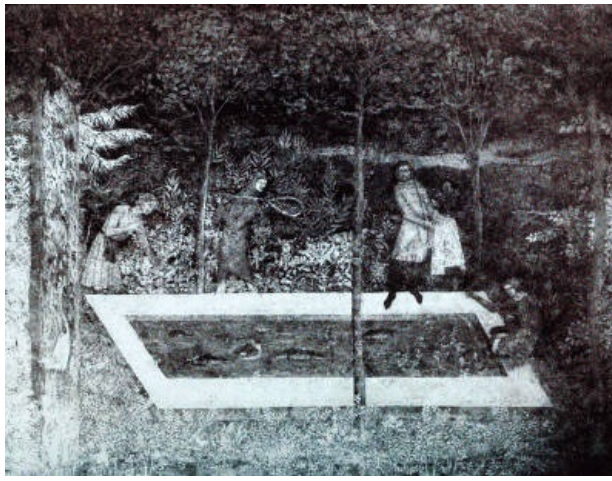
The story is of the innocent burning loves of a youth, the son of a wandering basket-maker, and of a young girl, the daughter of a rich farmer. The earliest books are full of simple and beautiful feeling for the common episodes of country life, as they unrolled themselves before the poet's own eyes at the time he was writing of them. We see the basket-maker and his son joining the master of the farm, his family, and his numerous dependents, at their meal on the long stone table under the vine-trellis in front of the house, and hear the stories they tell; we see the girls picking the mulberry leaves from the trees, and winding the silk from the cocoons, their hands and tongues alike busy; and hear wise talk of seasons and crops, and of all the active pastoral and agricultural life of the country. [160]

There come three rich suitors for the hand of the fair Mireille; a man of mighty flocks, who brings his sheep and goats down from the high Alps to winter on the Crau; the owner of troops of horses running wild on the windy marshes of the Camarque; and the strong tamer of bulls, tales of whose strength and prowess ring through the country, who fights a Homeric battle with the young lover, is defeated by him, but by a stroke of malevolent cunning leaves him for dead before he goes to his own death in the flooded river.

The after scenes have immortalized the Grotto des Fées in the Val d'Enfer of Les Baux, and the pilgrimage church of Saintes-Maries, in which Mireille dies, after hearing from the saints themselves the story of their miraculous voyage and their landing in Provence. All the scenes of the poem are laid within a few miles of Mistral's home, and neither in this poem nor in any other has he drawn inspiration except from the life and legends of his own Provence.



MISTRAL'S BIRTHPLACE, MAS DU JUGE



FRESCO IN THE PALACE OF THE POPES AT AVIGNON

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He has told the story of his own life in a charming book. His father was of the old peasant aristocracy of the country of Arles, and married his second wife, Mistral's mother, when he was already fifty-five. [161]

"One year, on St. John's day, the master, François Mistral, was in his cornfields, which the harvesters were cutting with their sickles. A crowd of women followed the reapers to pick up the grain which escaped the rake. Soon my father noticed a pretty girl who hung behind them as if she were afraid to glean like the others. He approached her and said:

"Where do you come from, little one? What is your name?"

"I am the daughter of Etienne Poulinet, Mayor of Maillane," she replied. 'My name is Délaïde.'

"What!" said my father, 'the daughter of Poulinet, Mayor of Maillane, coming out to glean!'

"Master," she replied, 'we are a large family, six girls and two boys, and our father, although he is fairly well-off, when we ask him for pin-money, says, "My dears, if you want money to make yourselves smart go and earn it." So that is why I have come to glean.' [162]

"Six months after this meeting, which reminds one of the old story of Ruth and Boaz the gallant yeoman asked Master Poulinet for his daughter, and I was born of this marriage.

"Well, then, my arrival in the world having taken place on September 8, 1830, in the afternoon, the happy mother sent for my father, who was at that time, as usual, in his fields.

"As soon as the running messenger came within hearing, he called out: 'Come, master, for the mistress has just been delivered.'

"How many?" asked my father.

"One—a fine boy.'

"A son! May the bon Dieu make him strong and wise!"

"And without more, as if nothing had happened, the good man finished his work and returned deliberately to the farm. This showed no lack of tenderness, but, brought up, and indoctrinated, like the old Provençals, in the Roman tradition, his manner showed the surface roughness of the ancient *pater familias*."^[11]

The child narrowly escaped being christened Nostradamus, but was called Frédéric instead, in memory of a poor little urchin who had carried love-letters between Mistral's parents during their courtship and had died shortly afterwards. [163]

His childhood was spent in soaking in the details of the large simple life in and about his home, and all the lore of the past that was stored up by the country people. He went to the University of Avignon, and to Aix to study law, and there gradually formed in him the purpose to devote his life to the literary revival of the national tongue, which had sunk from its proud estate as a language of high poetry to little more than a peasant dialect. He was not alone in his love for it. Other names were honoured throughout Provence of the joyous, high-mettled band that formed themselves into a society to advance their object, and made such an immense pleasure of their lives as they worked towards their end. There were sweet singers among them—Aubanel, Roumanille, Félix Gras, and others—although none whose names will live as Mistral's will; for he long outlived them all, and his fame has spread everywhere. They called themselves the "Félibres," and their movement the "Félibrige," using a word that Mistral had found in an old legend to designate the seven Doctors of the Law with whom Christ disputed in the Temple; and no one who has visited Provence needs telling how much alive the movement is. Besides his poems, and some charming stories, Mistral has produced an exhaustive Dictionary of the Provençal language, and if his fame had not been established half a century ago on the publication of "Mireille," his museum at Arles, in which he sought to gather up all the story of Provençal life, so that what has passed or is passing away should never be forgotten, would keep his memory green. It is a noble gift in itself, this museum housed in one of the ancient buildings of Arles. In 1906 Mistral was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, and dedicated it to this purpose. He wanted nothing for himself that money could buy. For eighty-four years he lived among his own people the common life of the land, and came to be supremely honoured by them all. They called him the Emperor of the South; there was no one whose name carried more weight. [164]

For the gift that he brought to his people, his grand old father of whom he draws such a delightful portrait in his Memoirs, must be accorded some of the thanks. As in the case of Ruskin

and of Browning, a parent who had no connection with literature himself fostered the early studies of the son and left him to follow his bent, while relieving him of the necessities which often smother talent, though never perhaps genius. But then Mistral's father was himself an inspiration to the work his son set himself to do when he returned to the large liberty of his home.

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"The Judge's farm was at this time a true home of pure poetry, biblical and idyllic. Did it not live and sing around me, this poem of Provence with its blue depths framed by the Alpilles? One had only to go out to be dazzled by it. Did I not see Mireille passing, not only in my young dreams, but even in person, sometimes in one of those pretty young girls of Maillane, who came to pick mulberry leaves for their silkworms, sometimes in the grace of those who came and went with bare throats and white coifs among the corn and the hay, in the olive-gardens and among the vines?

"Did not the actors in my drama, the labourers, harvesters, herdsmen and shepherds, come and go before my eyes from dawn till dusk? Could you have a finer old man, more patriarchal, more worthy to be the prototype of my Master Ramon, than old François Mistral, whom no one, not even my mother, ever called anything but the Master? My poor father—sometimes when the work was pressing and he wanted help, either to get in the hay or to draw up the water from the well, he would call out: 'Where is Frédéric?' Although at that moment I might be stretched under a willow idly pursuing some fugitive rhyme, my dear mother would reply: 'He is writing.' And immediately the rough voice of the good man would soften as he said: 'Don't disturb him.' For to him, who had never read anything in his youth but the Bible and Don Quixote, writing was almost a holy office."

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As a young man Mistral's father had been requisitioned to carry corn to Paris during the Reign of Terror, and was struck with horror at the execution of the king.^[12]

"He was profoundly religious. Every evening, summer as well as winter, kneeling at his chair, head uncovered, hands to his forehead, with his hair in a queue tied by a silk ribbon, he would pray for us aloud; and when the evenings lengthened in the autumn he would read the Gospels to his children and his servants....

"Although he would pick up a fagot on the road and carry it home; although he would content himself for his ordinary fare with vegetables and brown bread; although, in the midst of plenty, he was always abstemious, and would mix water with his wine, yet his table was always open, as well as his hand and his purse, to any poor wayfarer. Then, if there was talk of any one, he would ask first: 'Is he a good worker?' and if the answer was, yes, he would say: 'Ah, he's a good man; I'm his friend.'"^[13]

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This charming book of Mistral's and his poems, give more of flavour of Provence than anything I have read, and the link between our times and his was not even snapped by his death on the day I walked through the country that he more particularly wrote of.

He was never for long away from Provence during the eighty-four years of life, but was much lionized when he did venture as far as Paris. I very much wish that I had seen him, for his personality counted for a great deal in the movement he spent his life in fostering, and he was the last survivor of the original *Félibres*. It now remains to be seen whether the revival will continue of itself. I have heard it compared with other national revivals, fostered by intellectuals, but taking no great hold of the people, and prophecies of its decay. But I think it has life in it. Mistral would certainly not have called himself an intellectual, and he never behaved like one. He was one of the people himself, and they are fortunate to have found such an interpreter.

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CHAPTER XII

Saint-Remy

On the way up from Les Baux to the *col*, and for some distance beyond, the country is arid and cold; but the wealth of aromatic and flowering shrubs that carpet the ground in these stony regions, and the breathing spirit of the spring, gives them a charm of their own that is far removed from desolation. The road was lonely enough. A few flocks of sheep and goats clattered among the loose stones of the hillsides that were on either side, among the pines and the thyme and rosemary and the yellow brooms; and the shepherds watched and whistled to them, never very far away. A motor-car passed me as I rested at the top of the hill, and a carriage jogging along the straight road to the "plateau des antiquités" offered itself for a lift; for I was on my way to see something that every tourist in these parts comes to see, and this one was plying for hire in this lonely region in the ordinary way of business. But otherwise I had the road to myself in the early morning, and took my time over the six or seven kilometres that were all that I was yet able to accomplish.

The two noble monuments that stand in an open space a mile or so to the south of Saint-Remy, and dominate the wide expanse on all sides, can be seen long before one reaches them, from the south. The wildness of the hills has begun to give place to cultivation, but they stand by themselves with no other buildings near them, reminders of a story that has never been forgotten by the poorest and least educated of those who work within sight of them. [169]

The so-called mausoleum is the older of the two. It has an inscription that has caused considerable difficulties to the antiquarians. I need not go into the controversy, but will accept the conclusions set forth by Mr. Cook, who deals with the question in his own lucid and convincing way.

The inscription is to the effect that Sextus, Lucius, and Marcus, Julii, and sons of Caius, dedicated this monument to their parents; and within the colonnade on the top of it are two statues which have been supposed to represent these objects of filial piety. But the inscription is not less than a hundred years later than the date of the monument on which it was carved, and the probability is that some rich colonials "calmly appropriated a fine 'antiquity,' wrote their own names on it, and buried the respected corpses of their parents within a building originally intended for entirely different uses." [170]

The bas-reliefs on the four sides of the base represent a Roman triumph, and there seems little doubt that this noble monument was erected to commemorate the great victory of Caius Marius over the barbarians, on the spot where he had first met them. It was erected by Julius Cæsar, the nephew of Marius, and the two figures represent the great general himself, and Catullus, his colleague in the consulship, when their combined forces crushed the Cimbrians upon the Raudine Plain.

The Triumphal Arch, which stands close to the monument, was also erected by Julius Cæsar, to celebrate his great victory over Vercingetorix. It is the earliest Roman triumphal arch outside Italy, and there are probably only two in Rome that are earlier.



THE MAUSOLEUM, SAINT-REMY



THE TRIUMPHAL ARCH, SAINT-REMY

The photographs will show the wonderful state of preservation of the monument, as well as its beautiful details. The arch also preserves much of its detail, and the two monuments together have a striking effect. Mr. Cook draws a just comparison between these sane and beautiful relics of classical antiquity and the misery and squalor of the mediæval ruins of Les Baux. It is a comparison that strikes one forcibly throughout Provence. We shall see other examples of Roman architecture—in the Pont du Gard, the Arenas at Nîmes and Arles, and elsewhere—and in comparison with them all but fragments of the oldest churches and palaces and fortifications that came after them are things of yesterday. And yet the Roman works seem to be built to stand for ever, and tell their tale so that all may read it; while with the buildings of centuries after, the tale is confused often beyond unravelment. We know of the history that led to the erection of these "antiquities" at Saint-Remy, and the men who made them, almost as if they were things of a generation ago. Move forward a thousand years and the long history of Les Baux was just beginning. Its princes crept out of obscurity, and its stately buildings arose, to arrive at splendour through long centuries, to decay and to lie in ruins for centuries more; and all the time these other buildings within a few miles of them, whose life has been twice as long as theirs in all their phases, have continued almost in their first perfection. And you must move on for much more than a thousand years before you find the Christian legends that derived from the people and events which these monuments commemorated firmly fixed in the minds of men, and giving rise to the beautiful buildings which now vie with those of the Romans in interest. In this country, one is not allowed to forget how many hundreds of years it took for the church to produce its fine flowers of architecture, when one is continually coming across those of a civilization that was old before the Church ever existed.

Not far from these Roman "antiquities" is an interesting church and cloister of the twelfth century, but I did not turn aside to see it, as walking had now become a painful business, and it took me half an hour to limp down the long avenue that led to the pleasant town of Saint-Remy. It is a gay, clean little town, its broad streets and squares shaded by great limes and planes and chestnuts, its gardens full of flowering shrubs, and rich with beds of colour. One seems to have got back to the country about Grasse, but here the flowers are grown for seed, not for scent. Saint-Remy's chief industry is the production of seeds for the horticulturists. I should have liked to see something of it, but had to content myself with sitting still until the departure of the omnibus for Avignon.

This was a great clumsy petrol-driven conveyance in which the men stood in one compartment, holding on to anything within reach as it lurched and swayed along the road, and the women sat in another. I think it was market-day. At any rate the seated compartment was full of peasant women nursing their baskets, every window closed and the heat considerable. I might have borne that for the sake of a seat, of which there was one vacant, but when I opened the glass door between the compartments I was met with such a powerful efflux of garlic that I closed it again hurriedly and swayed and lurched with the rest until we reached Châteaurenard.

It was a charming, fertile country that we passed through, with one farm succeeding another—comfortable-looking, rambling, stone-built houses and outbuildings, shielded from the fierce winds by rows of tall cypresses, and even the fields and market-gardens fenced in with dried reeds. The *mistral* and the *bise*, when they really set to work, are a scourge. But as old François Mistral used to say when he heard grumbling about the weather: "Good people, there is One above who knows what He is about, and what is good for us. Supposing those great winds which bring life to Provence never blew, how would the mists and fogs of our marshes be dispersed? And if we never had the heavy rains, how would our wells and springs and rivers be fed? We need all sorts, my children."

At Châteaurenard we changed omnibuses for the five miles' journey to Avignon. They were mostly townspeople now who crowded the compartments. There was a family in the corner of mine—a mother with three handsome daughters who crocheted or knitted busily during the whole journey, and a father who sat silent and looked learned, but amiable. Perhaps he was a *félibre*; they are mostly learned and amiable; and Avignon is one of their chief centres.

We crossed the Durance, a broad and mighty river, soon to join its waters with those of the Rhône. The sun was setting over it, and the knitting ladies laid down their wool and exclaimed at the beauty of the scene. After another mile or so we were set down just outside the ramparts of the ancient city.

CHAPTER XIII

Avignon

Some one had told me that he had stayed at Avignon for a night while motoring down to the Riviera early in March, and had seen the Rhône under a full moon from the garden of the Popes' Palace, while the nightingales sang among the trees all around him. This information had been presented to me amidst the dreary days of clouds and thawing snow which come with the end of winter in the Swiss Alps, and the contrast was so entrancing that I had half a mind to make straight for Avignon first of all, by train. I had seen that beautiful garden, and the grand view from its terraces, with the Rhône rolling its mighty stream down below; the fabled bridge of St. Bénézet still throwing a few arches across it, with its two-storied chapel at the end of them; the forts and towers of Villeneuve a mile away on the other side; and the distant mountains closing in the great expanse of fruitful country. It was a spot to dream of and to long for.

But I think there must have been a mistake about the nightingales; or at least about the month. It was now the twenty-fourth of March, and, although the trees were beginning to break into leaf at last, I heard no nightingales in Provence. [176]

Avignon has a famous inn—the Hôtel de l'Europe—very old, very picturesque, with its archway and flower-grown court. Indeed, it is so much in keeping with all the rest that a stay there serves to heighten the pleasant memories that every visitor must carry away with him of the fascinating city. But on this journey I was on the lookout for something more retiring; and by good fortune I found something as good of its kind as I have ever happened upon.

I walked up the broad Rue de la République, with its gay and busy shops, *cafés* and picture palaces, its trams, plane-trees, soldiers and citizens, and all the life and appearance of a modern street, and came to the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville. On either side of this main artery lies the old Avignon, and I knew that I only had to turn aside from it to lose that somewhat disconcerting note of modernity, and perhaps to find my ideal *auberge*. I found it just off the *place*, very ordinary outside, and indeed in, but with a host and hostess whose sole aim seemed to be the welfare of their guests, and with cooking that would make the fortune of one of those Soho restaurants that the world occasionally discovers and flocks to for a time. Good wine, too, and all at a price that makes one wonder how these things are done. Find it for yourselves, ye travellers who want to save your pockets, and are content with a clean bed, good fare and a kindly welcome; commend me to madame, and ask her to give you a dish of *bouillabaisse*. [177]

I went up that evening, past the huge looming mass of the Popes' Palace and the cathedral to that delightful garden, with its dark foliage, gleaming sheets of water, statues and balustrades, and looked out over the Rhône and the dim country beyond. It is one of those places in which the past of a very old city seems to concentrate its memories. Whatever one knows of its history comes before one, half real; whatever is left of the city itself that is part of its history takes on its old meaning, and whatever is new is forgotten. In this corner of Avignon, the buildings round the great oblong of the Place du Palais, the ancient streets just off it, the huge rocks that lift it high in the air, the ramparts and towers and forts below, the cottages and quays along the river, the half-ruined bridge—all are of the old storied Avignon, and only the garden itself is new, though its newness takes off none of the effect of its surroundings.

The site of this garden was in papal times a barren windswept waste, with windmills and forts, and a cemetery used when Avignon was isolated by floods. When the Rue de la République was cut right through the city, the débris was carted up here and mixed with soil from the river banks, and this delightful garden laid out. Shortly after the Crimean war Marshal Canrobert planted an oak among the ilexes and cedars and cypresses that mix their dark foliage with the living green of the deciduous trees, and dedicated the garden to the use of the citizens of Avignon. [178]

It is a charming spot at all times. I found myself continually wandering up there, in the intervals of more serious sight-seeing, or in the early morning before sight-seeing began, or in the evening when it was over. Sight-seeing is really the bane of all beautiful places; one wants to see everything and is glad one has done so afterwards, but the way to enjoy a place is to live one's own life in it, for however short a time, and take the sights as they come. Unfortunately they do not come quickly enough when one has only a day or two to spare for a place that is full of them, and the only way is to make a business of sight-seeing, with whatever intervals of peace one can afford.

I did my duty the next day in spite of the rain that fell intermittently. In retrospect there are churches; crooked mediæval streets with little shrines in niches of the walls; broader Renaissance streets with handsome buildings; the immense ring of rampart, too big to make any single impression, but effective enough here and there when one found oneself at the edge of the city; the busy modern boulevards, which after a time fail to take away from the impression of the whole as a very ancient and very picturesque city; and the mighty palace so dominating everything that one is hardly ever able to forget it, however far one's wanderings take one. [179]

I think St. Agricol was the first church I visited. It is of the fourteenth century, on a very much older foundation, simple and pleasing, with a late Renaissance memorial chapel, richly and gracefully decorated, and containing some beautiful statuary. Avignon employed many sculptors of note in the days of its wealth and fame, and their work is to be found here and there, sometimes outside of a church and sometimes inside. One learns to look out for it, and gains many a little thrill of pleasure in spotting something true and right and beautiful, among a good deal that is commonplace. The same may be said of the paintings of which the churches are full,

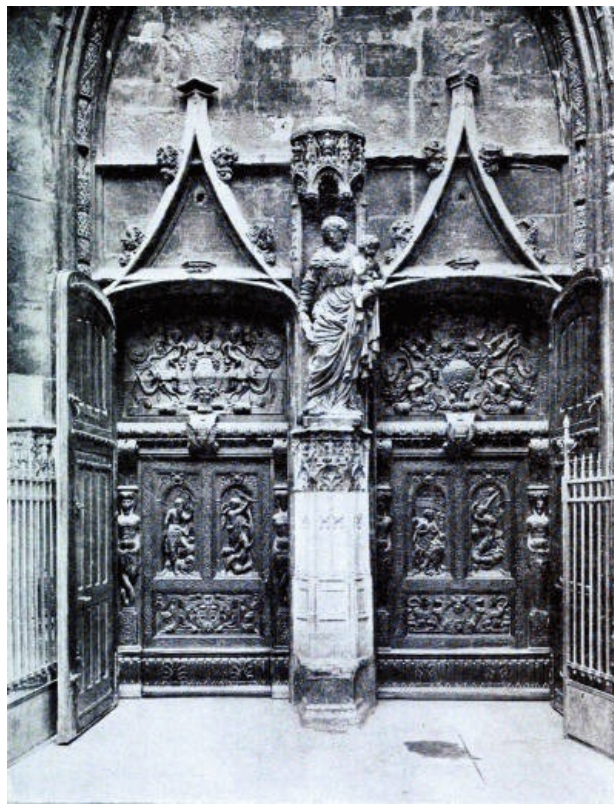
but both buildings and pictures are apt to be dark, and without a great deal of trouble it is difficult to pick out the good from the ordinary. Probably the best are in the Musée, and some of those are so fine that one is content to enjoy thoroughly a few, and let the rest go by.

St. Agricol was rather busy on the morning I visited it. In one of the side chapels a number of small boys were awaiting their turn at the confessional box. They sat on wooden benches, their bare legs dangling, and occupied themselves as is usual with small boys on their best behaviour, not making too much noise and ready to be diverted by anything in the shape of novelty that came their way. When I came unexpectedly upon them they showed great interest in me, but the opportunities for comment that I afforded were immediately displaced by something much more worthy of attention. The great west doors were opened and a coffin was carried in and laid in the chancel. There was a muttered service lasting a very few minutes, and silverheaded *aspersoirs* were handed from one to the other of the scant body of mourners. Then the untidy-looking men with their cloth caps on their heads lifted up the coffin and almost ran with it down the church, led by a cocked-hatted functionary whose aim seemed to be to get the whole business over as quickly as possible. It was the briskest funeral I have ever seen. [180]

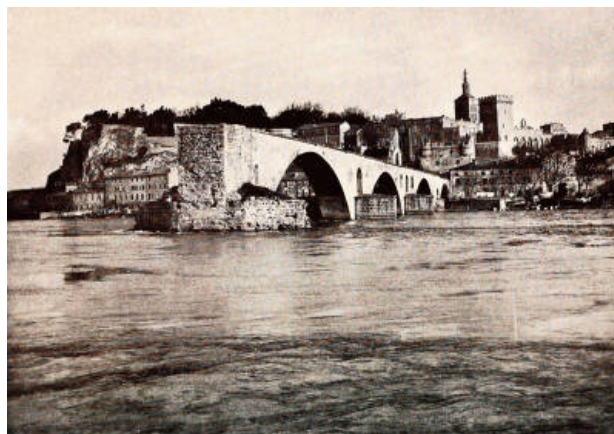
After that, the church rapidly filled up with crowds of children, and the small boys from the side chapel, relieved of their burdens of sin, clattered in to join the rest. A handsome, cheerful-looking priest mounted the pulpit and began to address them and ask them questions. He very soon had them interested, and the church rang with their eager answers and not infrequent laughter, as he cleverly led them from one point to another, and caught and threw back every word that he drew from them. Just as I was going out of the church a mischievous urchin poked his head in at another door and shouted something opprobrious, then ran away as fast as his legs would carry him. The priest was as ready for this interruption as he had been for the calls of his flock. He said something too quickly for me to catch, and the whole churchful of children shouted their applause. [181]

More beautiful than St. Agricol is the church of St. Pierre. Its fine Gothic front, completed early in the sixteenth century, shows a wealth of delicate carving, and it fronts a picturesque *place* which enables one to get its full effect. The façade is worth examining in detail, with the luxuriant carving, round the portal, of vines and oak leaves and acorns and little figures engaged in all sorts of agricultural pursuits. I did not see the carved sixteenth century doors, which are protected in the same way as those of the cathedral at Aix, but in a niche between them is a lifelike eighteenth century statue of the Virgin and Child—the Mother, tender and matronly, bending forward and holding up her flowing drapery—which is well worth noting. Very attractive is the little plane-shaded *Place du Cloître*, approached under an archway to the north of the church. The old ecclesiastical buildings have been taken possession of by all and sundry, and are alive with the signs of modern habitation—clothes fluttering, gay pot-flowers in windows of old grey stone, children playing under the trees. But it is a sweet and peaceful spot in the midst of a busy city, and its cloistered charm still hangs to it. [182]

I visited this church several times during the days I found myself in Avignon, between journeys. It has the same sort of interest as the churches one goes in and out of in Italy, though to a less degree than the finest of them—a sense of perfection in the whole, and a good deal that is worth looking at in detail. There is a lovely little Gothic pulpit of white stone, with statues of apostles and saints under delicately carved canopies; richly carved and gilded woodwork in the choir, which frames a series of dark but decorative pictures; a Renaissance altar-piece with a relief of the Last Supper; some really fine pictures by the best-known artists of Avignon—Nicholas Mignard, Simon de Châlons, Pierre Parrocel, and others. But the most human and pathetic possessions of this church are the cardinal's hat and tunic of St. Pierre de Luxembourg hung up in a glass case in one of the side chapels.



**SIXTEENTH CENTURY DOORS AND VIRGIN AND CHILD OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY,
ST. PIERRE, AVIGNON**



THE PONT BÉNÉZET

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This infant phenomenon of the Church had won fame in Paris for his learning and piety at the age of nine. At fourteen, already a bishop, he was made a cardinal, and summoned to the papal court at Avignon by Clement VII, in order that his fame might convert the Urbanists to the Clementine obedience. His reputation spread throughout Christendom, and was enhanced by the stories of his extraordinary self-disciplines. The poor child caused himself to be scourged as he was lying on his deathbed, and gave orders that he was to be buried in the common cemetery of the poor. His shroud and vestments were torn to shreds, and even the bier broken into fragments for relics, and countless miracles were wrought by the touch of his body and afterwards at his grave. Three thousand of these were attested by the papal commissioners, not of the common sort, it was explained, such as "recovery from fevers and such trivial ills, but the blind were given sight, the deaf heard, the dumb spake, and, what is more, the dead were raised to life."

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This boy-bishop was canonized a hundred and fifty years after his death. Now he is forgotten, and his relics hang there dusty and neglected. Baedeker does not even mention them, though Joanne does. There are none of the signs of devotion and remembrance that are shown to saints of popular memory, no candles or other offerings. The Church itself seems to have forgotten him. Has the efficacy of his self-tortured life died out, or is there still virtue in these relics of his principedom, which is there for any one to whom it may occur to draw on it?

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In the rather dark church of St. Didier is a notable work of art formerly known as the *Image du Roi René*, for whom it was executed. It is a relief in marble representing Christ bearing the Cross, with a figure of the Virgin on her knees in the foreground, and a score or so of other figures, with an architectural background. Its realism is striking, and rather painful, but it should not be missed, for it is one of the earliest sculptures of the Renaissance to be seen in France. High up on the wall opposite to the chapel in which this relief is half hidden is a beautiful Gothic pulpit, or tribune, which is also worth notice. Probably it was not used for preaching from. Mr. Okey in his admirable historical and descriptive account of Avignon, suggests that it was built for

the exposition of relics.

St. Didier has a fine tower and belfry, which draw the eye when one looks down upon the roofs of Avignon from the heights above. There are not many left now of the two or three hundred towers that were there before the Revolution, and of the sixty churches or chapels there are only eighteen, not all of which are intact, or used for their original purpose. But there are many curious "bits" still left in Avignon, which one continually comes across as one strolls about the streets—noble fronts of rich mansions, carved porches and doorways, innumerable ancient streets of smaller houses, which have remained almost untouched, and here and there a church or a single tower that has escaped destruction so long that one hopes it will be preserved for ever.

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Avignon, indeed, would be interesting enough if its great lions were left out; as it is, they dwarf everything else, and perhaps an apology is needed for dealing with the parish churches before the cathedral and the Palace of the Popes. But before we give ourselves over to the big things of Avignon, let us finish with the smaller.

Every one has heard of the Bridge of St. Bénézet, and the old jingle:

*Sur le Pont d'Avignon
L'on y danse l'on y danse,
Sur le Pont d'Avignon
L'on y danse tout en rond.
Les beaux messieurs font Comm' ça,
Et puis encor Comm' ça.
Sur le Pont d'Avignon
L'on y danse tout en rond.*

It was a stupendous work of its time, which even the Romans seemed to shirk; indeed, so great that it was necessary to assign it to a supernatural origin. The story was told by order of Friar Raymond of the Bridge, and sealed by the Pontifical Rectors.

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When Benet was a young child and was watching his mother's sheep, the voice of Jesus Christ came to him ordering him to build a bridge over the Rhône, which until then he had never heard of. An angel in the guise of a pilgrim led him to the place where the bridge was to be built and telling him to cross the river and show himself to the bishop and the townspeople of Avignon, vanished from his sight.

The ferryman was a Jew, and scoffed at his prayer to be taken over the river for the love of God and Our Holy Lady Mary, but Little Benet gave him the three farthings which were all his worldly wealth, and he ferried him across.

Little Benet interrupted the bishop's sermon by announcing his mission. He was led to the provost of the city to be chastised, and announced it also to him. The provost reviled him but said that if he could carry away a certain stone which he had in his palace he would believe that he could build the bridge. The bishop and all the townspeople looked on while he raised the stone, which thirty men could not have moved, as easily as if it were a small pebble and carried it away to form the foundation stone of his bridge.

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So, with a gift of money from the repentant provost, and more from the townsfolk, and with the usual miracles of healing and raising the dead to life, the bridge was begun, and Little Benet hailed as a true saint.

The pretty story, which is given in full, translated from the Provençal, in Mr. Okey's book need not be rejected entirely. There *was* a Little Benet, as well as a Great, and he was instrumental in building the bridge. For he was chief of a community of Friars Hospitallers founded at Maupas, near Avignon, in 1164, "to establish ferries, build bridges, and give hospitality to travellers along the rivers of Provence."^[14]

One of the most attractive exhibitions of religious feeling in the Middle Ages, among a good many that are not at all attractive, was this undertaking of works of necessity by men of piety who believed that they were doing service to God by doing service to men. "Travellers were considered as unfortunates deserving pity," says M. Jusserand in his "English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages," in which there is much interesting information about the building and preservation of roads and bridges, "and help was given to them to please God."

Thus, when Henry VIII gave the lands of the dissolved monastery of Christ Church to Canterbury Cathedral, he declared that he made this donation "in order that charity to the poor, the reparation of roads and bridges, and other pious offices of all kinds should multiply and spread afar." It is probable that the Frères Pontifes, taking their pattern from the Collegium Pontificum of Rome, owed their Christian impetus to St. Benet of Avignon, for his is the first society of its kind that is known, though it was soon copied all over Europe. It took him eleven years to build the bridge, and he also built the chapel of St. Nicholas that still stands upon it. He was buried in this chapel, and his body remained there for five hundred years. But the great floods of 1669 so shook the structure that his remains were translated to a chapel at the end of the bridge, thence to the church of the Célestines, and finally at the Revolution, into the church of St. Didier.

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Is it too fanciful to suppose that there is some foundation in fact for the legend of his beginning his great work as a child? I like to imagine him filled with his great idea as he walked by the side of the Rhône as a boy, talking about it and being laughed at, gradually forming a strong purpose, and finally bringing it to a triumphant issue. It reminds me of Dickens, as a poor child, passing the mansion of Gad's Hill and making up his mind that he would some day live there.

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The bridge passed through many vicissitudes. It was much quarrelled over, and seems to have been kept in fair repair whenever the Church's rights in it were recognized, but let go when it was in the hands of the laity. It has been in ruins now for two hundred and fifty years, but the few arches that remain show how well Little Benet and his bridge-builders did their work; and as it stands now it is one of the most picturesque features of the beautiful city.

CHAPTER XIV

The Palace of the Popes

"No one who did not see Avignon in the time of the Popes has seen anything. For gaiety, life, animation and one fête after the other, there was never a town like it. From morning till night there were processions, pilgrimages, streets strewn with flowers and hung with stuffs, disembarkings of cardinals from the Rhône, banners flying, galleys gay with flags, the soldiers of the Pope singing Latin in the squares, the begging friars swinging their rattles. And from top to bottom of the houses that pressed humming round the great papal palace, like bees round their hive, there was the *tic-tac* of the lace-makers' bobbins, the flying shuttles that wove cloth of gold for the chasubles, the little hammers of the metal-workers who made the chalices, the sound-boards being adjusted by the lute-makers, the songs sung over the looms; and above it all the pealing of the bells, and always the beating of tambourines down by the bridge. For with us, when people are happy they must dance, they must dance; and as in those times the streets of the town were too narrow for the *farandole*, fifes and tambourines posted themselves *sur le pont d'Avignon*, in the fresh air of the Rhône, and day and night *l'on y dansait, l'on y dansait*. [191]

"Ah, happy time! happy town! Halberds without an edge; state prisons in which wine was kept to cool! Never any scarcity; never any fighting! That was how the Popes of the Comtat knew how to rule their people; and that is why their people have missed them so much."

Thus Alphonse Daudet, a true son of Provence, draws his picture of papal Avignon, in that delicious story of his, "La Mule du Pape." As for the freedom of Avignon from war, during the seventy years that the Popes had their seat there, history would hardly justify the people of Avignon in regretting them on that account; nor probably were the dungeons of the papal palace lacking in tenants even at the best of times, for it was a cruel age, and the pleasures of the best of Popes would not have been greatly disturbed by the thought of men rotting in misery beneath the hall in which he was feasting. But the experience of all times of strife is that life goes on side by side with fear and danger, and merrily enough when the weight is lifted ever so little. Very likely Daudet's picture of Avignon enjoying itself is true enough. Clement VI, to whose time his story would refer, if it were intended to refer to any particular pontificate, was not much like the kindly old man who fed his mule with spiced wine, and advanced the adventurer who admired her, but neither was he like what a Pope would have to be nowadays. [192]

"Generous and open-handed," writes Mr. Okey, "a thousand hungry clerics are said to have crowded into Avignon seeking preferment, none of whom went empty away; for no suitor should leave a prince's court, said he, unsatisfied. Exquisitely polite and courteous, Clement had a gracious amenity of manner. Accustomed to the society of noble ladies, his court was crowded with fair dames and gallant knights; his stables were filled with beautiful horses; his hospitality was regal and his table loaded with rich viands and rare wines. The fair Countess of Turenne, his constant companion, disposed of benefices and preferments, and her favour was the surest avenue to fortune. No sovereign of his time kept so brilliant and expensive a court, and when one of the cardinals remonstrated and recalled the examples of Benedict and John, he replied magnificently: 'Ah! my predecessors never knew how to be a pope.' Clement relaxed the rigid constitution of Gregory X, *Ubi magis*, for the government of conclaves, made in 1274, and ordered that the cardinals might have curtains to their cells, to be drawn when they rested or slept; they might have two servants, lay or cleric, as they pleased, and after the lapse of three days, in addition to their bread and wine, they might have fruit, cheese, and an electuary, and one dish of meat or fish at dinner, and another at supper."^[15] [193]

It was in 1309, for reasons that we need not go into, that Clement V set up his court at Avignon in the papal county of Venaissan. "This was a man," wrote Villani, "most greedy for money and a simoniac. Every benefice was sold in his court for money, and he was so lustful that he openly kept a most beautiful woman, the Countess of Perigord, for his mistress." But he was also a great lover of the arts, as is shown by "the vast treasure of gold and silver vessels, gems, antiques and manuscripts seized by his nephew at his death." He died five years later, when there was an interregnum for two years. Then the Bishop of Avignon was elected Pope under the title of John XXII.

He was a small, wiry, learned and subtle old man of seventy-one, the son of a cobbler, and he lived to be nearly ninety. The conclave took place at Lyons, and he is said to have compassed his election by a promise to the Roman cardinals that he would not mount horse or mule except to go to Rome. So he got into a boat, and dropped down the Rhône to Avignon, "entered the papal palace on foot, and never left it again save to cross to the cathedral."^[16] [194]

His palace was the old bishop's palace that stood where the mighty mass of the Pope's Palace stands now, but the cathedral was the same, although it has been very much altered.

It stands very nobly, high above the *place*, and towering above the palace itself, which it adjoins. Its square tower is surmounted by a colossal gilt statue of the Virgin, which was put there in 1859, and bears that appearance. The cathedral dates from the eleventh century, but was rebuilt in the twelfth. The west porch with its Corinthian architecture was long thought to be of Roman construction, but it was probably erected rather later than the first rebuildings, and owes its classical appearance to the influence that Roman work had upon the Provençal architects, who had before them many fine buildings to study. It was once decorated with frescoes by Simone Memmi, who was brought to Avignon from Siena in the fourteenth century and did some beautiful work there, some of which we shall see later in the Popes' Palace. His paintings in the cathedral have unfortunately disappeared, all but a few fragments, which,

however, include a figure in a green gown, kneeling, which is said to be a portrait of Petrarch's Laura. Simone did meet Laura in Avignon and painted her portrait, for which Petrarch paid him in two sonnets that "brought more fame to the poor life of Master Simone," says Vasari, "than all his works have brought him or will bring."



THE CATHEDRAL, AVIGNON



"THE POPES' PALACE IS MOST LIKE THOSE ALMOST BRUTALLY STRONG BUILDINGS THAT THE ROMANS LEFT"

The great west doors of the cathedral stand open, and its floor is wholly bare. It is much more effective so, but it makes the church look smaller than it is. Indeed, when you consider that you are standing in what was, during the seventy years of the "Babylonian Captivity," the first church in Christendom, you must be struck by its smallness. But the Popes of Avignon gave most of their attention to their palace, and not much was done for the cathedral.

The main plan is a high nave, lighted, from an octagonal lantern in the last bay, and a semi-circular apse. The chapels came later. So did the elaborately carved marble gallery and tribunes on either side of the nave.

One of the two chapels first to be built contains the remains of the beautiful tomb of Pope John XXII and his nephew. It has been much mutilated and much restored. The recumbent figure is not that of the Pope whose effigy first lay there, and of the sixty marble statues that adorned its niches none remain, though it is possible that one or two of those on the pulpit of St. Pierre, which we have already seen, may have been taken from the tomb. It must have been a glorious monument when it was first erected, and is even now a thing to see. What is called the tomb of Benedict XII in another chapel is a pure "make-up," much of it of the nineteenth century. There was a beautiful monument to this great pope, but in the eighteenth century all that was left of it was moved. It stood in the chapel of the Tailors' Guild, and they wanted the space for a monument to a tailor.

The Revolution created great havoc in the cathedral. The cloisters and chapter-house that stood to the east of it were swept away, and all their treasures and those of the cathedral looted,

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or else broken up. For some reason the old papal throne was spared, and stands in the choir—a plain chair of white marble, with the lion of St. Mark and the ox of St. Luke carved upon it.

It was John XXII who really fixed upon Avignon as the papal city—Clement V had thought of transferring his seat to Bordeaux—and he soon set about housing himself in a manner worthy of a pope. He bought land, and began to build splendidly, not only a palace for himself, but one for his nephew, who had been presented with the bishopric. It still stands on the north side of the *place*, a comfortable and roomy house enough, though nothing beside the vast pile upon which it looks. He also built himself splendid country houses, one of them at Châteauneuf, where were the famous papal vineyards, and from which still comes a famous wine.

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Experts have pointed out some traces of Pope John's work, as well as of the small palace which he replaced; but the great fortified pile in which these were incorporated dates from the next reign—that of Benedict XII. The necessity there was for building a fortress is rather curious. Pope John had amassed a treasure so vast that his successor had to take exceptional steps to guard it.

"According to Villani—who makes the statement on the authority of his brother, who was the representative at Avignon of the great Florentine banking house of the Bardi, of which they were members—eighteen millions of gold florins were found in the papal treasury at John's death; and gold and silver vessels, crosses, mitres, jewels and precious stones to the value of seven millions more. And this prodigious wealth, adds the historian, was amassed by his industry and sagacity and the system of the reservation of all the collegiate benefices in Christendom on the plea of preventing simony."^[17]

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Mr. Okey goes into an elaborate and interesting discussion as to the present-day value of this vast sum, and puts "the approximate value of the papal treasure at John's death, according to Villani's statement, at the incredible figure of one hundred million pounds sterling." No wonder the walls of the palace were built to stand!

Benedict XII was the third French Pope, and in spite of remonstrances decided to stay on at Avignon. Indeed, Rome was impossible at this time. Civil strife raged there; and "so neglected and ruinous and overgrown with weeds were the churches, that cattle browsed up to the altars in St. Peter's and the Lateran, and a papal legate offered the marbles of the Coliseum for lime-burning."

Sometimes, in all that welter of crime and piety, squalor and luxury, cruelty and sentiment, of the Middle Ages, there stands out the figure of a man whom we seem to recognize as something nearer to ourselves than most of them. Our religion—even the religion of Catholic countries—is so different in spirit from the religion of those days that it is difficult to account for the actions of one after another of the great churchmen, except under the supposition that they were a set of greedy, bloodthirsty hypocrites, which probably most of them were not. But through it all there were constantly arising men and women who were actuated by much the same ideas as we should recognize as holy and righteous if we contemplated them in a living person. The greatest of these saints, we know, helped to fix the standard of goodness that is generally held today. They were men and women of genius, and we understand them as well as they were understood in their own day or perhaps better.

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But it is something a good deal less than genius that brings that sense of recognition in the case of a character like that of Benedict XII. He was a large, red-faced man, who was said by his detractors to love coarse jokes and to drink heavily; but his detractors were the clergy from whom he insisted upon behaviour much more in accordance with modern ideas than with those of his own age, and they could not forgive him. "He was a man," wrote one of them, "hard, obstinate, avaricious; he loved the good overmuch, and hated the bad; he was remiss in granting favours, and negligent in providing for the services of the church; more addicted to unseemly jests than to honest conversation; he was a mighty toper, and '*Bibamus papaliter*—let us drink like a pope'—became a proverb of the day."

The indictment contains more than a touch of spite. It is not to be supposed that a man who drank mightily, if he really did so, or laughed at a broad story, would have been thought deserving of much censure in those days, especially by one who felt no incongruity in accusing him of loving the good overmuch or setting his face against nepotism. Those were virtues that were hated in that society, so crooked in its views that it could even brand them openly as faults without fear of reproach.

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This bluff, honest man built the greater part of the palace, "which," wrote one of his chroniclers, "with its walls and towers of immense strength stands like himself, four-square and mighty." About half as much again, however, was added in later pontificates, and Benedict's building was a good deal altered; but the four great fortified towers are his, and the buildings in between, which include his chapel. These are used now for the storing of archives, and other similar purposes, and are not shown to the public, but one or two of the towers can be ascended and magnificent views obtained from them.

Of the massive walls little has been destroyed either by time or by the many vicissitudes through which the great building has passed. Of all the architecture that one sees in this country the Popes' Palace is the most like those huge, enduring, almost brutally strong, buildings that the Romans left behind them. An ineffaceable impression is gained of it as one walks up the narrow, winding Rue de la Peyrolie which leads from the lower parts of the town on the east to the Place du Palais. Part of the street has been cut out of the naked rock, and far overhead towers the south wall of the building, looking no less solid and permanent than the rock itself. It is like a gigantic cliff rearing its bulk above one, and that impression as of something vaster and stronger than mere human building is never quite absent from the whole mass, on whatever point of view it obtrudes itself.

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The enormous Court of Honour, which is the first thing you see after passing in, is undergoing repair, as, fortunately, is the whole of the building. It badly needed it, for until seven or eight years ago the greater part of the palace was used as a military barracks, and not only was the noble Hall of Justice divided up into three floors, and other parts ruthlessly adapted, but great Gothic windows were destroyed to give place to commonplace square openings, and in fact no beauty was spared where it might interfere with convenience. The restoration has been in hand for over seven years and is expected to take about as long again before the palace is put back into something like its original state. The work is being done with the utmost care, as all such things are done in France, but in many details the damage done has been irreparable.

The great *Salle du Conclave* has been cleared of its rubbish and the tall Gothic windows restored. It is huge and bare. There are no more than the worn remains of the frescoes with which Clement VI caused its walls to be covered, either by Simone Memmi himself, or by some one of his school. Some effort was made nearly a hundred years ago to induce the military authorities to look after their preservation; but "the Commandant of the Engineers replied that he did not share the commissioners' views with regard to the frescoes; they were of little artistic interest and not worth preserving; in fact they were not consonant with the spirit of a military establishment."

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It was in this hall that Queen Joan of Naples defended herself from the charge of being privy to the murder of her first husband, and won the day by her eloquence and beauty. Avignon was hers, and she sold it for 80,000 golden florins to Clement VI, who thus made an excellent bargain for the papacy.

By a broad staircase one mounts to the fine doorway leading to the "new" chapel. It contains two doors, and the part on the left has been barbarously mutilated, but the whole is now carefully restored, as well as the beautiful chapel itself.

You pass through numerous chambers and corridors, some of them restored to what they were, others in the hands of the work-people, and some still showing the hideous wreck that the adaptations to military use made everywhere of the interior of the palace. There is a room with charming fourteenth century frescoes of country scenes as pleasant as anything of the sort I know of. There is a garden with a fish pond and people preparing to take the disturbed-looking fish out of it; nymphs bathing; boys getting fruit from a tree; sportsmen rabbiting with ferrets; others hunting with falcons. The walls are covered with a realistic and most decorative groundwork of foliage and grass, in which you can pick out all sorts of trees, flowers, fruits, birds and little animals. Fortunately the greater part of these delightful paintings are intact, and a great deal of skill has been shown in restoring them to something of their pristine state.

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The more famous frescoes of Simone Memmi in the chapel of St. John the Baptist, and those of Matteo di Viterbo in that of St. Martial above it have not escaped so well.

"In 1816 a Corsican regiment being quartered in the Palace, some of the soldiers (who as Italians knew the value to collectors of the St. Jean frescoes) began the exploitation of the neglected chapel and established a lucrative industry in the corps. Special tools were fashioned for the work; the men became experts in the art of detaching the thin layer of plaster whereon the heads were painted, which they sold to amateurs and dealers."^[18]

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So in these beautiful New Testament scenes which cover roof and walls there are many unsightly white patches which sadly lessen the effect of the whole. But I cannot help thinking that the soldiers must have been stopped in their depredations, for very much more is left than has been taken away.

I forget in which of these two chapels it was that I noticed on a patch of white wall names scribbled, with dates, quite in the modern tourist's fashion, and as fresh as if they had been written yesterday. But the script was "German," and the dates of three hundred or so years ago. So little do habits change!

The rest of the palace that one is allowed to see has left no very definite impression on my mind, except that of vast space, and, where it has not yet been cleared of its barrack adaptations, of miserable degradation. One sees the funnel chimney in the middle of the great kitchen which was for so long said to have been the torture chamber of the Inquisition; one gets beautiful views from the higher chambers and windows and from the towers; and here and there one looks down on to a neglected space that was once a trim garden.

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If one cannot picture the old popes and cardinals walking in the beautiful garden from which we now look down to the Rhône and across to Villeneuve and the purple country beyond, they were not without such pleasures, although it never occurred to any of them to make a garden just there.

"Among the amenities of the old palace were the spacious and lovely gardens on the east, with their clipped hedges, avenues of trees, flower-beds and covered and frescoed walls, all kept fresh and green by channels of water. John XXII maintained a menagerie of lions and other wild and strange beasts; stately peacocks swept proudly along the green swards,—for the inventory of 1369 specifies seventeen peacocks, some old and some young, whereof six are white."^[19]

Even when the restoration is finished it will need a strong effort of imagination to recall the scenes that were witnessed by these gigantic walls. They tell of the strength of the place and of the necessity for that strength. One can imagine the fighting, but it will all be too much swept and garnished to call up the scenes of splendour and luxury that were piled one upon another even in times of misery—of war and of flood and of plague.

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The luxury was like nothing that we know of except that of some of the Roman Imperial courts.

Mr. Okey has collected many extraordinary details, from which I take as an example the account of the banquet given by two cardinals to Pope Clement V.

"Clement, as he descended from his litter, was received by his hosts and twenty chaplains, who conducted him to a chamber hung with richest tapestries from floor to ceiling; he trod on velvet carpet of triple pile; his state-bed was draped with fine crimson velvet, lined with white ermine; the sheets of silk were embroidered with silver and gold. The table was served by four papal knights and twelve squires, who each received silver girdles and purses filled with gold from the hosts; fifty cardinals' squires assisted them in serving the banquet, which consisted of nine courses of three plates each—twenty-seven dishes in all. The meats were built up in fantastic form: castles, gigantic stags, boars, horses, &c. After the fourth service, the cardinals offered his holiness a milk-white steed worth 400 florins; two gold rings, jewelled with an enormous sapphire and a no less enormous topaz; and a bowl, worth 100 florins; sixteen cardinal guests and twenty prelates were given rings and jewels, and twelve young clerks of the papal house and twenty-four sergeants-at-arms received purses filled with florins. After the fifth service, a great tower with a fount whence gushed forth five sorts of choicest wines was carried in; and a tourney was run during the interval between the seventh and eighth courses. Then followed a concert of sweetest music, and dessert was furnished by two trees—one of silver, bearing rarest fruits of all kinds, and the other loaded with sugared fruits of many colours. Various wines were then served, whereupon the master cooks, with thirty assistants, executed dances before the guests. Clement, by this time, having had enough, retired to his chamber, where, lest he might faint for lack of refreshment during the night, wine and spices were brought to him; the entertainment ended with dances and distractions of many kinds."^[20]

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The luxury has gone, and so has the terror. The thick-barred windows of the towers speak of the many who were immured there in pain and misery; if the kitchen was not a torture-chamber, such a chamber was certainly to be found elsewhere; somewhere on the walls is the hook from which was suspended the iron cage in which a cardinal who had offended the pope was hung up for months in the sight of all. The times needed a good deal of gilding.

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CHAPTER XV

Vaucluse

It was very pleasant to get on to the road again, with my pack on my back. I was not yet tuned up to the nearly twenty mile walk between Avignon and Vaucluse, though my damaged muscles were now giving me little trouble, so I took the train to L'Isle-sur-Sorgue, which is distant from Vaucluse between four and five miles.

In 1789, Arthur Young made this pilgrimage to the shrine of Petrarch and Laura, and allowed himself to be more moved by sentimental interest than was his custom. L'Isle has changed very little since that time. It is still the bright, pleasant, well-watered little town he describes it.

"L'Isle is most agreeably situated," he wrote. "On coming to the verge of it I found fine plantations of elms, with delicious streams, bubbling over pebbles on either side; well dressed people were enjoying the evening at a spot I had conceived to be only a mountain village. It was a sort of fairy scene to me. Now, thought I, how detestable to leave this fine wood and water, and enter a nasty, beggarly, walled, hot, stinking town; one of the contrasts most offensive to my feelings. What an agreeable surprise, to find the inn without the town, in the midst of the scenery I had admired! And more, a good and civil inn. I walked on the banks of this classic stream for an hour, with the moon gazing on the waters, that will run for ever in mellifluous poetry: retired to sup on the most exquisite trout and crawfish in the world. To-morrow to the famed origin."^[21]

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I do not remember the elms, but the planes were there, as usual, and fine, spreading ones they were; and what was more, they were beginning to show a delicate haze of green, which was very delightful, and what I had been looking out for ever since I had started on my expedition. During the two days I had been at Avignon the spring seemed to have taken that little definite step forward which makes all the difference. In the south, where the sun gets hot long before the trees get green, and so many flowers come forth to greet it, this longed-for arrival of the true spring is apt to be discounted, and comes with less of a thrill than is felt in the north. But the thrill is there, if one's senses are open to it; and I felt it on that morning as I walked to Vaucluse.

"I am delighted with the environs of L'Isle," Arthur Young wrote of his next morning's ride; "beautiful roads, well planted, surround and pass off in different directions, as if from a capital town, umbrageous enough to form promenades against a hot sun, and the river splits and divides into so many streams, and is conducted with so much attention that it has a delicious effect, especially to an eye that recognizes all the fertility of irrigation."

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It is still a fertile, carefully cultivated country, but gets wilder as one approaches the famous spring "justly said to be as celebrated almost as that of Helicon." The river Sorgue, whose source provides the fountain, is already a full and rapid stream as one nears the village, and flows through green meadows down the valley not far from the winding road. The hills are high on either side and a great cliff looms in front of one, closing in the gorge. One's eye instinctively searches for a cleft down which the torrent must descend; but none is to be seen—only the tall rampart of rock.

The village is pleasant enough, and contains two inns, each of them quite capable of providing for a comfortable night's lodging. Too much, I think, has been written in disgust of the paper-mills, which use the power of the stream and provide the village with employment. Their buildings are old enough to make them not so very incongruous, and they are a small detail beside the huge masses of rock that enclose the village on three sides. Nor is either of them in the village itself. There is an ancient church, an old stone bridge, gardens and terraces and parapets, and much shade of trees, and the beautiful sparkling river that makes music all the time. And dominating the village on a high crag are the ruins of the Bishop of Cavaillon's castle, up to which Petrarch so often climbed to see his friend.

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The fountain is some little distance beyond the village. The road, which runs by the river, passes one of the factories and then the garden of a *café*, where everything was being painted up and prepared for the coming influx of visitors, and "La Belle Laure," the motor-boat upon which trips can be taken on the river, was just about to be drawn from her winter quarters. With all this, and with the booths for the sale of picture-postcards and all sorts of reminiscent rubbish, most of which has nothing to do with Vaucluse, or even with Provence, the place has been cockneyfied enough, and I dare say that if I had seen it later in the year, or on a Sunday, when it is crowded with people, I should not have carried away with me the next morning such an agreeable impression. But I had it pretty well to myself, and when I had got past the last of the booths on to the rocky path above the stream it was as lonely as it must have been in Petrarch's time, six hundred years ago.



THE "FOUNTAIN," VAUCLUSE



THE CAVES ABOVE THE "FOUNTAIN"

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But where was the fountain? I had read of a rocky cave in which it bubbles up, and had pictured I don't know what in the way of gloom and mystery. The path led up to the straight, towering cliff, and there stopped. To my right was a broad pool of water, and that was all. At first sight it was just a pool at the foot of the great rock.

Then I saw that the water was flowing all the time as it were from the face of the rock itself. There may have been an inch, but not more, of the top of the cavern showing. I had found it at its fullest. Sometimes it sinks so low that the waters of the pool do not rise to the rocks over which they were now thundering to the torrent below, and then the river is fed by an underground stream, of which the waterfall is only the overflow.

The pool was very still, and very blue, and the rocks about it were very bold, but naked and oppressive. I must confess to having been rather disappointed; for this is a place in which countless people have been moved to tears by the beauty of their surroundings as well as by a sensibility to the past of which we seem in these prosaic days to have lost the knack. Mr. Okey tells us how in 1783 Alfieri, "on his way to buy horses in England, turned aside with transport to visit the magic solitude of Vaucluse, and 'the Sorgue,' he writes, 'received many of my tears; and not simulated or imitative tears, but verily hot, scalding, heartfelt tears.'" Also how Wordsworth, "on his way to Italy in 1837, was most of all pleased with the day he spent at Vaucluse, where he was enchanted with the power and beauty of the stream and the wildness and grandeur of the rocks."

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In the eighteenth century the cult of Petrarch and Laura was very much alive, and no traveller with any pretensions to taste would have omitted a visit to the famous fountain if he had found himself anywhere near. We have already seen how Arthur Young, who was anything but a sentimentalist, thought nothing of Avignon except in connection with the loves of Petrarch and Laura. The engaging rascal Casanova, who was a sentimentalist beyond everything, went to Avignon for no other purpose but to make the pilgrimage to Vaucluse. Of course he wept copiously; nothing else was to be expected of him, and I do not see why Mr. Okey should take it for granted that his emotion was not genuine.^[22] He was not the most estimable of characters, but there can be no doubt of his love of letters, nor indeed of the power of such a story as that of Petrarch and Laura to touch him. "I threw myself on the ruins," he tells us, "arms extended as if to embrace them; I kissed them, I moistened them with my tears; I sought to breathe the divine breath which had animated them." And then he characteristically proceeded to draw a moral from his emotion that would help him with the lady to whom he was paying court at the time.

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"I asked pardon of Mme. Stuard for having relinquished her arm to render homage to the shade of a woman who loved the finest spirit that the age had produced.

"I say spirit; for the flesh, as it seems, was not concerned in the matter. 'It is four hundred and fifty years, madame,' said I to the frigid statue that regarded me with an air of amazement, 'since Laura de Sade walked on the very spot on which you stand now. It is quite likely that she was not so beautiful as you are, but she was gay, bright, sweet, merry and good. May this air which she breathed, and which you are breathing at this moment, enliven you with the divine fire that ran in her veins, that made her heart beat and her breast palpitate! Then you will capture the homage of all sensible men, and you will find none who will dare to cause you the least annoyance. Gaiety, madam, is the lot of the happy, and sadness is the dreadful shadow of spirits condemned to eternal torments. Be gay then, and thus merit your beauty!'"^[23]

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It is sad to read that this inspiring address was received by the lady with no signs of emotion whatever. She took the chevalier's arm again and the party returned to the house of Messer Francesco d'Arezzo, where Casanova spent a quarter of an hour in carving his name; after which they dined and went back to Avignon.

From Casanova's description this scene must have passed at a house just below Philip de Cabassole's castle, as he describes himself mounting to the point of a rock. Such a house was shown as Petrarch's during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and one opposite to it, with an underground passage between the two, was shown as Laura's. I do not remember either of these houses, which I believe no longer exist. And it is pretty certain that none of the places that were ever celebrated as Petrarch's house was really his, though a fair case for the situation of his dwelling, and the garden he describes with such affection, has been made out.

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The story of Petrarch's love for Laura, like that of Dante for Beatrice and Abelard for Héloïse, has passed into the very texture of literature, and need not be told here. And it would be an affectation for one who is unable to read Italian to pretend to any absorbing interest in Petrarch's expression of it. I must confess that, for my own part, I find much more to delight me in the details of his life at Vaucluse than in anything that I can gather at second-hand of his worship of Laura, and those details are real and fresh enough to give to the place such a charm as hangs over no other that I visited in Provence. Mr. Okey has collected them so well in his chapter "Petrarch at Vaucluse," that I cannot do better than make a long extract from his pages.

"In 1337 the poet, revolted by the atmosphere of the papal court, and perhaps a little disappointed at curial insensibility to his claims for beneficial favours, turned his back on Avignon and withdrew to live the simple life near the source of the Sorgue at Vaucluse, whose romantic beauty had been impressed on his mind since a boyish excursion he had made thither in 1316. To a modest little house fit for a Cato or a Fabricius, with no companion but a dog given him by Cardinal Colonna, living on hard rustic fare and dressed like a peasant, figs, nuts, almonds and some fish from the Sorgue his sole luxuries, the poet retired with his beloved books; the only sounds that greeted his ears in that sylvan solitude were the songs of birds, the lowing of oxen, the bleating of lambs, the murmuring of the stream. Like Horace, he scorns gold and gems and ivory and purple; the only female face he looks upon is that of his stewardess and servant—a visage withered and arid as a patch of the Libyan desert, and such that if Helen had possessed it, Troy would yet be standing. But her soul was as white as her body was black, and her fidelity was imperturbable. By indomitable industry she was able to attend to the poet's wants as well as to those of her own household; faring on hard, dry, black bread, watered wine, sour as vinegar, she lay on the bare ground, and would rise with the dawn; in the fiery heat of the dog-days, when the very grasshoppers are overcome, her invincible little body would never tire. Two small gardens the poet had: one a shady Transalpine Helicon, sacred to Apollo, overlooked the deep, mysterious, silent pool where the Sorgue rises, beyond which there was nothing save naked, barren, precipitous, trackless crags, inhabited only by wild animals and birds—the like of it could not be found under the sun. The other garden, better tilled and nearer his house, was bathed by the crystal waters of the rapid Sorgue, and hard by, separated by a rustic bridge from his house, was a grotto whose cool shade and sweet retirement

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fostered study; there, in a little retreat, not unlike the *atriolo* where Cicero was wont to declaim, the happy recluse passed the hot afternoons in meditation; in the cool of the evening he roamed about the green meadows, and in the morning rose early to climb the hills. Were not Italy so far and Avignon so near the poet could end his days there, fearing nothing so much as the return to a town.

"Dear friends, too, are not lacking. The cultured Philip of Cabassoles, Bishop of Cavaillon, dwells in the château that crowns the hill above his hermitage, and the great ones of the earth are pleased to seek him in his rustic home. The island garden of the Sorgue gave incessant trouble. Writing to Guglielmo di Pastrengo, the studious recluse recalls the stony patch of ground his friend helped to clear with his own hands, and informs him, the once barren waste is now enamelled with flowers, rebellious nature having been subdued by human toil. In a charming epistle, in Latin verse, to Cardinal Colonna, Petrarch tells of the fierce frontier wars he waged with the naiads of the Sorgue in order to recover possession of the garden which he had usurped from them and which they had reconquered during his absence in Italy. By dint of strenuous labour he had cleared a stony patch of land and planted there a little green meadow, as a retreat for the Muses. The nymphs, taking it ill that he should establish strangers in their territory and prefer nine old maids to a thousand young virgins, rushed furiously down the mountain to ravage and destroy his budding garden; he retires terrified, but, the storm passed, he returns shamefacedly and restores the desolated land to its former verdure. Scarce had the sun run his course when the furious nymphs return, and once more undo all his labour. Again he prepares to restore the evicted Muses, but is called away to foreign parts. After six years he returns to his solitude: not a vestige remains of his handiwork, and fish swim at their ease over the site of his garden. Grief gives him arms, and anger, strength; he calls to his aid the peasant, the shepherd, the fisherman; together the allies roll away great stones and tear out the entrails of the earth; they chase forth the invading nymphs; with Phoebus's help re-establish the sacred Muses in their place and build them an abiding temple. The enemy retires breathing vengeance and awaits the help of the winter floods and storms; but the victorious champion of the Muses is prepared; he defends his conquest by a rocky rampart and defies the fury of the nymphs. Now will he enjoy a lasting peace and fear no foes; not even were they allied to the waters of the Po and the Araxes. His triumph was, however, short-lived, for we learn from a further letter that with their allies, the winter floods, the naiads of the spring gained a final victory, and the defeated Petrarch was forced to lodge the Muses in another spot.

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"The poet always found solace and refreshment in his gardens. A true lover of horticulture, he cultivates exotics, experiments on soils and plants, and writes to Naples for peach and pear trees. He invites the Archdeacon of Genoa to his dwelling, happy, celestial and angelic; to the silence and liberty of his grateful solitude; he will find secure joy and joyful security, instead of the noise and strife of cities; he shall listen to the nocturnal complaints of Philomela, and the turtledove cooing for her mate.

"He bids the convalescent Bishop of Viterbo find health of body and serenity of mind in the soft and balmy air of Vaucluse. There in the warm sun, by the crystal fountain, in umbrageous woods and green pastures, he shall experience the delights of Paradise as described by theologians, or the charms of the Elysian fields as sang by poets; a good supply of books and the society of faithful friends shall not be lacking."^[24]

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That is a picture worthy to be put beside those that one makes for oneself of Horace enjoying his Sabine retreat, and indeed, if one were to leave Laura out of consideration, there is an almost exact parallel in the retirement of the two poets. If one could have read Petrarch, as one reads Horace, there would have been a constant series of little discoveries and recognitions to be made all about Vaucluse. Even as it was, wandering about the pleasant quiet place as I did that afternoon and evening, with the music of its many waters always in my ears, I gained an impression that comes back to me now as among the best that that land of many memories afforded me. It was only the "fountain" itself in which I was a little disappointed. The rest was as sylvan and poetic and peaceful as one would wish such a place to be, and the shade of the courtly nature-loving poet seemed to brood over it all, so little has it changed in essentials.

I made my way up through the olive gardens to the ruins of the castle, of which there are enough left to provide a most picturesque feature, but hardly enough to enable one to picture it as it was when Petrarch visited his friend there. One sees the pool and the cliff from it, and the river running over its stones below, the curious cave dwellings high up in the rocks opposite, and the pleasant fertile valley opening out on the other side. It must have been a delightful country retreat, and in that remote spot fairly safe from the disturbances that were apt to centre round such dwellings, although it was strongly built and fortified.

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The next morning I set out early to walk back to L'Isle by a roundabout way which took me over the hills to Saumane, where I had heard that there was an ancient castle still inhabited.

I found a hill village, very picturesque, as is the way of such villages in Provence, and walked round the walls that guarded the château from the gaze of the vulgar, but found it more inaccessible to curiosity than is usual with such places. So I went down again to the village and into the *auberge* to refresh myself, and found a friendly postman also refreshing himself at a table in the kitchen, who conversed with me on many subjects but particularly on that of dogs. He seemed to take an occasional bite as something in the ordinary way of his rounds, and only showed apprehension in the case of the dog that bit him being "malade." I am bound to confess that this possibility gave me something of a chill. I had seen the teeth of so many dogs, which seem to be of a particularly unfriendly disposition in that country, and although I had always managed to drive them off, my accident at Les Baux had made me nervous about them. But I had not considered the chance of hydrophobia, which an Englishman is apt to forget all about. However, I suffered nothing further, except an occasional scare; but whenever I approached a farm and heard the bark of a dog, I went past very gingerly.

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Both the postman and the woman of the inn gave me to understand that, although the château was kept strictly closed against unauthorized visitors, something might possibly be done for me if I called at a certain cottage with a large rose over the porch and rattled the coins in my pocket. Which I did, and was sent up the road hopefully. On it I met a man leading a donkey laden with

fagots, who promised to join me at the entrance when he had disposed of his load.

Parts of the *château* date back to the twelfth century, but the dull square front is of the seventeenth. It is magnificently situated on a point of rock above the village, and commands splendid views. Or rather, the terraces do, for a grove of *ilexes* has been planted all along the front—I suppose for shade, and shelter from the wind—and nothing can be seen from those windows.

I had exhausted the interest of the gardens, and the immediate surroundings of the *château* long before the man with the ass reappeared. There was an untidy "*pièce d'eau*" on the sandy square in front of the house, and some dejected-looking peacocks in a cage, and over all the rest was that air of makeshift and economy which marks so strange a contrast between the *châteaux* of France and the lavishly kept-up country houses of England. Nor was the impression altered when I was taken inside, as far as the appointments of the rooms were concerned. I have never been inside any of the great French provincial *châteaux*, but I have seen a good many of the size of an ordinary English country house, and never one that was not full of rubbish, or that had gardens kept up except with the bare minimum of labour. They have the air of places to which their owners occasionally retire for a sort of picnic existence, and I suppose that is what they are generally used for—as appanages to some fine house in a city.

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But all the rubbishy furniture and decoration of this *château* could not detract from its interest. It had belonged to the Marquises of Sade. I do not know whether the infamous eighteenth century marquis ever owned or lived in it, but it was the property of the Sades when Petrarch was at Vaucluse, and even if Laura had not married into the family, as it is generally supposed that she did, Petrarch must have visited it. The vaulted dining-hall, with its curious echo, can have changed but little since his time, and one can say almost with certainty that his feet trod the stones upon which one stands today, or at least that he knew the room as one sees it.

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The appalling dungeon cells, most of them too dark and inconvenient to be used now even as storerooms, show that this castle was equipped with all the conveniences of the middle ages. One could more easily imagine a nobleman of those days doing without his dungeons than a modern one without his bathrooms or garage. But the owners of this *château* seem to have been more enterprising in making economic use of their prisoners than most of their fellows. They ran an illicit mint. There are the stone trough and table in one of the maze of cells underground. Nobody could have been indelicate enough to pry into the domestic arrangements of a gentleman's dungeons, and the coiners were no doubt as safe from detection there as anywhere. Nor was it probable that any of them would give away the secret. They did not mix with the outside world, and were not likely to do so again when once they had been initiated into their new trade.

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CHAPTER XVI

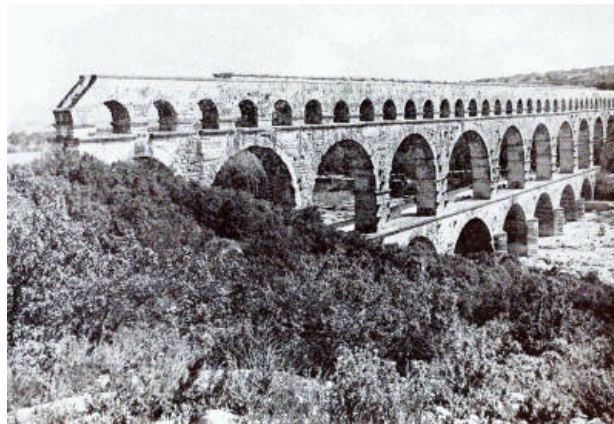
Nîmes and the Pont du Gard

The surpassing charm of Nîmes is provided by its waters, which are the chief feature of a garden as beautiful of its kind as is to be seen anywhere. But these waters were considered too sacred for common use in Roman times, and in order to provide this quite unimportant colonial town, which is not even mentioned by classical writers, with pure drinking water, an aqueduct was built to convey to it the waters of the springs five and twenty miles away; and the remains of this aqueduct are one of the wonders of the world. We will take the Pont du Gard first, as I did on this expedition, walking from Remoulins, and then back again by the other side of the river, and on to Nîmes.

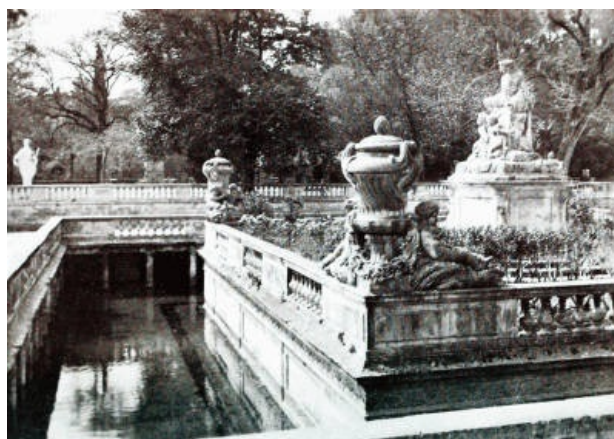
It was a bright, hot, spring day, and the first view I had of the famous aqueduct was through a haze of foliage which later on would have been thick enough to hide it until one was almost underneath its soaring arches. Taking this road to the left, which is the usual and the shorter one, the huge structure comes as a sudden surprise; but I am not sure that it does not provide a more interesting sight seen over miles of olive gardens from the other road. [228]

No detailed description of this mere fragment of a monumental and enduring work is necessary, as I am able to give an excellent photograph of it from a point of view that is not usually taken. But I doubt if its immensity can be gauged from any photograph that it is possible to take. It rises a hundred and eighty feet from the level of the river. The huge blocks of which it is composed are put together, and have held together, without any mortar. It has lasted for close upon two thousand years, and looks as if it would last till the end of the world, without much trouble being taken to keep it in repair. Its effect, indeed, as one lingers about it, and looks at it now from the hills above, now from the road below, now from a distance across the plain, and tries to get some definite outstanding impression, is of a work on such a scale that it rivals that of nature herself. It is huge and yet it is light; it is regular in design, but irregular in detail; its use is gone, yet it has life.

It stands in majestic solitude. The blue river with its sandy bars flows between rocky, wooded hills, and the white road keeps it company, but seems to be little used. There is some sort of a *café* near it, but it is hidden by the trees. I had the place all to myself during the hour or so that I stayed there. The impression of something belonging to nature more than to the art of man deepened.



THE PONT DU GARD



THE FOUNTAINS, NÎMES

The photograph, taken from the north bank of the river, shows the end of the squared channel which conducted the water, and a little farther along the roofing with which the whole length of it was covered. A tall man can walk under it upright; but if he is inclined to be bulky there are places where he may have to squeeze himself through. This is because of the calcareous deposit [229]

left by the water flowing through the channel for centuries. The thickness and hardness of this coating must be seen to be believed. At first I could not imagine how such enormous masses of what looked like natural rock had been raised to the summit, and then I remembered reading something about the deposit, and recognized it for what it was. Houses have been built of it, and a whole church in a village not far off.

The jutting-out stones in the middle row of arches may also be noticed. They were put there by the Romans probably to provide for scaffolding when repairs should become necessary.

I do not know why it is that my stay in Nîmes seems in retrospect rather depressing. The weather was fine, and what there is to see is well worth seeing. Perhaps I was getting a little tired of being alone; perhaps the large, dirty hotel in which I spent the night had something to do with it. One puts up with very poor quarters in the country, and always has some sort of intercourse with one's fellow-creatures. But in a town it is different, and I was glad enough to get away from Nîmes the next morning, bearing with me nothing very fresh in the way of impressions to add to those that I had formed of the place during an hour's visit two years before. In fact, a motorist who stays to lunch at Nîmes, and sees the fountains, the arena and the Maison Carrée, may congratulate himself that he has tasted the full flavour of the brew.

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But these three sights, and the "Temple of Diana," by the fountains, are by all means worth seeing. Except the Arena, which is somewhat similar to the one at Arles, there is nothing to equal them.

The "fountains" are, as to their aspect, seventeenth century of the happiest. How far they follow the lines of the Roman baths and washing pools I have not troubled to enquire, nor does it very much matter. Probably the semi-circular basin in which rises the once sacred spring is much the same as it was in shape. From it the waters are led underneath pavings and bridges to the various balustraded and ornamented pools of the central garden, and then into canals, still of formal architecture, until they disappear somewhere at either end of the long tree-shaded Quai. It is always fascinating to see water flowing, and I know nothing more attractive of its sort than the way this limpid spring comes from under the dark arches leading to the central pool and covers a shallow stone floor recessed all the way round in a colonnade. The photograph gives some idea of this happy invention, but it is not possible to convey its pleasing ingenuity. The gardens, beautifully planted, slope up in a series of bold staircases and terraces. They show a wealth of variegated foliage that makes a most pleasing background to the graceful architecture of the pools and fountains, and on the lower side broad avenues of trees lead away from the charming place quite in the best style of French garden planning.

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In the garden itself are the ruins of a Roman temple, which has for long been known as the Temple of Diana. In 1739 an inscription was found dedicating it to the god Nemausus and the goddess Diana on behalf of the commonwealth of Nîmes, and attributing its building to the munificence of the Emperor Augustus.

Part of the beautiful colonnaded portico has been reconstructed. It connected the temple with the Nymphæum, which was where the central square basin now is. Preserved in the temple is a single tall pillar—one of those used to support the *velarium* under which the Roman ladies reclined in the course of their bathing.

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The architecture of this temple forms a valuable connecting link between that of the Romans and of the later Provençal builders, concerning which Mr. Cook has something interesting to tell us. He is more interesting still on the subject of the Maison Carrée, for he gives us, with a wealth of technical detail and illustration, the curious reason for its being so supremely satisfying to the eye.

No one even with an uneducated eye for beauty can look at this little gem of Greek architecture without a sensation of pleasure. Mr. Baring-Gould, whose eye is not uneducated, writes of it: "It is the best example we have in Europe of a temple that is perfectly intact. It is *mignon*, it is cheerful, it is charming. I found myself unable at any time to pass it without looking round over my shoulder, again and again, and uttering some exclamation of pleasure at the sight of it."^[25]

And Mr. Henry James, in that delightful book, "A Little Tour in France," writes in his own way:

"The first impression you receive from this delicate little building, as you stand before it, is that you have already seen it many times. Photographs, engravings, models, medals, have placed it definitely in your eye, so that from the sentiment with which you regard it curiosity and surprise are almost completely, and perhaps deplorably, absent. Admiration remains, however,—admiration of a familiar and even slightly patronizing kind. The Maison Carrée does not overwhelm you; you can conceive it. It is not one of the great sensations of the antique art; but it is perfectly felicitous, and, in spite of having been put to all sorts of incongruous uses, marvellously preserved. Its slender columns, its delicate proportions, its charming compactness, seemed to bring one nearer to the century that built it than the great superpositions of arenas and bridges, and give it the interest that vibrates from one age to another when the note of taste is struck."

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In a word, the beauty of this little temple is alive, and one of the reasons for its being so I now proceed to extract from Mr. Cook's discussion of a subject that he has made particularly his own.

Why is it that the Maison Carrée is so eminently pleasing to the eye—is alive—while the Madeleine in Paris, which is a strictly mathematical enlargement of it, is "dull and unsuccessful"? Because the lines of the Madeleine are straight, and those of this temple, as of all Greek architecture, are not, though they are so nearly so that the fact was not discovered until about twenty years ago.

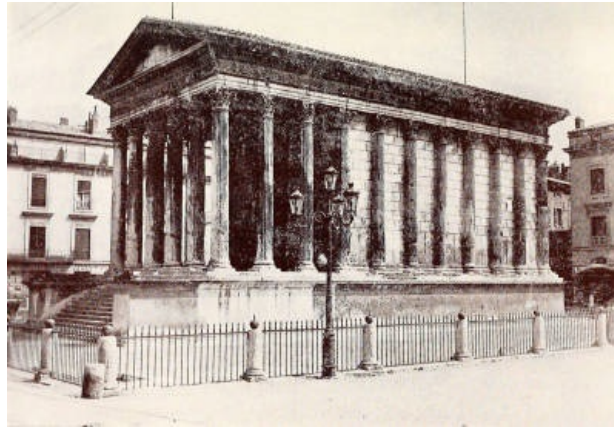
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The divergences are surprisingly small, and in fact this great secret of the ancient builders—Egyptian, Roman, Byzantine and Gothic, as well as Greek—was not suspected until it was proved

on the Parthenon in the middle of the last century. "In the Parthenon the curve is under four inches in two hundred and twenty-eight feet. At Nîmes it is nearly five inches in less than a hundred feet."^[26]

These skilful curves can be traced in Gothic cathedrals. The walls in the nave of Westminster Abbey "are bent inwards at about the height of the keystones of the arches and outwards above and below this point, and they are structurally sound unto this day."^[27]

Mr. Cook explains the difference caused by following this principle "as something of the difference between an architectural drawing done with compass and rulers, and an artist's painting of the same building done with a free hand and with just those 'inaccuracies' which give it life and beauty." It is "an essential principle which, known to Greece, and known to the builders of the Maison Carrée, is one of the chief reasons why this little temple is the greatest treasure of classical architecture north of the Alps."^[28]



THE MAISON CARRÉE



THE AMPHITHEATRE, NÎMES

The Maison Carrée has been at various times a kind of Hôtel de Ville, a private dwelling, a stable, a church, a granary, and a public market, and it is surprising that with all the structural changes it has undergone there is anything of it left. But fortunately its exterior was never much interfered with, and now its interior has been cleared out, and is used as an antiquarian museum.

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The amphitheatre at Nîmes is very slightly smaller than that at Arles, but it is rather better preserved. In fact, it is the best preserved of any of the Roman amphitheatres—far better than the Coliseum, for instance. Its seating accommodation was about twenty-two thousand, as against ninety thousand of the Coliseum, but the area of the arena was in the proportion of about seven to twelve, so that this provincial city was very well off in this respect, as compared with the capital of the world.

The photograph will show what a noble building this was, and will incidentally provide an example of the manner in which the French treat their ancient monuments. You may imagine from it an ellipse of about four hundred and thirty feet by three hundred and thirty, all of it in much the same state. It will be seen that where the original structure is strong enough it has been left, where it needs repair the old work has been copied, and here and there—as in the balustrading beneath the upper row of arches—features have been restored not absolutely necessary to the support of the building. There are those who object to this sort of restoration. I suppose it is a matter of knowledge and imagination; but ordinary persons, of whom in questions of architecture and archæology I am one, may be grateful for a system that shows plainly what an ancient building really looked like, and what purposes it served, while he is nowhere invited to take the new for the old.

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As the original seating accommodation of the amphitheatre would provide for more than a quarter of the present inhabitants of Nîmes—that at Arles would take some thousands more than there are now people in Arles—it has not been necessary to restore all the tiers of seats for the uses to which the arena is put. Consequently, it is possible to see the ingenious plan on which it was constructed, so as to give ample means of ingress and egress, and to divide up the spectators

according to their rank. There were thirty-four tiers of them—four for the senators, ten for the knights, ten for the freedmen, and ten for the slaves and menials—and everybody had an uninterrupted view of what went on in the arena. The holes for the masts supporting the gigantic awning that sheltered the spectators can be seen here and there in the topmost circle; but the moderns do without that luxury, and watch their bull-fights in the full glare of the Southern sun.

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I cannot describe a Provençal bull-fight, as the season had not begun when I was in the country, though preparations were being made for a spectacle on the following Sunday. It is an ancient sport with the Provençaux, but, as Mr. Henry James says, "the thing is shabbily and imperfectly done. The bulls are rarely killed, and indeed often are bulls only in the Irish sense of the term,—being domestic and motherly cows." But the "Grande Tauromachie" is creeping in. Large bills were posted about the amphitheatre announcing events in which Spanish matadors and toréadors would compete for the favour of the populace, and the organizers of the sport were full of self-commendation of the noble struggle they were making over the innovation. It seemed to be almost a matter of conscience with them. They spoke of their loyalty and simplicity, of their scrupulous honesty and untiring good-will, and of the inexhaustible force of energy that they would bring to bear in this contest against discouraging circumstance.

Mises à Mort they call their Spanish bull-fights, and to judge by a picture postcard that I bought of one in progress, in which every seat in the amphitheatre is occupied, and dense masses of people are standing where there are no seats, they are taking very kindly to the pastime.

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CHAPTER XVII

Aigues-Mortes and the Camargue

Aigues-Mortes, like Les Baux, is one of those places which are apt to dawn upon the traveller only when he is in reach of them. I might hesitate to confess that I had never heard of Les Baux before my first journey in Provence, or of Aigues-Mortes even then, if I had not met so many well-informed and well-travelled people who had never heard of either of them.

And yet Aigues-Mortes is a place of absorbing interest. It is romantically situated on the edge of the great plain of the Camargue, surrounded by salt marshes, lagoons, canals, and only a few miles from the sea. Here the town is entirely confined within its unbroken mediæval fortifications, and its walls and gates and towers are more perfectly preserved than those of any other fortified town in Europe; more so even than those of Carcassonne, which owe much to modern restoration.

The story of its building is soon told, and it is a story that cannot be forgotten when one visits the place, for there has been nothing since that has overshadowed it. The poor little town, laid out in square "blocks" like an American village that hopes some day to become a city, has hardly a voice of its own, it is so nothing-at-all compared with its girdling ramparts. These are as nearly as possible a mile round, and probably the stones of all the buildings they enclose would not suffice for one side of them. So the walls and towers are everything at Aigues-Mortes, and speak insistently of the purpose for which they were built. [240]

When St. Louis took his crusading vows in 1244, he had to acquire a port from which to embark. He exchanged land with the Abbey of Psalmodi for the site of Aigues-Mortes and the marshland between it and the sea. There was already an old fortified tower there, erected five hundred years before as a place of refuge from the Saracens, and this was rebuilt as the Tour de Constance. St. Louis also dug the long winding canal to the sea, which is now completely silted up, and its place taken, for the barge traffic to Beaucaire, by one quite straight and about half its length. By this he embarked an army of thirty-six thousand men in 1248.

In 1270 he embarked another great crusading army at Aigues-Mortes, but died almost immediately upon landing at Tunis.

Between the two crusades the walls of the fortress town had begun to be built, but it was St. Louis's son Philip III who completed the fortifications as we see them today. They have lasted for seven centuries and a half, and although the history of Aigues-Mortes did not quite end in the thirteenth century, they have sustained no destruction or decay, and no essential modification. [241]

This, then, is what one sets out to see—a town which presents itself to our eyes exactly as it did to the eyes of the crusaders, who built it. Can one see the like anywhere else in Europe?

I left Nîmes on a bright Sunday morning and travelled by the pottering little train that runs across the plain of the Camargue. It was a little too far to walk in one day, and I wanted to see Aigues-Mortes that afternoon and start early the next morning for Saintes-Maries.

It was a very pleasant journey. The flat country lay soaking in a haze of sunshine, and the hills to the north showed lovely soft purples and golds and blues. At first the country reminded me very much of that stretch of reclaimed marshland across which one travels to get to our old English town of Rye. There were brooks and willows and green fields, and to one who has lived on "the Marsh" it was plain that all this fertility had the same origin—alluvial soil spread over what was once a bare expanse, from which the sea had receded. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that I knew the fact and recognized the signs of it. But after a time this English-looking scenery gave place to the Provençal rows of cypresses, to groups and dottings of stone pines, and to scattered buildings on an unkindler-looking soil. [242]

After St. Laurent d'Aigouze, the next station before Aigues-Mortes and ten kilometres from it, the unreclaimed marsh begins, with stunted vegetation growing on poor stony soil, and water here and there, but not yet the great reed-bordered "étangs," which are the home of so many wild fowl. To the left of the line straggles the broad road, and beyond it is the clean-cut line of the canal that leads from the sea through St. Gilles to Beaucaire. On a sort of island in the marsh stand the ruins of the Abbey of Psalmodi, and a little farther on is the outpost Tour Carbonnière, which is about two miles from Aigues-Mortes and its main fortifications.

The line, which runs quite straight from St. Laurent takes a right-handed turn just before it reaches Aigues-Mortes, and before the turn comes you can see the walled city in front of you, just as you can see the surprising picturesque little town of Rye, growing out of the marsh, as it were, before you come to it from Ashford.

"On this absolute level, covered with coarse grass," writes Mr. Henry James, "Aigues-Mortes presents quite the appearance of the walled town that a schoolboy draws upon his slate, or that we see in the background of early Flemish pictures,—a simple parallelogram, of a contour almost absurdly bare, broken at intervals by angular towers and square holes." [243]

The sight makes its instant appeal. One is back in a long past century, the aspect of which is familiar from just those pictures which Mr. James recalls, and from little illuminated drawings in old manuscripts. There is an agreeable sense of surprise and recognition, almost of awe. It is rather as if one had suddenly come face to face with some dead personage well known from portraits—such as Napoleon or Henry VIII. One had no idea that there was anything left quite like that.

You mount up through a fortified gateway into the little town, which although old is almost entirely devoid of interest. Its rectangular streets gave me a reminiscence of our old English

Cinque Ports. About the time that Philip le Hardi was building Aigues-Mortes, Edward I was building, or causing to be built, the new town of Winchelsea in place of the old one that had been submerged by the sea; and Winchelsea was also laid out in rectangles, and surrounded by walls. The two princes had crusaded together. Perhaps they had talked over this new way of laying out a town, in place of the old way of radiating streets from a centre; but they could hardly have foreseen that it would be some hundreds of years before their plan would be generally adopted.

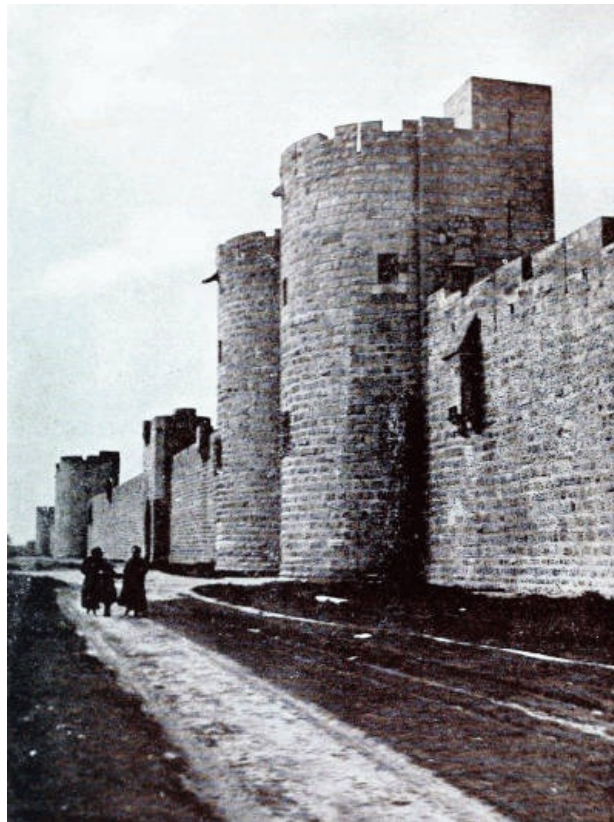
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There is a good inn at Aigues-Mortes, for people make an excursion of it from Nîmes and Arles, and on the Sunday I was there there were a good many visitors. And all the inhabitants of the town seemed to be about the streets. There was a confirmation going on in the church, and after it a well attended funeral, in which none of the mourners were dressed in black. I would rather have struck the place on any other day, for the slight air of bustle and holiday-making did not suit it. M. Maurice Barrès has made it the background of "Le Jardin de Berenice," and every one who has read that remarkable novel will remember the atmosphere of brooding peace and suggestion in which he has bathed it.

Mr. Henry James indicates its charm no less skilfully:

"It is true that Aigues-Mortes does a little business; it sees certain bags of salt piled into barges which stand in a canal beside it, and which carry their cargo into actual places. But nothing could well be more drowsy and desultory than this industry as I saw it practised, with the aid of two or three brown peasants and under the eye of a solitary douanier, who strolled on the little quay beneath the western wall. 'C'est bien plaisant, c'est bien paisible,' said this worthy man, with whom I had some conversation; and pleasant and peaceful is the place indeed, though the former of these epithets may suggest an element of gaiety in which Aigues-Mortes is deficient. The sand, the salt, the dull sea view, surround it with a bright, quiet melancholy. There are fifteen towers and nine gates, five of which are on the southern side, overlooking the water. I walked all round the place three times (it doesn't take long) but lingered most under the southern wall, where the afternoon light slept in the dreamiest, sweetest way. I sat down on an old stone, and looked away to the desolate salt marshes and the still, shining surface of the *étang*; and, as I did so, reflected that this was a queer little out-of-the-world corner to have been chosen, in the great dominions of either monarch, for that pompous interview which took place, in 1538, between Francis I and Charles V."

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AIGUES-MORTES, THE RAMPARTS



"LOOKED AWAY TO THE DESOLATE SALT MARSHES"

This meeting between the Emperor and the Pope and the King of France is one of the few outstanding episodes in the history of Aigues-Mortes. It need only be remarked of it that Louis IX's channel had already fallen into disuse, and another and a shorter one had been dug out through the lagoons for the royal and papal galleys. This, from Grau de Croisette, has also ceased to be practicable, and the present canal starts from Grau de Roi, a little fishing and bathing resort at the nearest possible point on the coast, to which this railway also runs.

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Another chapter in the history of Aigues-Mortes—the last before it sank to be the unimportant village it is now—is a long and painful one. It centres round the strong Tour de Constance, which was used as a prison for Protestants in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, until the horror was finally removed from it in 1767. It was mostly women who were interned in it during long years, amidst circumstances of great cruelty. I quote, from Mr. T. A. Cook's pages, the account of one who accompanied the Prince de Beauvan in his mission of release.

"We found at the entry of the tower," writes de Boufflers, "an eager guardian, who led us through a dark and twisting passage, and opened a great clanging door on which Dante's line might well have been inscribed: *Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch' entrate*. I have no colours in which to paint the terrors of the picture which gradually grew upon our unaccustomed eyes. The scene was hideous yet pathetic, and interest in its victims struggled with disgust at their condition. Almost without air and light, fourteen women languished in misery and tears within that stone-walled chamber. As the commandant, who was visibly touched, entered the apartment, they all fell down together at his feet. I can still see them, bathed in tears, struggling to speak, unable at first to do anything but sob. Encouraged by our evident sympathy they all began to tell us their sorrows at once. Alas, the crime for which they were then suffering was the fact that they had been brought up in the same religion as Henri Quatre. The youngest of them was fifty, and she had been here since she was eight years old. In a loud voice that shook with emotion the marshal said, 'You are free!' and I was proud to be his servant at that moment."^[30]

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You can visit the three round chambers, one above the other, in which these unfortunate women were imprisoned, which are in exactly the same structural state. Their walls are of enormous thickness, and they are lighted by mere slits of windows. They have been swept and furnished, and one can admire their vaulting and other architectural features, but not without a thought of the misery that they contained, which is too recent and too detailed to lose any of its horror in the mists of time.

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At the other end of the north-west wall is the Tour des Bourgnans, round which also cling dreadful memories. In 1421 a party of Burgundians seized the town but were all massacred and their bodies were thrown into this tower, and covered with salt in order to avoid a plague.

To the south of Aigues-Mortes lie the shimmering lagoons and the desolate marshlands of the Camargue, which breed fever and ague, and make the peace of the little dead town not altogether so desirable. This great plain, which contains something like twenty thousand acres, has had a varied history. It is naturally formed by the Rhône delta. The river rolls down its detritus which gradually chokes up its mouth. There is no tide in the Mediterranean to scour it out, and a bar is formed. Then the river has to find another outlet, and this happens again and again until it has wandered all over a large area, leaving behind it more and more deposit raised above the sea level. In the meantime, behind the bars thrown up both by the river and the sea, are left lagoons of fresh water, into which the sea sometimes rushes in times of storm, and leaves behind brackish and stagnant water.

Now in classical times it was well understood that if outlets to these lagoons were kept open, not only were their surroundings perfectly healthy, but that natural forces would do what was necessary to turn the great expanse of the Camargue from a desert waste into fertile corn-growing land. These natural forces were the simple ones which have made the Nile and other deltoid rivers the fertilizers of the land about them—periodical floodings and changes of their beds. In fact in the time of the Roman occupation the Camargue was called "The granary of the Roman army," and Arles, which was the market for its corn was so flowing with plenty as to be called "The Breasts."

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Why is only part of this great stretch of land now fertile, and the rest a desolating waste? The mistake was made in the sixteenth century, when the engineers of Louis XIV examined the country and made recommendations for its treatment. The outlets from the lagoons had been allowed to get choked up, and the Camargue had for long been a fever-breeding waste instead of providing the rich corn land that it had once done. The king's engineers recommended the

embanking of the Rhône, so that it should be kept to its course, instead of flooding the adjacent land, and the building of dykes against the inrush of the sea. Drains, protected by traps, were also cut to carry out the stagnant water from the lagoons into the sea, and all this was done at an original cost of about a million pounds, and is kept up at an annual cost of about five thousand. There are now two hundred and thirty miles of dike, and although the land is fertile enough where the Rhône is allowed its periodical overflow, and has been laboriously reclaimed elsewhere, the main effect of these works has been to reduce the Camargue to sterility. It has been estimated that at every overflow of the Rhône, eighteen thousand cubic yards of rich alluvial soil was deposited over the land. This is now carried out to sea, and thrown down to make new bars. Perhaps some day the work will be done again, the dikes removed and the river allowed to take its natural course. All that would have to be done then would be to keep open the mouths of the lagoons, to prevent them from stagnating and breeding fever and ague; and then the whole Camargue would once more be one of the most fertile tracts of the earth.

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In the meantime it has its own picturesque wild life, just as the fen country of eastern England had before it was drained. As in all flat countries it domed with magnificent skies; the mirage is a common effect of the scorched desolation; flights of rose-coloured flamingoes are to be seen among the commoner wild fowl. Bulls and horses roam the great solitudes in a wild state, until the time comes round for one of those great pastoral manœuvres, half business, half sport, in which a whole countryside takes part, when the animals that are wanted are cut out from the rest and their ownership settled.

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The *Guardiens* ride over the wide territory committed to their charge, mounted on wiry little white horses of the breed that is most common on the plain. They are splendid-looking young men, for the most part, and it gave me quite a thrill to see one of them a few days later. For there is a romance about them, and the wild yet anciently ordered life they lead, which is hardly of our civilization. You may read all about it in some of the novels of Jean Aicard, and especially in "Roi de Camargue," which seems to cry aloud for translation into English, it is so much finer than later ones by which he is chiefly known here. Now that Mistral and Daudet are dead Jean Aicard is the chief literary interpreter of Provençal life, and in his pictures of this wild life of the great plains with its primitive pursuits and passions he stands supreme.

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CHAPTER XVIII

Saintes-Maries de la Mer

I was on the road early the next morning with a twenty-mile walk before me to Saintes-Maries de la Mer. I had to follow the canal for a couple of miles to the north, then to strike across the plain to the westward, then to follow the course of the Little Rhône to the south. This took me through country that has been for the most part reclaimed, and grows acres upon acres of vines. To the south and west of Aigues-Mortes it is nothing but *étangs* and unreclaimed marsh, and if there is a way through it all I could hardly have expected to find it and should certainly have been cut off by water besides.

The walk was not very inspiring. Any one who knows the reclaimed fen lands of Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire will agree that, fertile though these flats may be, they provide the modicum of picturesque scenery. I imagine that the vine-growing industry hereabouts is a comparatively new thing, but it is already a big one. After walking along a straight road between vineyards—flat fields regularly planted with vines about the size of small gooseberry bushes—for five miles, I saw ahead of me an enormous castellated, spired building which I afterwards learnt to be a wine lodge, but which was not on my map at all. And just outside the walls of Aigues-Mortes they have recently erected a building having to do with the shipping or storage of wine over which there has been a good deal of controversy; for it is built in a sham castellated style, and interferes with the effect of the ancient fortifications. [253]

My road turned before I came to the big building I have mentioned, and presently the fields became less ruled and planed, and little bits of untouched marshland began to encroach upon them. I came to the hamlet of Sylvéreal at a turn of the Little Rhône, where there is a bridge and a road running to Saintes-Maries on either side of the river. I refreshed myself at a poor little inn and was heavily charged for sour bread and hard cheese. But these regions are really out of the world, habitations are sparse and communications rare. Five miles further on I came to a ferry—the Bac du Sauvage—and was put across the Little Rhône, which is not little at all, but a big river with a rapid flow. Except for the quite good road, one might well have imagined oneself during these last miles in a new country gradually being opened up. The river carries no merchandise, its banks are deserted. Since Aigues-Mortes, in sixteen miles or so, I had passed no village except Sylvéreal, and there cannot be more than a dozen houses there. I could not rid myself of the feeling of being somewhere in the bush of Australia, which I know best of the new countries. Even the occasional wayside shanties were not absent—little groups of them occasionally, in which there was nearly always one announcing itself as that of a *coiffeur*. [254]

The feeling vanished when I came within sight of the fortress church of Saintes-Maries towering above the low roofs of the village that surrounds it. It could be seen from afar across the plain, and immediately carried the mind back to the past, which is never very far away from you wherever you go in Provence. And this is one of the most ancient and storied places of the whole country. The walls and towers of Aigues-Mortes are new beside it. If you reject the story of the landing of the New Testament saints here—and you will find it hard to reject in Saintes-Maries itself—still the church itself dates partly from the tenth century; it was built on the site of another church destroyed by the Saracens; and that church was built on the site of a temple erected by Augustus. In Roman times there was a sort of island here, and a prosperous settlement. The state of almost destitution to which the wretched little town has come must be owing to the defertilization of the Camargue, of which I have already written. But in the time of King René it was a prosperous town with many privileges, afterwards confirmed to it by the kings of France, and at least since that time the church has been the object of a yearly pilgrimage that has kept its fame alive to an extent that is perhaps not equalled anywhere in France, except at Lourdes. [255]

I cannot but think that "Les Saintes," as it is commonly called, must be now at the very nadir of its poverty. It is right on the edge of the Mediterranean, and beautiful firm sands backed by sand dunes stretch away from it on either side. It is on a little line of railway from Arles; and by far the nearest possible watering-place to that city, and even to Avignon. In fact, Le Grau du Roi, near Aigues-Mortes, would be its only rival for the central cities of Provence. In England, a place of this historical importance and advantageous situation would be a prosperous town instead of a squalid village.

I need scarcely say that to the sentimental traveller the present dejected state of Saintes-Maries, in which nothing detracts from the extraordinary interest of its shrine, is a boon almost beyond gratitude. But one can hardly help being struck by its possibilities, and the difference between France and England in respect of making use of such; nor by the fact that at any time the whole aspect of the place may become changed. [256]

There are two inns in Saintes-Maries, and I went to the worst of them, because it faced the sea. It was the dirtiest inn I struck in Provence, but that was not altogether the fault of the proprietors, as part of it was rebuilding. Perhaps the visitors to Saintes-Maries have already begun to demand more accommodation, and this is the sign of it. I did come across one honeymoon couple, or one that looked like it, sunning themselves below the stones of the dike in view of the shining Mediterranean, but I walked along the sands to the mouth of the Little Rhône, a distance of about two miles, without seeing any one else, except a few fishermen. And at the mouth of the river there were only a few scattered huts. It seemed almost ludicrous that a mighty and famous river—even if only the lesser branch of it—should be allowed to take to the sea with so little ceremony. Again the likeness to a stretch of coast in a brand-new country was

overwhelming. But one only had to turn round and see that ancient church for the odd sensation to pass away again; and only the peace and the windy solitude of the sea remained of it.



SAINTES-MARIES, THE FORTRESS CHURCH



SAINT-GILLES, THE CENTRAL PORCH

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The church is, I think, the most compelling thing in Provence. The photograph will give an idea of its fortress exterior, but not of the way it dominates the country for miles around. That is a thing to remember, but unfortunately my own photograph, taken from the shore some little way off, went wrong.

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The first thing that strikes one in the dark interior—what windows there are are mere slits in the thick wall—are the rows of rough deal seating that run round three sides of the church in a sort of narrow gallery. These are for the crowds that come on May 24th, and during the following week for the great annual festival, when the coffin containing the bones of the blessed saints is let down from the chapel above the apse, and the church is packed full of pilgrims. They are a makeshift affair and do not add to the dignity of the church, although they serve to remind one that this church does not depend for its fame on its age or architecture.

The high altar with its simple decoration of wrought iron stands forward. The priest celebrates facing the congregation; it is a privilege granted by the Pope to this church. Immediately in front of it is the entrance to the crypt. In front of that, just aside from the main aisle, is the miraculous well, with pitcher and pulley all complete.

When the saints landed near to this place, they set about building a little oratory, "erecting an altar for the celebration of the holy mysteries, as near as possible like to the one which Moses constructed by the order of God. The two Marys, with Martha and Magdalene, prepared the ground for this purpose, and God made known to them how agreeable in his eyes were their devotion and their sacrifices, by causing to spring up a fountain of sweet water in a place where hitherto only salt water had been known."

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This well must have been of the utmost value to those who stood a siege in the church some hundreds of years later, and may be thought to have been sunk for that purpose. But its miraculous properties are still recognized, and its waters are resorted to by "persons bitten by enraged animals."

The narrow little chapels that line the church are fuller of votive offerings than any others I have seen. Besides the usual *ex voto* tablets, and chaplets and ribbons of first communions, there is a regular picture gallery of miraculous escapes, most of them, it must be confessed, of the lowest possible artistic value, but going a long way back, and telling a series of tales of considerable interest.

A characteristic one, which bears the date of 1777, is of a man being attacked by five dogs. His companion is not going to his assistance, but is represented on his knees, and in an upper corner of the picture appear the two Marys, who presumably saved the victim from any ill effects of the attack. Another rather well-executed pencil drawing represents a man dragging a horse out of a swollen river. Another is of a child being run over—or possibly just not run over—by a cart. Many are of elderly people in bed with friends and relatives standing around them—and the saints in their usual corner.

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In one of the chapels are the old carved wood figures of the two Marys in their boat, which are carried every year in procession to the sea, and into it, in commemoration of the miraculous voyage which ended at this place.

I don't know how it was that I did not realize on my first visit to the church that the chapel containing the sacred remains, the outside of which can be seen in the photograph above the apse, was to be seen by taking a little trouble about it. From the inside of the church appear the doors from which the double ark is let down by ropes and carried in procession, but I had not thought that there was rather an elaborate chapel up there behind the doors. It was rather late in the evening when the old priest came out from his presbytery to take me up to it.

It is approached by a narrow, winding stairway from the outside of the church, and is about forty feet from the ground. It was enriched in the time of Louis XV, but its decorations were much damaged by the Revolutionaries. The pictured coffer containing the relics of the saints is in a chamber closed by ornamented double doors, in which are also the pulleys and cords by which it is lowered to the floor of the church on the great day of the pilgrimage. All round the little chapel are the crutches and other offerings of those who have been cured by attendance at the shrine. One of the latest is a sort of strait-waistcoat left behind by a cripple who had used it for many years, but went away, as the curé told me, on his own feet, and praising God and the blessed saints.

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I walked all round the strong battlements, from which a glorious view extends itself, of the plain with its bright sheets of water on the one side, and the sea and the sands on the other. It was a lovely, peaceful evening, and the old priest admired it as much as I did. He said he liked to come up here away from the world, and often said his Mass in the quiet chapel high above the low roofs of the town. I bought from him the little book he has written about his church, which contains the hymns and prayers and canticles, partly in Latin, partly in French, partly in Provençal, that are used during the days of pilgrimage.

Of the church as a work of defence, he writes: "It is a fortress, with its sentry's walk, its watch tower, its crenellations and machicolations. When Saracens or pirates invaded us, and during the wars of religion, the men went up to the high chapel for defence, at the summons of the watchman, who gave the alarm, while the women and children were shut up in the church, which communicated by two staircases with the roof. During the religious wars, the church was smoked out several times by the assailants."

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It was nearly dark when we went down into the crypt, and what I saw of the tomb of the servant Sarah was by the light of a candle which the curé lit for me, dropping the grease about plentifully, as seems to be the way of those who show sacred treasures. It will be remembered that this black servant of the holy ladies accompanied them on their miraculous voyage to Provence. Her body, exhumed with theirs, under the auspices of the good King René, and in his presence, was reburied here, and this half subterranean chapel at Saintes-Maries has been from time immemorial the centre of a cult, the strangest of any with which we have to do.

At the time of the yearly pilgrimage, when good Catholics come to venerate the remains of the saints, there come also hordes of gipsies, who prostrate themselves before the tomb of the servant Sarah, and practise strange rites which have nothing to do with the Christian religion. The good curé in his book mentions the fact that they come in, but says nothing about their worship, which is said to include the adoration of fire, and other mysteries of an immemorially old religion.

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I have been able to find nothing very illuminating that bears upon this strange survival and its origins. The Marquis de Baroncelli-Javon has published a little illustrated pamphlet which is of some interest on the subject of gipsies in general, and those that are to be found in this stretch of seaboard in particular, but he is not able to suggest why St. Sarah, as he calls her—but I do not think that she was ever canonized, or regarded as a Christian saint—should have attracted to herself this ancient worship, except by reminding us that she was commonly supposed to be an Egyptian, which is hardly convincing. But that the gipsies should gather at this particular spot and perform their rites, he does find some reason for, and his theories are at least interesting.

He says, first of all, that there are two distinct races of *Bohémiens* different in feature, in bone formation, colour, character, language and traditions; that they have nothing in common and treat each other not only as strangers but often as enemies. "A gipsy who traffics in horses will never have anything to do with one who leads about dancing bears or works in copper; there will be no understanding between them and they will treat one another with indifference if not with

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hatred. But this trafficker in horses will immediately recognize as his blood brother another *maquignon* at Saintes-Maries, it matters not where he comes from."

Now at Saintes-Maries the gipsies with performing bears, or the tinsmiths, are never to be met with. These are the Zingaris, and their home is in the east of Europe. They talk the languages of the north and the east willingly and easily, but with difficulty those of the south.

The gipsies who are to be found in Spain, Languedoc, Provence and parts of Italy call themselves Gitanos or Gitans. These are they who come once at least during their life wanderings to Saintes-Maries, "to salute the earth, to fulfil strange rites, and to regard the sea, their eyes fixed in ecstasy." Where do they come from?

"From the parts where the sun sets," they say of themselves; and if you ask an American Indian the same question he will tell you that he comes "from the parts where the sun rises." They are the ancient inhabitants, says M. de Baroncelli-Javon, of the lost Atlantis, which lay between the old world and the new.

The resemblances between the Gitanos and the Redskins are curious, not only in appearance and language but in many small details and habits. They use, for instance, exactly the same actions when they examine a horse's teeth. The author adds to the list of survivors of Atlantis the Basques, the Bretons and perhaps the Copts of Egypt, and finds resemblances in them too. My small ethnological knowledge prompts me to reject the Bretons, but the Basques have always been a puzzle, and seem to fit in with this theory. There is also a hint, in a footnote, of the inclusion of the Laps, Samoyeds, and Esquimaux, whom we might perhaps accept in place of the Celts.

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But to continue. The Egyptians and the Gitanos—probably two branches of the same family—found themselves on either side of the Mediterranean. The Egyptians moved westwards to the Nile and the Red Sea, the Gitanos took up a roving life and were to be found everywhere along the coast, from the Gaudalquiver to the Var. They are thus not descendants, but brothers of the Egyptian race.

"Little by little arrive the Iberians, and then others and still others. The Gitano flies before the invader; he finds refuge nearer and nearer to the coast, following the last wild horses into the most lonely places, among the lagoons and the unhealthy marshes, uninhabitable by all except him, the aboriginal. There he erects his temples, in which he adores Fire and the Sun, like the Redskin and the Egyptian, where he buries his chiefs and his wise men, thus consecrating special places. And he is always moving on, with the wild horse, along the line of the sea. Centuries and centuries pass, Christianity shines forth, which founds the altars of its saints on those of the pagans, and it is not unscientific to think that the pilgrimage to the place of the Saintes-Maries existed long before Christianity, and honoured first the gods of the soil, then those of the Iberians and Ligurians, before it honoured our saints."

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CHAPTER XIX

Saint-Gilles and Montmajour

This was to be the last full day's walk. I had to meet a friend at Avignon the next afternoon; then to Arles with no further time for walking; and then home.

There was a lot of ground to cover. The first stage, after going halfway to Arles by train, was an eight-mile walk across the plain to Saint-Gilles. The train started at six, and soon after seven I was on the road, on a fine still spring morning, and in company with an old peasant woman who was also going to Saint-Gilles, and had suggested in the train that we should walk together. I had not known quite how to refuse, but had thought that after a mile or so I might say that I was in a hurry, and push on from her. Provençal was her tongue, and French is not mine; the burden of a conversation lasting for two hours daunted me.

We walked and talked together for about a mile, and although she must have been getting on for seventy, and carried a heavy basket, her steady pace was just a trifle faster than my usual one at the beginning of a long day's walk. I could not for shame suggest that I should drop back; besides, she would have offered to walk more slowly. So when we had exhausted the first burst of conversation, I drew myself together, lifted my hat, and with a word of apology, forged on ahead with all the air of a Marathon racer. [267]

She chased me for miles. Whenever I looked back I saw her plodding form on the straight road across the marsh. I was ashamed of myself, but I couldn't keep it up. The walk to Saint-Gilles was only to be the beginning of my day. At a wide turn of the road I took what looked to be an easy short cut across the marsh. If it had been easy, of course she would have taken it too, and the end of it was that when I came out on to the road again after my windings there was her black determined figure a quarter of a mile ahead of me. So I let her take her pace, and I took mine, and she crossed the great suspension bridge into Saint-Gilles nearly half an hour before I did. I saw her the whole way, and she never looked round. I hope she thought I was ahead of her.

Scarcely any of its original importance is left to Saint-Gilles, which dates from the earliest dawn of Provençal history. It was the Phœnician Heraktra. In those days the branch of the Rhône upon which it stands was an open trade route. The Phœnician traders came to it from their expeditions to Britain, by way of the Seine valley and the Rhône. Early in the twelfth century the building of one of the noblest churches in Provence was begun here; and its remains, in spite of the successive destructions and mutilations it has received, make it still well worth a visit. [268]

All that is left in its original state is the wonderful carved façade, which is finer even than the famous one, of about the same date, of St. Trophimus at Arles, and takes in three portals instead of one. It is in its original state only as far as its main structure is concerned, for its figures have been sadly mutilated by successive generations of enraged Protestants. But one can be thankful to them for sparing it at all, instead of treating it as they did the church behind it.

The story of St. Gilles is charmingly told by M. J. Charles-Roux, in his "*Légendes de Provence.*"

He was a Greek, of royal lineage. In all the country there was not to be found a man richer than his father, or a woman more chaste and charitable than his mother. He was baptized with great rejoicing, and from an early age his parents sought to bring him up in their faith. At seven years of age he was taught his letters, and thus early he devoted himself to study and the service of God. Modest and of fine address, he grew into the flower of his country's youth; his hair was fair and curling, his skin as white as milk, he had a delicate nose and ears, white teeth and a sweet mouth. [269]

The day came when God was ready to show His designs concerning him. He was on his way to school, when he saw crouching in the gutter a poor cripple, pale, hideous and horrible. The child addressed him, and he replied, "Sir, hunger is killing and cold overwhelming me; death is near, and I only want to die." Gilles's eyes filled with tears, and as he had neither silver nor gold he gave the poor wretch his coat, and he at once arose cured and thanked God with such fervour that presently more than a hundred persons appeared on the scene.

The fame of Gilles's holiness began to spread, and soon afterward he healed a man bitten by a venomous snake.

After his father and mother died he was pressed to marry by his vassals, who wished him to continue his royal race, but he begged a respite. He was much troubled by the crowd that besieged his doors—crippled, dumb, blind, lame,—who besought him to heal them. He was willing to do so, but dreaded the worldly fame that was beginning to attach itself to his name. He wished to seek a road that would bring him nearer to God, and he determined to go to Rome.

He ordered a great feast in his palace, and at night, when all were sleeping, overcome with the fumes of wine, after praying for a long time he left his chamber softly, and made his escape from the battlements, hidden in a fog. He was never seen there again. [270]

After wandering on foot for a long time, he came to the sea, and saw a ship being driven on to the rocks in a storm. He prayed to God, and the storm abated, and the ship came safe to shore. He asked the sailors to take him to Rome, and they, recognizing him for a holy man, took him on board.

They were for the most part Provençals, and were carrying a rich cargo of corn from Russia, silks, precious stuffs and spices. They sailed for days under a clear sky, and never had to touch a rope, for God was guiding them.

They landed at Marseilles, and Gilles, who had been so rich, went from door to door, begging his food. After a time, having heard of the good bishop, Cæsar of Arles, he went to that ancient

city. He lodged with a widow whose daughter had been paralysed for twelve years. When he had prayed for a moment beside her bed she arose well and joyful. When the good bishop heard of this miracle, he sent his archdeacon to bring Gilles to him. The archdeacon found him praying in the church. The bishop received him with affection and honour and kept him by him for twelve years, during which time he wrought many miracles.

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But this was not the sort of life Gilles had dreamed of. He escaped from Arles and plunged into the wild forest which surrounded it. At last he came to a monstrous rock in which some steps had been cut. He climbed up them and found a pious hermit with whom he lived for twelve years in perfect communion of prayer and meditation.

Although his retreat was remote and hidden, the piety and the miracles of St. Gilles were so renowned that at last it was discovered. So he resolved to find a hiding-place more impenetrable still.

He wandered far into the forest until he came to a cave choked with brambles. He hid its opening with branches, leaves and clods of turf, and took it as his hermitage. A fresh spring welled up at a short distance from it, round which grew a cress upon which he sustained himself until God sent him a doe which gave him milk. Every day while he was at his prayers she went into the forest to feed, and returned at fixed hours to the cave, where Gilles had prepared for her a couch near his own.

At this time Florenz was king in Provence, under Charlemagne. Holding his Christmas court at Montpellier, he entertained all the lords of the country round at banquets and parties of the chase. One evening as they were feasting news was brought in by the royal huntsman of a wonderful white hind that had been tracked to her hiding-place in the forest, and early the following morning the king set out with a great retinue to chase her. The chase was long and Florenz found himself ahead of his companions with the hind flying in front of him. As she was disappearing among the trees, he launched an arrow at her, and immediately the hermit, Gilles, appeared, to whom the hind had flown for shelter, and whose hand the king's arrow had pierced.

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After this the king conceived a great veneration for the saint, visited him often alone and pressed him to accept presents. Gilles resisted him for a long time, but said at last: "Sire, if you really wish to give me a portion of your lands, of your treasures, of your vessels of gold and silver, found a monastery upon this spot, and fill it with monks for the service of God, who shall pray day and night for your people and for your law."

"I will do so," said the king, "if you will be their abbot."

After much hesitation Gilles consented, and the noble abbey was built and greatly enriched by gifts from the king. Gilles continued to live in it the same life as he had lived in the woods, and that his flesh might be still further mortified he prayed that the wound in his hand might never heal; which prayer was granted to him.

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After a time Gilles's great renown reached Charlemagne, who wished to confess his sins to so holy a man, and sent an embassy to invite him to Paris. After consultation with his brethren he went there, and was received with the utmost veneration and magnificence. But the honour done to him caused him nothing but shame.

Charlemagne confessed all his sins but one, which he had not the courage to avow. Gilles pleaded with him for twenty days, but in vain. One Sunday, as he was going to celebrate the Mass at St. Croix he saw a demoniac chained to a pillar of the church. His prayers drove out the demon; all the bells in the city began to ring, and the king came with a great crowd to hear the Mass. During the celebration Gilles prayed that the king might be brought to confess the sin that it would cost him so much to acknowledge, and an angel appeared above the altar and deposited near the sacred Host a little letter which God Himself had sent His faithful servant. You can see the scene sculptured on a pillar in the cathedral of Chartres. The letter announced that the famous sin, of which we do not know the details, might be remitted to the king together with all other sins humbly confessed and secretly detested; also that the saint's own life would soon end and his reign in glory begin.

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Gilles, refusing the king's rich presents, made the journey back to his monastery in great pain because of his still open wound, but in great joy, and learnt that during his absence his monks had behaved in all respects as he could have wished them. He resumed his customary life of prayer and meditation, but feeling that he would not for long continue to direct the affairs of his flourishing abbey, and that the favour of kings was fleeting, he determined to go to Rome to put his monastery under the protection of the Holy See.

The Pope received him with great honour and granted his request. He also showed his interest in the church that St. Gilles had built by giving him two doors of cypress wood, wonderfully carved. St. Gilles threw them into the Tiber, commanding the water to carry them to his church. He himself arrived at the moment when they stranded on the banks of the river, in perfect preservation, and was made happy by this still further proof of divine favour.

His work was now done, and he prepared himself for death. His monks stood around him, scarcely able to recite the sacred offices because of their sobs. Just before midnight he began to recall to them events in the life of the Saviour, and at the moment of death he had a vision of the glorious resurrection of Our Lord, and prayed St. Michael to conduct him to God. These were his last words; he made signs of blessing those who knelt around him, and two of them saw angels take the soul that issued from his lips, to carry it to Paradise.

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Although the story which I have condensed speaks of Charlemagne, it was his grandfather, Charles Martel, in whose reign St. Gilles lived, and who gave him shelter when he fled from the Saracens who had attacked his monastery. But St. Gilles did die in peace in it in 721, and he had long before handed over the property to the Holy See, for the Pope's Bull taking it over in 685 is

still extant.

The fine crypt, which fortunately still remains, was constructed in the eleventh century to receive the tomb of the saint, and its high altar consecrated by the Pope in 1095. The church above it was begun twenty years later, and its magnificence can be judged from the ruins of the choir, which stretch far to the east of the present building, as well as from the carving of the front which took over thirty years to complete. In 1562 the victorious Protestant troops murdered the priests and the choir boys and threw their bodies into the well that is still to be seen in the crypt. The church, says Mr. T. A. Cook, "was alternately desecrated by the reformers and used as a fortress by the churchmen." It was completely destroyed in 1622, the tomb of St. Gilles removed and the crypt filled with rubbish; "and the façade itself seems only to have been left standing in order that its carvings might the more openly be debased and mutilated." At the Revolution still further havoc was wrought, and it was not until seventy years later that the crypt was excavated and restored under the auspices of the Commission of "Monuments Historiques," who also restored as far as possible the façade.

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Considering the vicissitudes it has gone through this splendid work retains a surprising effect. It stretches right across the front of the church, except for the two narrow towers on each flank, and is of a wonderful interest and richness. Another wonderful relic is the Vis de St. Gilles, the spiral stone staircase that stands among the ruins of the choir, and the tower. It is famous everywhere among architects for the delicacy and preciseness of its stone-cutting and vaulting.

Another thing to see in Saint-Gilles is the Maison-Romaine, a tall town house of the twelfth century which was restored at the same time as the church. It comes as something of a surprise to the inexpert, it looks so very modern—rather like the sort of house an advanced architect might build in Munich today. But its proportions are beautiful, and the quiet wall space contrasting with the decorations of the windows is very effective. Indeed, the advanced architect might do worse than copy such a model. After eight hundred years he could learn more of the twelfth century builder than he could teach him.



THE MAISON-ROMAINE



THE STAIRCASE IN THE FARMYARD AT MONTMAJOUR

I took train to Arles and walked straight out of the station towards the Abbey of Montmajour two miles distant. Arles itself was to wait for a few days.

The road lay along a broad shady avenue too full of traffic for pleasurable tramping, but turned off presently from the main road to Tarascon, and the mass of the great Abbey could be seen towering above the trees across the open country.

This great Benedictine abbey, under the stones of which lie buried the ancient kings of Arles, was founded in the sixth century, and its splendid church was rebuilt in the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.

It was situated on an island among the lagoons of the Camargue, but now stands overlooking the fertile plain right away to the sea, on what is no more than a low hill overgrown on one side by a little wood.

I left the road, which goes round by the front, and climbed up through the trees, to find myself in a littered farmyard, with the walls of a seventeenth century building, now in ruins, towering above me. The remains of a carved stone staircase finished off by a rickety wooden bridge ran up under a bold arch, and had a very extraordinary effect, springing thus out of the straw and muck of the yard. This great palace, joined on to the original monastic buildings, seems strangely out of place even now, more than a hundred years after both suffered the same destruction. It was built when the abbey was at its richest and proudest, but was not occupied for long, for the Revolution swept new and old alike away. Of all the treasures it contained, only three remain—a Bible of 1320, which is in the museum at Arles, an abbatial cross in the museum of Cluny, and a twelfth century pyx, now in the Louvre.

What remain of the buildings themselves have suffered no less changes of ownership. When they were sold by the state after the Revolution many of the walls were broken down and the stones taken away to build bridges and houses and to mend roads. The painter Réatlu of Arles bought the great tower and saved it. The chapel of St. Croix became the property of a fisherman, but finally fell into the hands of the city of Arles, and was restored and maintained by them. This stands apart from the rest of the abbey, of which the site is still private property. Until recently the later buildings were partly inhabited by peasants. Gradually the rest has been bought back, and classed among the "Monuments Historiques." The buildings thus saved from further desecration are the church with its crypt and cloisters, the tower, the "Confessional" of St. Trophimus, and the chapel of St. Croix, and each and all of these are remarkable.

The church, which was begun early in the eleventh century and was never quite finished, is of a severe and grateful simplicity. The enormous crypt beneath it is of a still earlier date, and is still more remarkable. The apse is divided into five little chapels opening on to an ambulatory, and from each can be seen the high altar. The cloisters are best preserved of anything, and retain their stone penthouse roofing.

But the most interesting thing about Montmajour is the little chapel, part scooped out of the living rock, part built in the ninth century, which is called the Confessional of St. Trophimus.

You descend to it down stairs cut in the side of the rock. It stands in a sort of overgrown garden, and looks as if it were trying to hide itself. Its rock chambers were no doubt used by the

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early Christians for hiding and shelter, in the same way as the catacombs at Rome. At the east end is a big chamber almost entirely filled with a stone bench, which opens into two other chambers. Whether St. Trophimus was ever there or not, it has very much the appearance of a confessional. And scepticism sinks before this pathetic little secret place, in which beyond doubt the holy mysteries were celebrated and the faith taught at a date before one can be certain of perhaps any other ecclesiastical remains in the country, whatever antiquity they may claim.

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The curious Eastern-looking Chapel of St. Croix stands at some little distance from the rest of the abbey buildings. It is in the form of a Greek cross with four semi-circular apses radiating from a central square-domed tower, and a porch attached to that on the west. Its date is 1019, but there was probably a cemetery on this spot at a much earlier date, and it was built entirely as a mortuary chapel. Viollet le Duc wrote of it:

"The monks brought their dead here processionaly; the body was placed in the porch and the brethren remained outside. When Mass was said, the body was blessed, and it was conveyed through the chapel and out at the little south door, to lay it in the grave. The only windows which lighted this chapel looked into the walled cemetery. At night, a lamp burned in the centre of this monument, and, in conformity with the use of the first centuries of the Middle Ages, these three little windows let the gleam of the lamp fall upon the graves. During the office for the dead a brother tolled the bell hung in the turret, by means of a hole reserved for the purpose in the centre of the dome."

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This little architectural gem with its delicate exterior carvings has been very carefully preserved. Up to the eighteenth century it was the object of a popular and crowded pilgrimage on May 3rd, but on the destruction of the abbey the precious indulgences with which it had been dowered by successive Popes were transferred to the church of St. Julian at Arles, and it is now nothing but a "Monument Historique."

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CHAPTER XX

The Last Walk. St. Michel de Frigolet

I walked on from Montmajour through the most delightful country. The road dipped up and down, crossed thymy, brambly, rocky heaths, and gave promise of pleasant villages to come. One begins here to get out of the plain, and on the low heights the comfortable land, dotted with nestling farms and towers and steeples, can be seen stretching away to the white Alpilles, upon which Les Baux perches and makes its romantic presence felt, though it cannot be seen.

This little corner is full of curiosities, but I had a long walk before me and a fair one behind, and turned aside to see none of them. There are the remains of the Roman aqueduct, built to carry the waters of Vaucluse into the Arena at Arles. It is still called Ouide de Sarrasin (stonework of the Saracens) by the country people, because the Spanish Moors marched along it to attack Arles. At the foot of the Montagne de Cordes are the remains of fortifications, contemporary and perhaps built by the invading Saracens. On the top of the same hill is the Grotto of the Fairies, with its curious pavement and stones which were cut in prehistoric times. [283] And there are other megalithic remains in the little hill of Castellet, and a cavern in which were found a hundred skeletons, and among other objects ornaments of a stone only to be found in the Indies and the Caucasus. The French call it *calaïs*; I do not know its English name. All these things are to be seen within a mile or two of Montmajour.

But two of the sights I did see, because they lay right on my road, and the second of them I would have gone out of it a reasonable distance to see in any case.

The first was the "*allées couvertes*," of which signposts obligingly give notice, at so many metres from the road. They are subterranean passages, running at a short distance beneath the surface, on either side of the road and parallel to it, broken into here and there, and their entrances covered with brambles. When they were constructed, or what for, I have not the slightest idea, and no book that I have been able to get hold of tells me. My impression is that they extend for some miles, but I don't know where I got it from, and perhaps I am wrong. The "*allées couvertes*" are a mystery of which I am content to be without the key.

But nearly halfway between Arles and Tarascon is the charming little village of Fontvieille, and there is something to see there that I would not willingly have missed. It is the disused mill which Alphonse Daudet bought to retire to as a young man, and from which he wrote that delightful collection of tales and essays about his beloved native country to which he gave the title "*Lettres de Mon Moulin*." They breathe Provence, as nothing modern does, except the works of Mistral and his brother *Félibres*, and some of the tales of Jean Aicard, and if one wanted to make a pilgrimage to the heart of it, one would come either to the "Mas" at Maillane in which Mistral was born, or to Daudet's mill at Fontvieille. [284]

Nevertheless when I came within sight of it I was a trifle disappointed. There it stood on its thymy hill overlooking the village, familiar enough in its aspect from the photograph in my edition of this book. But there were two other mills exactly like it on the little hill, and all three quite close together; and it was in full view of the village, and not very far from it. I had imagined a place of more reflective solitude. I was glad to have seen it, but did not trouble to go up and examine it more closely.



SAINT-MICHEL DE FRIGOLET



THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN, VILLENEUVE-SUR-AVIGNON

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In the evening I came to the roadside chapel of St. Gabriel, which was marked on my map with a cross, showing it to be something worth looking at, but was left without mention alike by the German Baedeker and the French Joanne. It is just a single, heavily buttressed nave with a richly carved porch, within the arch of which is a curious relief representing Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It stands in an olive garden by the side of the road and there are no other buildings quite near to it, so that it comes as something of a surprise. It is important, as I have learnt since from Mr. T. A. Cook, as a link in the progression of early Provençal architecture, and is certainly worth seeing on its own account.

A little farther on was an *auberge*, before which some great wagons were standing while their drivers refreshed themselves within. It was in a quiet and pleasant corner, where four roads met, all overshadowed by trees now in their full leafage. I should have liked to get a bed and a dinner there, as by this time I had walked quite far enough, and it was the sort of peaceful countrified place that it is pleasant to wake up in. But they did not want me, and after sitting there for a time I tramped the three or four miles into Tarascon.

It was dark by the time I got there, and I saw very little of the immortal Tartarin's town. I went up under an old gateway, and wandered about the streets on the lookout for an inn. I would have taken the first that came, for I was very tired by this time. But I could not find one at all. At last I was directed to a large hotel, where they gave me a bad dinner and charged me preposterously.

But I got a good deal of fun out of it. Tarascon is a military town, and the big dining-room in a corner of which I sat was providing entertainment for many of the soldiers of the regiments quartered there, and their friends among the townspeople. There were cavalry officers in natty little Cambridge-blue tunics, and troopers with tunics of a deeper shade of blue. They did not mix, but their friends were all of the same class, and of course a trooper of a French cavalry regiment may be just as well bred as his officers. It seemed to me, remembering the character that Daudet fixed upon the Tarasconnais, that he had done them no injustice. There was a sort of theatrical swagger about those that came within my view that marked them off from their companions of the military even more than their civilian garb. I remember Sir Henry Irving in "The Lyons Mail" taking a meal with his back to the audience. He seemed to be eating chiefly with his shoulders, and that was exactly the way in which these gentlemen of Tarascon ate, as if they were in the limelight, and everything must be done for effect. When they talked, they did so with terrific emphasis and gesticulation, and when somebody else was talking they would suddenly withdraw themselves from the conversation and reflectively twirl their moustaches. And when my waiter, who was tremendously overworked, did bring my long pauses of reflection to an end, he served me with a flourishing air that would have made it almost indecent to complain of being kept waiting, since my reward was to be attended to with an amount of pomp and circumstance that must warm the coldest of victuals.

I was up early next morning and walked out of the town by a roundabout way, which gave me a sight of its quaint arcaded streets, King René's castle, which would have been worth a visit if I had had time for it, and the suspension bridge across the river to Beaucaire. I passed along a plane-shaded boulevard on the outskirts of the town, always on the lookout for Tartarin's villa, which I think I saw, though there were no signs of the india-rubber tree in its elegant little garden.

I was on a literary pilgrimage. You remember Daudet's story "L'Elixir du Révérend Père Gaucher"—how the monastery of the White Canons had fallen upon such evil times that even the belfry was as silent as a deserted dovecot, and the monks, for lack of money, were obliged to sound to matins with rattles of almond-wood; how the humble cowherd restored them to affluence by the cordial cunningly distilled from Provençal herbs, of which he had learnt the secret from the naughty old woman who had brought him up; and the dreadful things that followed when the wonderful elixir proved too seductive for his soul's health. Now this monastery was St. Michel de Frigolet, up in the hills a mile or two off the road from Tarascon to Avignon, and there is a good deal more attached to it than Daudet's story.

To begin with, Mistral went to school there, and I will make use of another chapter of his Memoirs to describe its situation and tell its story.

It was nearly eighty years ago that he was taken there from Maillane in the farm cart, together with a small folding bed, a deal box to hold his papers and a bristly pigskin trunk containing his books and belongings.

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"At the Revolution, the lands of Saint-Michel had been sold piece by piece for paper money, and the despoiled abbey, deserted and solitary, remained up there, bereft in the wilds, open to the four winds and the wild animals. Sometimes smugglers would use it to make their powder in. When it rained the shepherds would shelter their sheep in the church. The gamblers of the neighbourhood would hide there in winter at midnight to avoid the police, and there by the pale light of a few candles, as the gold followed the movement of the cards, the vaulted roof echoed with oaths and blasphemies instead of psalms. Then when their game was finished these rakes ate and drank and revelled and rioted until dawn.

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"About 1832 some mendicant friars established themselves there. They had put a bell in the old Roman belfry, and rang it on Sundays. But they rang in vain; nobody came up the hill to their offices, for they had no faith in them. The Duchess de Berry about this time had come to Provence to raise the Carlists against Louis Philippe, and I remember it being whispered that these runaway friars were nothing but Spanish bandits under their black robes plotting some dubious intrigue.

"Following these friars a worthy native of Cavaillon, M. Donnat, came and started a boarding-school for boys at the Convent of Saint-Michel, which he had bought on credit.

"He was an old bachelor, yellow and swarthy in complexion, with lank hair, flat nose, large mouth with prominent teeth, in a long black frock-coat and tanned shoes. Very devout, and as poor as a church mouse, he had made shift to start his school and to find pupils without a penny to bless himself with.

"For instance, he would go to Graveson, or Tarascon, or Barbentane or Saint-Pierre to a farmer who had boys.

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"'I have come to tell you,' he would say, 'that I have opened a school at Saint-Michel de Frigolet. You have thus at your very door an excellent institution to which you can send your sons and have them prepared for their examinations.'

"'My dear sir,' the father of the family would reply, 'that may be all very well for rich people, but we are not the sort of folk to give our boys so much learning. They will have quite enough for working on the land.'

"'Look here,' M. Donnat would say, 'there is nothing better than a good education. Don't worry about payment. Give me every year so many measures of corn, so many casks of wine, so many drums of oil, and arrange matters in that way.'

"So the worthy farmer would send his children to Saint-Michel de Frigolet.

"Then I suppose M. Donnat would go to a tradesman and begin thus:

"'What a fine boy you have there! He looks sharp enough, too. I suppose you are not going to turn him into a counter-jumper.'

"'Oh, sir, if we only could, we should be glad to give him a little education, but schools are dear, and when there isn't much money—!'

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"'If it's a question of a school,' M. Donnat would reply, 'send him to mine at Saint-Michel de Frigolet. We will teach him Latin and make a man of him. As for payment, let it come out of the shop. You will have an extra customer in me, and a very good customer too.'

"And then and there the shopkeeper would promise him his son.

"Another time he would pass a carpenter's house, and supposing he saw a child playing in the gutter who looked pale, he would say to his mother: 'What's the matter with this pretty little fellow? He looks very white. Is he ill, or has he been eating cinders?'

"'Oh, no,' she would reply, 'it is always playing about that makes him look like that. Play is meat and drink to him, sir.'

"'Well, then, why not send him to my school at Saint-Michel de Frigolet?' M. Donnat would say. 'The good air alone will give him rosy cheeks in a fortnight. And he will be watched over and taught his lessons; and when he has been well educated he will find an easier occupation than a carpenter's.'

"'Ah, sir! But when one is poor!'

"'Don't trouble about that. We have up there I don't know how many doors and windows to mend. I can promise your husband more work as a carpenter than he will know how to get through; and so, my good woman, we shall settle the matter of fees.'

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"So this child would also find himself at Saint-Michel, with those of the butcher, the baker and the candlestick-maker, and by these means M. Donnat collected into his school about forty boys, of whom I was one. Out of them all, I and a few others were there for a money payment, but three-quarters of them were paid for in kind, or by the labour of their parents. In a word, M. Donnat had solved the problem of the Bank of Exchange, quite simply and without any fuss, which the celebrated Proudhon tried in vain to establish in Paris in 1848....

"In those days Saint-Michel was of much less importance than it has since become. There was left just the cloister of the Augustinian monks, with its green in the middle of the court; to the south the refectory and chapter-house; then the dilapidated church of St. Michael, with its frescoes of the damned, and of demons armed with forks, and the battle between the devil and the great archangel in the middle; and then the kitchen and stables.

"But apart from this little group of buildings there was a buttressed chapel, dedicated to Our Lady of Succour, with a porch in front of it. Masses of ivy covered the walls, and the interior was lined with gilded carvings which enclosed pictures said to be by Mignard representing scenes in the life of the Virgin. Anne of Austria, mother of Louis XIV, had given these decorations in accordance with a vow she had made to the Virgin if she should bear a son.

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"This chapel, a real gem, hidden in the mountains, had been saved during the Revolution by the good people who piled up fagots under the porch and hid the entrance. It was there that every morning in the year, at five o'clock in summer and six in winter, we were taken to hear Mass; it was there that I prayed, I remember—we all prayed—with a faith that was really angelic....

"The little hills all around were covered with thyme, rosemary, asphodel, box and lavender. In odd corners there were vines, which produced a wine of some repute—the wine of Frigolet; patches of olives on the lower slopes; plantations of almond-trees, twisted, dark and stunted, on the stony ground; and wild fig-trees in the clefts of the rocks. This sparse vegetation was all that these rugged hills could show; the rest was nothing but waste and scattered rocks. But how delicious it smelt! The scent of the mountains at sunrise intoxicated us....

"We became as rugged as a troop of gipsies. But how we revelled in these hills and gorges and ravines, with their sonorous Provençal names ... eternal monuments of the country and its language, all embalmed in thyme and rosemary and lavender, all illumined in gold and azure. Oh, sweet land of scents and colours and delights and illusions, what happiness, what dreams of paradise thou didst reveal to my childhood!"^[31]

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This idyllic existence came suddenly to an end. M. Donnat, being frequently away collecting pupils, neglected to educate them when he had found them, and being anxious to increase his numbers took pupils who paid little or nothing, and they were not those who ate the least. One morning the cook disappeared.

"No cook, no broth for us. The masters left us in the lurch one after the other. M. Donnat had disappeared. His poor old mother boiled us some potatoes for a few days, and then his father said to us one morning, 'Children, there is nothing more to eat; you had better go home.'"^[32]

This was the end of poor M. Donnat's experiment, and he finally died in an almshouse.

The old monastery was abandoned for twelve years, and was then bought by a Premonstrant, who restored it under the rules of his order, which had ceased to exist in France.

"Thanks to the activity and preaching and begging of this ardent zealot, the little monastery grew enormously. Numerous crenellated buildings were added to it, a new, magnificently decorated church was built, with a nave and two aisles and two towers. A hundred monks or novices occupied its cells, and every Sunday the neighbouring people drove up to admire the elaborate pomp of their offices. The abbey of the White Fathers became so popular that when in 1880 the Republic ordered the convents to be closed a thousand peasants or inhabitants of the plains shut themselves up in it to protest against the execution of the decree. And it was then that we saw a whole army on the march—cavalry, infantry, generals and captains, with their commissariat and all the apparatus of war—and encamping round the Convent of Saint-Michel de Frigolet, seriously undertaking the siege of a comic-opera citadel, which would have given in to four or five gendarmes."^[33]

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It may be remembered that the romantic heart of the immortal Tartarin was stirred within him to take part in these proceedings. Equipped with a regular arsenal of weapons, he led his followers up the hill one dark night and taking immense pains to circumvent the investing troops crawled laboriously to the gates of the monastery. As he was crouching behind a stone, an officer on guard, who had often met him at his club, called out affably, "Bon soir, M. Tartarin," and made no difficulty whatever about his proceeding. The more people there were inside the monastery to consume its stock of provisions the quicker the siege would end. It has been made the basis of other stories and poems, but Mistral assures us that none of them are half as comic as were the facts themselves. I have read elsewhere that two thousand soldiers, horse and foot, united to expel twenty recalcitrant but unarmed monks, who were finally reduced by hunger and led triumphantly between two files of dragoons to Tarascon.

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I do not know when or how the monks came back to their monastery, but they were finally expelled with all the rest ten years ago, and settled themselves somewhere in Belgium.

Well, you will agree that Saint-Michel de Frigolet was a place to see. I got up to it by a winding track among the hills. It was a clear, sunny morning, and the bees were humming among the scented herbs that give such a character to these stony hills, just as they did in the poet's happy childhood. On this side of the hill were a few olives here and there, but no other sign of cultivation until I came to the top of a hill, where there was a patch of dug ground, and beyond it a collection of pinnacles and walls conveying the impression that I had unexpectedly hit upon a large modern cemetery.

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The first building I came to was a tall, jerry-built structure which seemed to have been used as a sort of factory. Its doors were open and its chambers empty and already beginning to fall to pieces. I walked down the hill between this and another building of the same sort, modern, hideous and deserted, and came to a large church, which looked on the outside much like a pretentious Nonconformist chapel in a London suburb. The west doors stood open, and I looked over an iron railing to find the interior blazing with gold and bright blues and reds and greens on every inch of wall and roof, and with coloured windows to match. At first sight it looked gorgeous, at second, its gorgeousness was seen to be mere garish vulgarity. The sacristan was inside, and I pushed open the iron gate and went in. He showed me the glories of the church with pride. He said that the decorations alone had cost one million six hundred thousand francs, which is £64,000, and the more I looked the more depressed I became at the senseless, conscienceless waste of it all. This was the building that the Premonstrants had erected in 1854, the "magnificently decorated church" to which Mistral describes all the neighbouring countryside flocking to admire the elaborate pomp of its offices. But all Mistral's artistic genius went into his poetry. He seems to have been incapable of appreciating the art that surrounded him so richly. I was told that the tomb he had erected for himself in the churchyard at Maillane was a close copy of the Pavillon de la Reine Jeanne at Les Baux, but that he had substituted the heads of favourite dogs for the carvings on the keystones of the arches; and I came across another instance of his lack of artistic understanding later on in his Musée Arlaten.

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The Premonstrants have for their object the celebration of the ceremonies of the Church with the highest possible degree of elaboration, and I suppose that when they acquired this monastery money was lavished upon them for enriching it. It was the same spirit, one would have said, that had created the treasures of ecclesiastical art and architecture of which Provence is so full, but if so, what had become of its creative force? And yet the people—the uncontaminated sons of the soil, to whom the latest doctrine would have us look for the truest appreciation of art—flocked to this pinchbeck shrine, and took its gaudy ignorance for a true revival of ancient splendours.

The sacristan took me over the rest of the buildings. They had all been bought a few years

before by a rich priest who admirably uses them for the training of boys whom he sends out to the colonies. He has bought farms and large tracts of land all around, and the score or so of youths that he looks after work on them. I should have liked a chat with him, but he was away for the day, and I suppose the boys were all out at work, for I did not see any of them.

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Some of the buildings that were used by the original monks—and I suppose also by M. Donnat—are used now; others, even of the newer ones, are empty and some of them dilapidated. I was shown the library—two big rooms fitted up with painted deal shelves from which all the books had been removed. They looked poor and desolate, and there was not a trace of architectural dignity about anything else I saw that had been built in the last century, though it was all convenient enough for its purpose.

And yet there was the old church which these aspiring religionists had left to its quiet decay while they built their vulgar modern one, the sweet little peaceful cloister, the chapel of Our Lady of Succour, which Mistral has described, with its gilded Louis XIV *boiseries* round the altar, from which, however, the pictures had been removed. They had models around them, if they had had the wit to use them.

I went down the expensively embanked road towards Graveson, when I had seen all that there was to see. It was lined on either side with heavily built shrines exhibiting the Stations of the Cross, which looked like the rooks of a set of clumsy chessmen. And the last thing I saw of this derelict monument of bad taste, before the windings of the road hid it, was a large cross toppling over sideways, as if even that had not been built to last.

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CHAPTER XXI

Villeneuve-sur-Avignon

My walking was done. I had another day and a half for Avignon and a day and a half for Arles, and that was to be the extent of this expedition. I wish it could have included Carcassonne, which is not, however, in Provence. But neither are Nîmes nor Aigues-Mortes, nor Saintes-Maries nor Saint-Gilles, strictly speaking. The old province of Provence ended with the Rhône, and Languedoc began on the other side of it. I should have liked, too, to renew my acquaintance with Orange, and visited Montelimar, if only for the sake of its *nougât*, and Martigues, and half a dozen other towns. But it is not a bad thing to leave out some places in a country one loves. There is always something to come back for.

I have said nothing yet about Villeneuve, which, by the bye, is also in Languedoc; but one can never forget it in Avignon. The great fort of St. André frowns across the river on to the papal city; and the tower of Philip le Bel, at which the Pont Bénézet used to end, is a conspicuous object on the lower ground.

I suppose the two cities, one very much alive, the other almost dead, are about a mile apart. The two branches of the Rhône and the Isle de Barthelasse are between them. It seems a long way round by the suspension bridge on a hot day, but it is worth going there, if only to see Avignon from the other side. The city stands up magnificently, its rock crowned by the cathedral and the palace. [302]

But there is much to see in Villeneuve itself. There is a fine fourteenth century church, which contains among other treasures a wonderful ivory virgin and child, coloured, which was presented by Cardinal Arnaud de Via, nephew of Pope John XXII, who founded the church in 1333. It is kept in an ancient safe in the sacristy, and there is a tremendous fuss of unlocking by various keys when it is shown.

There is also the very fine Gothic tomb of Pope Innocent VI, which, although much restored, is still in better preservation than the not dissimilar one of John XXII in the cathedral at Avignon.

"When seen by Mérimée in 1834," writes Mr. Okey, "the monument was in the possession of a poor vine-grower and used as a cupboard; casks were piled up against it, and all the beautiful alabaster statuettes had been destroyed or sold. Another visitor of the period saw the tomb in use as a rabbit hutch."^[34] [303]

The tomb stands in the middle of the little chapel of the Hôpital, which also contains a small collection of paintings, one at least of which is of first-rate importance. It represents the coronation of the Virgin. It was long attributed to King René, as were most of the pictures of its date of which the authorship was doubtful, then to Jan van Eyck, and then to Van der Meere. But in 1889 the contract for its painting was discovered, "drawn up in the spicer's shop of Jean Brea at Avignon, between a priest, Jean de Montagnac, and Master Enguerrand Charonton, of Laon, and dated April 24, 1453." As this contract shows the sort of terms on which artists of the middle ages worked, and how little was left to their own initiative, and is an interesting document besides, it is worth quoting Mr. Okey's mention of it.

"Every detail is specified, narrowly and precisely, as in a contract for building a house, and in order that the artist may have no excuse for not following the specification, the details are written in French, whereas the terms of the contract are in Latin. First, there was to be the representation of a Paradise, and in this Paradise must be (*doit estre*) the Holy Trinity. There is to be no difference between the Father and the Son, and the Holy Ghost must be in the form of a dove. Our Lady is to be crowned by the said Holy Trinity, and the vestments are to be rich; that of Our Lady is to be cloth of white damask, figured as may seem best to the said master. The disposition of the angels and archangels, the cherubim, seraphim, prophets, patriarchs and saints is specified in elaborate detail: moreover, all the estates of the world are to be represented in the Paradise. Above Paradise are to be the heavens, with sun and moon, and the Church of St. Peter, and the walls of Rome are to be figured over against the setting sun; and at the issue of the church is to be a pine cone of bronze; thence spacious steps are to descend to the great piazza, and a street is to lead to the bridge of St. Angelo, with houses and shops of all kinds. The castle of St. Angelo must be also seen and many churches; the Tiber is to be shown starting from Rome and entering the sea; and on the sea are to be a certain number of galleys and ships. Beyond the sea must be figured part of Jerusalem: first, the Mount of Olives and the Crucifixion of my Saviour and a Carthusian in prayer at the foot of the cross; and a little further the sepulchre of my Saviour, and an angel saying: *Surrexit, non est hic*. At the foot of the sepulchre shall be two (persons) praying; and at the right side, the Vale of Jehosaphat, between two mountains, and in the valley a church with the tomb of Our Lady, and an angel saying: *Assumpta est*, etc., and there shall be a figure praying at the foot of the tomb. On the left is to be a valley, wherein are three persons of one and the same age, and from all these three shall shine forth rays of the sun, and there shall be seen Abraham coming out of his tent and worshipping the said three persons, saying, *Domini si inveni*, etc.; on the second mountain shall be Moses tending his sheep, and a young girl playing the pipes, and Our Lord in the burning bush, and Our Lord shall say: *Moyses, Moyses*, and Moses shall answer, *Assum*. And on the right shall be Purgatory with angels leading forth rejoicing those that are going to Paradise, whereat the devils shall show forth great grief. On the left side shall be Hell, and an angel is to be seen comforting the souls in Purgatory. Then in the part where Hell is shall be a devil, very hideous, turning his back to the angel and casting certain souls into Hell which other devils are handing to him. In Hell and Purgatory, too, all estates of the world are to be represented according to the judgment of the master. The said picture is to be painted in fine oil colour, and the blue must not be German blue but fine blue of Acre; German blue may, however, be used on the border. The gold used for the picture and the border must be fine burnished gold. The said master is to display all his science in [304]

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the representation of the Holy Trinity and the Blessed Virgin, and the rest may be painted according to his conscience. On the reverse of the picture is to be painted a fine cloth of crimson damask figured with fleur-de-lys. The said master is to have the said picture faithfully done by St. Michael's Day, and to be paid 120 florins at 24 soldi to the florin, of which sum the master had received 40 florins on account; the balance is to be paid—20 florins when the picture was half finished; 40, according to the rate of the progress of the work thereafter; and the remaining 20 florins when the picture was completed and delivered at the Carthusian Church."^[35]

Almost an anecdotal picture! But a very beautiful one. It was amusing to stand before it with this description in one's hand and pick out the various commissions which Master Enguerrand Charonton so conscientiously fulfilled. They could do these things, even at that early date, without sacrificing composition or anything that is the mark of a great picture in all ages. I think there are not many artists who could do it now. [307]

The sleepy high street, or what corresponded to such, of the once famous city is full of memorials of its past grandeur, although they are for the most part hidden behind the rows of ordinary looking house-fronts. There are courtyards surrounded by stately buildings, deposed from their once high estate, when the princes of the Church and the great nobles of Provence had their summer palaces here; but the main surprise that Villeneuve holds out to the visitor is the ruins of the great charter house of the Val de Benediction, which was founded by Innocent III, and so grew in importance that it became the second of the Order.

It is a surprising place to visit. The circuit of the walls was a full mile round, and they are mostly standing on the two sides towards the open country. On the other two sides there are streets, and the main entrance is in the Grande Rue—a fine gateway standing between the house-fronts and leading by a vaulted passage to what is left of the monastic buildings. These are all mixed up with houses and cottages, some rebuilt from the old materials, others adapted for modern dwellings out of the walls as they stood. At the Revolution the monastery was sacked, and its buildings sold in small lots. There are said to have been two hundred families of the poorer sort living within the walls, and there are still a very large number, although the whole is being very gradually bought up, and as much as possible of it restored as an historical monument. [308]

The church still stands, though in advanced ruin, and the chapel of the Holy Trinity, built by Innocent VI retains some of its frescoes. There are also the remains of a fine cloister, and in the cloister garth is the eighteenth century rotunda, built over the old well of St. Jean. To my mind, however, the interesting thing about these ruins are not the important remains, but the endless little ones that one comes across as one wanders about the narrow alleys and yards. There is probably not a hovel that has not got something about it that tells of the past. As I was poking about, two urchins accosted me and asked if I would like to see the *plafond*. They took me to a house standing in a row of others like it—a house of perhaps half a dozen rooms—and up a stone stair into a bedroom of which the ceiling was painted, not in the least ecclesiastically, but in a good eighteenth century style. It was in excellent preservation, and indeed the whole house, into some of the other rooms of which I peeped, was no more dilapidated than any house might be that had come down in the world, but not so very far. I do not know what purpose it may have served in the monastic days. I suppose there were those in this great monastery who lived much in the style of people outside, and this was the dwelling of one of them. The place was a town in itself, and not a very small one.



A COURTYARD IN VILLENEUVE



THE ROTUNDA AT VILLENEUVE

The photograph of the Rotunda will give some idea of the sort of buildings that now surround this and other remains of the past. A lane runs round the two sides of the old walls that do not face the town, and doors are cut into them leading to the houses inside, or into their yards. The clearing out must be a very slow process, if all the descendants of those who acquired the many "lots" at the Revolution are to be removed. I doubt if the result will be worth while, except here and there. The whole has been destroyed and altered past repair, and it is interesting enough in its present state.

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The mighty fort of St. André stands on the hill above the monastery. With its double fortress towers and frowning battlements, it is the most conspicuous object in Villeneuve as seen from Avignon, and Avignon is seen from its heights, as well as the wonderful stretch of country around, perhaps to greater advantage than from any other point.

Its long history was closed, except for later restorations, by an occupation which Mr. Okey describes as follows:

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"In the later years of the monarchy a post of artillery was stationed in the fort, and it was from the fire of a battery planted there that a young captain of artillery, one Napoleon Bonaparte, in 1793, overawed the city of Avignon, which was occupied by the Marseillais federalists who had declared against the Convention; and it was with the cannon seized at St. André that Bonaparte marched to Toulon and expelled the English from its harbour. The papal soldiery were ever objects of scorn to the royalists of Villeneuve, who dubbed them *patachines* (*petachina*, Italian for slipper), and taunted them with drilling under parasols—a pleasantry repaid by the Italians who hurled the epithet *luzers* (lizards) against the royalists, who were said to pass their time sunning themselves against the hot rocks of Villeneuve."^[36]

CHAPTER XXII

Arles

Of all the larger towns in Provence, Arles is perhaps the one that creates the deepest impression upon the visitor. Avignon is much finer, and its interest is at least as great as that of Arles, although it lacks that of Roman remains. And the Roman remains of Nîmes are finer than those of Arles, although Nîmes has very little mediæval interest. But both Avignon and Nîmes are thriving modern cities, while Arles is a comparatively small provincial town. Its ancient remains are everything, and you can never forget them in connection with it.

I do not remember any feeling of modernity at all about Arles. The streets are cobbled, narrow and puzzling. If you once get away from any central point you must use a map to get back again. I do not remember any modern houses or any large shops. It is a sleepy old town, and a pleasant one to wander about in, even when one has no immediate object in the direction of its outstanding antiquities.

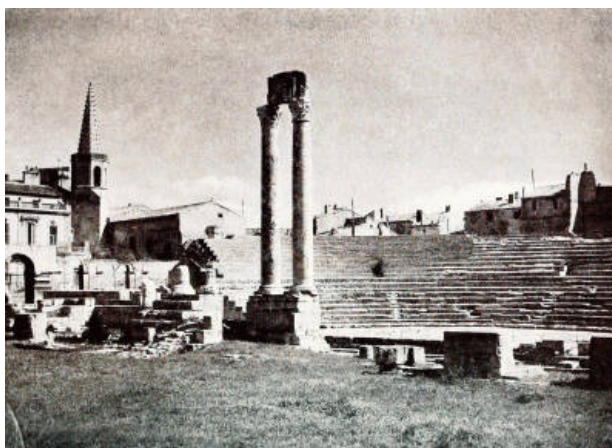
Of the Arena I need say little. The exterior is less striking than that of Nîmes, because it is not nearly so well preserved. The arches of the upper tier stand naked all the way round, and it is not possible anywhere to get an idea of what the exterior looked like without more knowledge and imagination than most visitors are likely to possess. The interior, as will be seen by the photograph, has been to some extent restored for spectacular purposes. As it was built to hold thirty thousand spectators, and the whole population of Arles is now about half that number, the ancient seats of honour afford ample accommodation, and the rest has been left to its ruin.

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But this ruin is really a considerable restoration in itself. The arenas, both at Arles and Nîmes, suffered many vicissitudes after the Roman occupation. The square tower above the entrance was a fortification of the Saracens, and there is another still standing which is not shown in the photograph. In the seventeenth century the whole area was crowded with houses. According to contemporary prints, the round tops of the arches, with the coping above them removed, formed the roofs of separate narrow dwellings; here and there extensions clung to the outside walls; the interior was a mass of buildings and alleys, and there was even a church. It was a little town within a town, and a very horrible one at certain times of its history, for it was the resort of criminals of the basest type, who made a sort of fortress of it. In 1640 the plague that ravaged Arles broke out first in this crowded den, and its inhabitants were shot down if they came out of it. It was not until 1825 that it began to be cleared of buildings, and a careful restoration was set in hand twenty years later and carried on slowly until the present considerable result was attained.



THE ARENA AT ARLES



THE GREEK THEATRE, ARLES

The remains of the Greek theatre are unfortunately even less complete, but they are enough to cause one to linger over this unique survival of ancient days. The two beautiful marble columns which remain give one an idea of what the proscenium must have been like. One is of white

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marble from Carrara, the other of African marble. Charles IX took eight columns of porphyry and one of verd-antique for shipment to Paris, and they were lost in the Rhône. One would willingly exchange the whole of the Arena—contenting oneself with that of Nîmes—for an equal preservation of the theatre. But its destruction dates very far back. It was in 441 that the Deacon Cyril aroused a fanaticism that led a Christian mob to attack and wreck it, and they left it in little better state than it is now. In 1664 a monastery was built with the materials, actually on the stage of the theatre itself.

This complete and sudden demolition, however, had the effect of preserving some precious objects which would otherwise have disappeared entirely. When excavations were made, possibly in preparation for the building of the monastery, there was brought to light the beautiful *Vénus d'Arles*, now in the Louvre, and there are other priceless remains of statuary and architecture in the Musée Lapidaire of Arles itself, which go to show what a treasure-house this theatre was; for the early iconoclasts paid special attention to the destruction of the statuary.

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Behind the stage of the theatre rises the Romanesque tower of the cathedral of St. Trophime. This wonderful church has suffered as little as anything of its date in Provence. Its carved façade is not so fine as that of St. Gilles, but it has been better preserved, and while St. Gilles has lost nearly everything that was behind its façade, St. Trophime has kept nearly everything.

The interior of the church is very solid and very dignified. It has little decoration, but the light that is let in on it is just enough to give it mystery and solemnity. The aisles are so narrow that looking up to the vaulting one has the impression of mere passages, but their narrowness is effective, and the whole structure conveys an uplifting sense of austerity.

The richness of the famous cloister, happily in good preservation, comes as something of a surprise when one steps into it from the dark church, though its earliest "walk" is of the same date as the portal and not less luxuriant in decoration. This beautiful cloister is one of the most satisfying things in all ecclesiastical Provence, and would make a visit to Arles memorable if there were nothing else there to see. A chapter might be written on its carvings alone, and its irregularities of date and of construction provide constant fresh interest. The photographs of the north and south walks will show the great variety that exists. The north is of the twelfth century, the south as it was altered at the end of the fourteenth, and the west is later still. At the south-east corner is a well, said to have been originally fed by a Roman aqueduct which was older than the amphitheatre, for the water rose in a channel cut through the rock beneath it.

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Mr. Henry James speaks of the Musée Lapidaire as the most Roman thing he knows of outside Rome, and, indeed, its contents, which are not so numerous as to confuse the mind, show what Arles had lost in the way of beauty centuries before St. Trophimus and other mediæval glories were bestowed upon it. I was pleased to come across, in Mr. James's pages, mention of the delightful little boy's head in marble, of the second century, which had particularly struck me. There is another similar one, not quite in such perfection, but even more tender and "naturalistique". One seems to know these little children, who died close upon two thousand years ago, and almost to love them.

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In the Musée are some of the finest of the early Christian tombs from the Alyscamps, which has enriched half the museums in Europe with its treasures. This ancient burying-place lies a little outside the town. It is a rather mournful avenue of poplars underneath which are the rows of stone coffers, all empty now, which remain of the many that once stood there, and an ancient ruined church at the end of it.

"Here," writes Mr. T. A. Cook, "was the true necropolis of Gaul, consecrated, as the legend runs, by the blessing of the Christ Himself, who appeared to St. Trophime upon this sacred spot.... At first a Roman burial-place, this cemetery gradually became the chosen bourne of every man who wished his body to await in peace the coming of the resurrection. By the twelfth century it was sufficient to place the corpse of some beloved dead, from Avignon or further, into a rude coffin, fashioned like a barrel, and to commit it to the Rhône, which brought its quiet charge in safety to the beach of La Roquette. No sacrilegious hands were ever laid upon that travelling bier; for once a man of Beaucaire had robbed the coffin that was floating past his bridge, and straightway the corpse remained immovable in the current of the river, and stayed there until the thief confessed his crime and put the jewels back."^[37]



THE CLOISTERS, SOUTH WALK, ST. TROPHIME



THE CLOISTERS, NORTH WALK, ST. TROPHIME

The ancient church of St. Honorat, at the end of the avenue, is in a sad state of desolation, for its ruin went very far before what was left of it began to be cared for. I remember little of it but the octagonal domed belfry which gives it its character in the scene, the enormous round pillars of the interior, and a side chapel which interested me because it belonged to the Porcelets of Les Baux. St. Honorat was only one of nineteen churches and chapels within the Alyscamps when it was most famous. The translation of the body of St. Trophimus to the cathedral in 1152 took away something of its prestige. It was served by the monks of St. Victor of Marseilles until the middle of the fifteenth century, by which time the people of Arles seem to have realized that they had an almost inexhaustible supply of coveted Christian antiquities to dispose of, and ever since the sixteenth century the spoliation has been going on. There is nothing of much value left compared with what can be seen of the treasures of the Alyscamps elsewhere, and even the sacred ground has been whittled away by degrees, and the railway has set up workshops on the very spot where so many Christians of the first centuries were buried. One hears the clang of metal as one walks along the melancholy avenue, or stands in the empty ruined church. The glory has all departed, and most of the romance.

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There are many other memories of the past in Arles, but they need not detain us. The ancient city has of late years been the centre of the Provençal revival of the *Félibres*, and we may take leave of it as well as of the charming land of Provence, with a glance at the Musée Arlaten, which owes its foundation to the patriotism and largely to the generosity of Mistral.

It is housed in a fine old mansion built round a courtyard in which have lately been discovered some valuable Roman remains. It fills all the rooms and passages of the first floor and is already an ethnological and local museum of great value. They call it the Palace of the *Félibrige*, and it aims to sum up all the life and traditions of Provence. "Art, letters, customs, manners, pottery, costumes, furniture," announces the catalogue, "all are there. The whole of Provence unfolds itself and lives again in all its aspects in these admirable galleries, masterpieces of patience as well as genius."

The patience as well as the genius have been mostly Mistral's. His neat, angular writing is to be seen on nearly all the labels, and up to the very week before his death he came regularly to the museum one day every week and worked there cataloguing and arranging. As I was waiting at Graveson station after visiting Saint-Michel de Frigolet, the station-master told me how much they should miss him. Every Thursday he would come over from Maillane, in the old diligence, and take the train to Arles. He talked a great deal about his museum. It was his pride and his chief interest of latter years.

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One of the smaller rooms is called the *Salo Mistralenco*, or the *Cabinet de Mistral*. "The walls of this *salle d'honneur* are decorated with illustrations of *Mireille*, *Nerte*, *Calendal*, &c. On the chimneypiece a superb bust of the Master. In glass cases: the works of Mistral, things that have belonged to him, the 'original' of the great Nobel Prize adjudged to the poet, and a letter to the same from Roosevelt, President of the United States, etc. In the middle of the *salle*, a wonderful reliquary estimated at over 10,000 francs, the gift of M. Mistral-Bernard of Saint-Remy: it contains the hair, the christening robe and the cradle of the infant Mistral; in the cradle the manuscript of 'Mireille.'"

There may seem something a little odd to English ideas in this naïve acceptance of immortality, and preparation for the veneration of posterity, in a man's own lifetime. But Mistral's advanced years may excuse it, if excuse is needed. Long ago he saw his cause triumph, and it is a cause that looms big in Provence. He could hardly help knowing that he was its central figure, and from the very first he has laid all the fame that it brought him at the feet of his beloved country. In any case the slight anachronism will soon disappear. It was already beginning to fade away when I was there in the week after his death, and saw the chamber darkened and the pathetic reminders of his infancy all swathed and wreathed in black.

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ARLES, THE ALYSCAMPS



BOY'S HEAD IN MARBLE, MUSÉE LAPIDAIRE, ARLES

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Two of the larger rooms have been given up to a kind of wax-work show, the one of a Christmas Eve feast in the kitchen of a Provençal farm, the other of the ceremonies surrounding the birth of a child. The descriptions in the catalogue, probably written by Mistral himself, may be quoted.

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"Salle de Noël.—Here is Christmas Eve represented in all the truth of its poetry, very spaciouly and completely, in the kitchen of a Provençal 'mas.' A dozen very expressive *mannequins* in coloured stucco by M. Férigoule represent the inhabitants of the farm.... On the table; three cloths and three candles; the *pain calendal* is served with the great pike cooked with black olives, and with snails, celery, artichokes, brandied raisins, and the little cask of mulled wine. By the hearth, facing the grandmother, the head of the house sprinkles with wine and blesses the Yule log. Round the table the servants mix with the masters: here family simplicity equalizes all ranks.

"Chambre Conjugale.—Another group, superb in arrangement, expression and poetry. In the room, discreetly lighted, there arrive, wonderfully dressed in Arlésian costume, the relations and friends of the young mother, lying with her new-born child in a bed of the fifteenth century. The visitors are bringing the symbolical and traditional gifts, of bread, salt, a match and an egg. They are expressing the customary wishes: *Sage coume la sau;—bon coume lou pan;—plen coume un ion;—dre coume uno brouqueto*; which means, May your child be as wholesome as salt, as good as bread, as full as an egg, and as straight as a match. With what jealous care does the grandmother, seated apart, seem to watch that those coming and going shall behave quietly! Bravo, M. Férigoule, for your composition; you have done the work of an artist. The scene, indeed, is religious in its impression."

Well, I suppose M. Férigoule has done his work as well as such work can be done; but as for

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art!—it is the negation of all art, this imitation of life, which is as dead as the stuff of which it is made. The more realistic such figures are the more dreadful they are. For my part I can never look at them without a shudder, and those in the Musée Arlaten took away all my pleasure in the careful and interesting furnishing of the rooms, in which they stand and sit and lie in their horrible immobility. If only they were taken out, how imagination might play about the rooms themselves, which contain every detail of the warm picturesque home-life of the past, now fading away. With them, imagination is killed. It is as if the rooms had been prepared for corpses.

But one must not let one's disgust for these *mannequins*, which cannot be felt by everybody, or so great a man as Mistral would not have been so pleased with them, stand for one's whole impression of this interesting museum. I spent a couple of hours in it very happily employed in gathering up the pleasure that this spring expedition in Provence had brought me. It touches on all the life and all the memories of that fascinating country, and it is especially rich in the accessories of the ancient and picturesque work of the soil, perhaps more ancient and more picturesque in Provence than in most countries. In Mistral's youth there can have been little change from the ways of centuries past. He lived to see much that made his country unlike others disappear, and gathered what he could in his museum so that it should not be forgotten. But it has not all disappeared. Except here and there, men and women have given up their old distinctive costumes, harvests are reaped by machinery, the Rhône no longer bears its freights drawn by the huge teams of horses or oxen, the festivals of the church do not see every house decked and every street strewn with green. But the queenly Arlésian women still wear their becoming coifs; and on high days and holidays some of the rich dresses, of which there is such a variety in this museum, are taken out of old coffers and presses, in the great country farmhouses the old furniture that has descended from father to son is polished and cherished, and many of the old customs are kept up. The harvest of the olives sees the girls of Provence filling their baskets as they did in the days of Mireille, and the old-fashioned mills grind out their tons of rich oil. The shepherds lead their flocks over the stony, herb-scented hills as they led them when Marius drove out the barbarians. The wild bulls and horses roam the plains of the Camargue, and the life of the men who have to do with them is not changed.

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Of all these things, and many others, there is evidence in the Musée Arlaten, and walking through the country one sees it for one's self, enough at least to make one love the fair sunburnt land that holds so many memories, and to love its roads and fields and hills no less than the treasures it hoards in its ancient cities.

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THE END.

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APPENDIX

The Provençal Legend

Dr. M. R. James has sent me a pamphlet, "Saint Lazare et Saint Maximin," by Dom G. Morin, which, although published in Paris in 1897, he considers to be the last word on the Provence legends of St. Lazarus, etc. I summarize its conclusions shortly.

1. Dom Morin produces evidence that the cult of St. Lazarus by the Church of Marseilles, which dates at least from the eleventh century, has, for historic foundation, the burial of a bishop of that name in the crypt of the Abbey of Saint-Victor. This was not the Lazarus of the New Testament, but most probably a Bishop of Aix in the first half of the fifth century, who was dispossessed of his See for the part that he had taken in the Pelagian controversy, and came to end his days with the Bishop of Marseilles, who had ordained him.

2. For the cult of the saints of Saint-Maximin there is an ingenious and probable explanation. In the ancient town of Billom, in the Auvergne, and in the adjacent villages, the relics of several saints were venerated from a very early date. Among them were St. Maximin, a Confessor, perhaps a Bishop; St. Sidonius, who was none other than Sidonius Apollinaris, the fifth century poet and orator; St. Marcelle, a shepherdess for whom the villagers of Chauriat have had from time immemorial a deep veneration.

Now these are not names that are to be found scattered all over the martyrologies. Besides those of Billom and Saint-Maximin, there are only three or four other St. Maximins, one St. Sidonius, and two St. Marcelles; and there are not two of any of them, otherwise, who can be referred to the same locality or between whom there exists any connection whatever. Dom Morin can find no other explanation of this curious 'bilocation' than by supposing a translation of relics either from Auvergne to Provence or from Provence to Auvergne; and he gives good reasons for preferring the first supposition.

June, 1920.

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FOOTNOTES:

- [1] Now Sir T. A. Cook.
- [2] Now Professor Okey.
- [3] I have added others recently bought.
- [4] According to the tradition held from time immemorial by the churches of Provence, St. Mary Magdalene and St. Mary of Bethany were one and the same.
- [5] I have not been able to get a photograph of the Gloria, but some of the cherubs are to be seen over the Altar of the Crucifixion.
- [6] Plutarch.
- [7] Lancel, *La Provence*.
- [8] Now Provost of Eton.
- [9] I have since procured the accompanying photograph in Paris, but something seems to have been lost even in that, besides the fresh colouring.
- [10] Cook, *Old Provence*.
- [11] Mistral, *Mes Origines*.
- [12] Mistral, *Mes Origines*.
- [13] Mistral, *Mes Origines*.
- [14] Okey, *Avignon*.
- [15] Okey, *Avignon*.
- [16] Okey, *Avignon*.
- [17] Okey, *Avignon*.
- [18] Okey, *Avignon*.
- [19] Okey, *Avignon*.
- [20] Okey, *Avignon*.
- [21] Young, *Travels in France*.
- [22] The robust Dr. Samuel Butler, Bishop of Lichfield, wrote in his diary, in 1822: "I could not contemplate from this spot (the Capitol), which commands all the monuments of Ancient Rome, without feeling very strong sensations; in short I could not refrain from an actual gush of tears."
- [23] Casanova, *Mémoires*.
- [24] Okey, *Avignon*.
- [25] Baring-Gould, *In Troubadour Land*.
- [26] Cook, *Old Provence*.
- [27] Cook, *Old Provence*.
- [28] Cook, *Old Provence*.
- [29] James, *A Little Town in France*.
- [30] Cook, *Old Provence*.
- [31] Mistral, *Mes Origines*.
- [32] Mistral, *Mes Origines*.
- [33] Mistral, *Mes Origines*.
- [34] Okey, *Avignon*.
- [35] Okey, *Avignon*.
- [36] Okey, *Avignon*.
- [37] Cook, *Old Provence*.

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