

*Rambles around
French Châteaux*

140



Frances M. Gostling

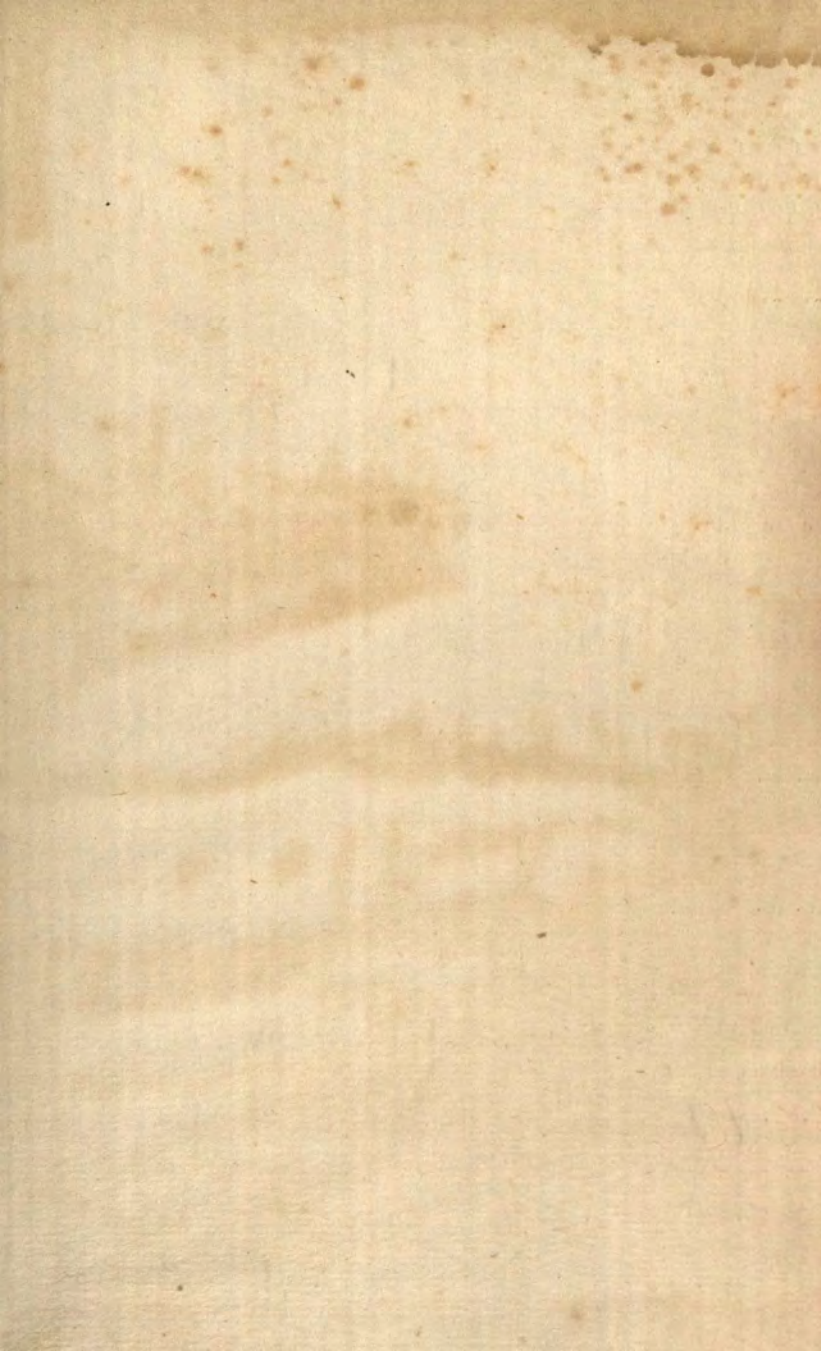
5041/56

100.4

62

}}.





dezyntekowano
gazem Rotinox

12.7.81.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH
CHÂTEAUX

**A SELECTION FROM
MILLS & BOON'S
LIST OF GENERAL LITERATURE**

THE ENGLISH COURT IN EXILE. By E. and M. S. GREW. With 16 Illustrations. Demy 8vo, 15s. net.

SIXTY-EIGHT YEARS ON THE STAGE. By Mrs. CHARLES CALVERT. With a Frontispiece in Photogravure, 20 Illustrations, and many Facsimiles. Demy 8vo, 10s. 6d. net.

FORTY YEARS OF SONG. By Madame ALBANI. With a Frontispiece in Photogravure, 16 Illustrations, and many Facsimiles. Demy 8vo, 10s. 6d. net.

MY ITALIAN YEAR. By RICHARD BAGOT. With 25 Illustrations. Demy 8vo, 10s. 6d. net.

TURKEY AND THE TURKS. By Z. DUCKETT FERRIMAN. With 16 Illustrations. Demy 8vo, 10s. 6d. net.

THE WONDERFUL WEALD, AND THE QUEST OF THE CROCK OF GOLD. By ARTHUR BECKETT. With 20 Illustrations in Colour by ERNEST MARILLIER. Demy 8vo, 10s. 6d. net.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX. By FRANCES M. GOSTLING. With 5 Illustrations in Colour, 33 from Photographs, and a Map. Crown 8vo, 6s.

RAMBLES IN THE BLACK FOREST. By I. A. R. WYLIE, Author of "My German Year." With 5 Illustrations in Colour and 24 from Photographs. Crown 8vo, 6s.

THE TOWN OF MORALITY; or, The Narrative of One who Lived here for a Time. By C. H. R. Crown 8vo, 6s.

OUT OF THE IVORY PALACES. By P. H. DITCHFIELD, M.A., F.S.A. With 12 Illustrations. Crown 8vo, 6s.

THE ZOO CONVERSATION BOOK. By EDMUND SELOUS. Illustrated by J. A. SHEPHEARD. Crown 8vo, 5s. net.

NERVES AND THE NERVOUS. By EDWIN ASH, M.D.(Lond.). Crown 8vo, 5s. net.

CANNED CLASSICS, AND OTHER VERSES. By HARRY GRAHAM. Profusely Illustrated by LEWIS BAUMER. Crown 4to, 3s. 6d. net.

QUEERY LEARY NONSENSE. Being a Lear Nonsense Book, with a long Introduction by the Earl of CROMER, and Edited by Lady STRACHEY of Sutton Court. With 50 Illustrations in Colour and Line. Crown 4to, 3s. 6d. net.

THE GARDEN OF SONG. Edited by HAROLD SIMPSON. Fcap. 8vo, 2s. 6d. net.





"SORTIE DE LA GRANDE MESSE." SAINT-TROPHIME, ARLES.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

BY

FRANCES M. GOSTLING

AUTHOR OF "THE BRETONS AT HOME"

"AUVERGNE AND ITS PEOPLE" "BRETON FOLK-SONGS"

TRANSLATOR OF "LAND OF PARDONS" ETC.

WITH FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR AND
THIRTY-THREE FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

CBGiÓŚ, ul. Twarda 51/55

tel. 22 69-78-773



Wa5150024

MILLS & BOON, LIMITED

49 RUPERT STREET

LONDON, W.

Published 1911



140.

NH-42056/15

AUTHOR'S PREFACE



THIS book is the story of a journey, a long journey, as will be seen by a glance at the map. I had been asked to write a book about the Castles of France, and, though many of them were already old friends, I felt I must renew my acquaintance with them before setting down my impressions. They are probably old friends of yours also, but I hope, nevertheless, you will find something to interest you in my little volume, for old friends are sometimes even more captivating than new. You may wish sometimes, as I did often, that we could linger here and there, and grow familiar with the history and atmosphere of each town and village. It seems a pity to dismiss in a few pages such wonders as Blois, Amboise, Chinon. But others have written of "Châteauland" far better than I could hope to do. So I have limited myself to the account of this five weeks' journey, with the impressions and souvenirs I gathered *en route*; and I can assure my readers that no study could be more impressive and illuminating, than the successive visits, in one

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

journey, to all these historic homes. As one passes from château to château, gaining a glimpse here, a vision there, the scattered stories and legends begin to arrange themselves in sequence, till the dead past lives again, and we see how the France of to-day is but the natural outcome of the Gaul of the past. The rude tribes become united into the great provinces, the provinces merge into the monarchy, the monarchy itself gives way before the republic. It is a wonderful study—this of the Castles of France; nothing less than the study of the life of a nation. Of course our time was all too short—what else can you expect when your husband is a doctor? What I hope is, that my book may fall into the hands of some who are not so handicapped, and that they may, in a more leisurely and thorough fashion, follow in my steps. You will have such a glorious time; you will see France as it was, as it is, and even, perhaps, gain some idea of what it will become in the future, which is the most interesting problem of all, is it not?

FRANCES M. GOSTLING.

BARMINGHAM,
WORTHING,
Aug. 1911.

INTRODUCTION



C'EST une excellente façon de visiter la France que de la voir Châteaux par Châteaux. Ils font sa parure et peu de pays peuvent être fiers d'aussi belles demeures. L'histoire de la nation reste écrite dans ces maisons seigneuriales qui sont des témoins du passé, aussi sûrs, aussi précis que des Chroniques. Malheureusement les révolutions en ont détruit un grand nombre ; dans ceux qui restent, les siècles ont fixés leur souvenir ; l'âme des ancêtres y révèle son secret, son idéal de vie, de gloire et de force. Leur ruine même est éloquente et, pour qui sait interroger les vieilles pierres, le Château des Papes à Avignon est aussi beau, aussi éloquent que Versailles ; les illustres maisons de la royauté avec les restes éclatants de leur splendeur, ne parlent pas un plus clair langage que les donjons démantelés de l'ancienne noblesse féodale.

Les Français, grands bâtisseurs, aimaient donner à la vie familiale un décor durable et somptueux, attestant la force et la richesse de la lignée. Ils furent servis par une nature variée, aux agréables sites, aux terrains coupés par les monts et les plaines, les eaux et les bois ; l'ardoise et la pierre mettaient des matériaux parfaits aux mains des ouvriers. Et ainsi le génie de la France parvint, au dire de tous, aux sommets de l'art architectural ; le gothique surtout qui a pris naissance et s'est

INTRODUCTION

développé sur notre sol. Nos cathédrales encore debout en sont une preuve, et il en fût de même de nos châteaux qui n'ont pas tous survécu comme elles. Ils instruisirent et perfectionnèrent des générations d'artistes, sculpteurs, ferronniers, huchiers ou tapissiers, qui gardèrent à la construction et à la décoration françaises, à travers les vicissitudes et les changements de styles, la primauté que proclama l'Europe entière. Ainsi jusqu'à la révolution de 1789 les traditions corporatives créèrent toujours à la France un patrimoine de beauté.

Le dix-huitième siècle mit son raffinement au service d'un luxe nouveau et de besoins plus semblables aux nôtres. Les seigneurs de la cour et les financiers de l'Ancien Régime apparaissent ainsi comme les héritiers et les continuateurs des évêques, des villes et des monastères du Moyen-Age. Dans l'intervalle, la souplesse du génie national s'était pliée aux transformations les plus diverses et le seizième siècle, par exemple, avait donné ces bijoux exquis, qui sont la création originale de la Renaissance française. Toujours se maintient et s'enrichit cette parure de la France, où les belles demeures abritèrent les fleurs épanouies de la race.

Les Français d'aujourd'hui aiment beaucoup que les étrangers goûtent avec sympathie les paysages de leur pays et les œuvres de leur passé.

Le livre de Madame Gostling ne nous fait connaître qu'une part de ces merveilles, mais son itinéraire est heureusement choisi ; il nous mène à travers les provinces les plus centrales, suit les routes les plus pittoresques, les villes les plus caractéristiques et ceux des châteaux dont la France est le plus fière ; en un mot c'est un aimable et vivant compagnon.

PIERRE DE NOLHAC,
Conservateur du Musée de Versailles.

CONTENTS



CHAPTER I

	PAGE
Le Havre — Lillebonne — Caudebec — Duclair — Rouen — Château Gaillard—Saint-Germain.	1

CHAPTER II

Saint-Cloud—Assassination of Henri III.—Death of Hen- riette d'Angleterre—Versailles—The Kings at Versailles	16
---	----

CHAPTER III

Fontainebleau—The Forest—The Hôtel d'Armagnac—The Palace and its Royal Inmates—Napoleon at Fontaine- bleau	34
--	----

CHAPTER IV

Sens — Saint Théodechilde — Auxerre — Saint Germain d'Auxerre	55
--	----

CHAPTER V

Thiers—Saint Genez—The Cutlers and Cardmakers of Thiers —Ambert—Foundation of Ambert — The Huguenots at Ambert—La Chaise Dieu—Legend of Saint Robert —Saint Anselm at La Chaise Dieu—Castle of Polignac .	71
--	----

CONTENTS

CHAPTER VI

PAGE

- A Night at Le Puy—Crossing the Cevennes—The Gorge of the Ardèche—Thueyts—Aubenas—Viviers—Bourg-Saint-Andéol—First View of the Rhone—Pont-Saint-Esprit 96

CHAPTER VII

- Orange—The Castle of the Princes of Orange—The Roman Antiquities—The Martyrs of Orange 113

CHAPTER VIII

- Avignon—Le Rocher des Doms—La Métropole—Benedict XII.—The Legend of Bénézet—Le Brave Crillon—La Reine Jeanne—The Palace of the Popes—Villeneuve—Fort-Saint-André 126

CHAPTER IX

- Vaucluse—Petrarch and Laura—The Story of the Building of the Aqueduct 152

CHAPTER X

- Tarascon—Saint Martha and the Tarasque—King René and the Fêtes of the Tarasque—The Tomb of Saint Martha—Beaucaire—The Story of the Drac 170

CHAPTER XI

- A Visit to Mistral—Saint-Rémy—Les Baux—The Troubadours and the Courts of Love 189

CHAPTER XII

- A Visit to Châteauneuf-du-Pape—The Castle of Roquemaure—Death of Pope Clement v.—Avignon by Night—The Bridge of Bénézet 214

CONTENTS

CHAPTER XIII

PAGE

Arles—Les Aliscamps—Herakles at Arles—Les Arènes— Saint Trophimus—The Cathedral—The Abbey of Mont- Majour—Saint-Gilles—Nîmes	227
--	-----

CHAPTER XIV

Montpellier—Béziers—Persecution of the Albigenses— Carcassonne—Story of Roger Trencavel and the Siege of Carcassonne	243
--	-----

CHAPTER XV

Alet—Quillan—The Story of the Making of the Road up the Gorge of Pierre-Lys—The Castle of Foix—Gaston Phœbus	260
--	-----

CHAPTER XVI

Toulouse—Charles VI. at Toulouse—The Church of Saint Sernin—Legend of Saint Saturnin and the Bull—The Cathedral—Cahors—The Siege by Henry of Navarre —The Rock Shelters of Les Eyzies—Monsieur Hauser and his Prehistoric Finds	276
---	-----

CHAPTER XVII

The Castle of Chalus—Siege by Richard Cœur-de-Lion— Limoges—Siege by Edward the Black Prince—Loches— The Donjon Keep—The Church of Saint Ours—Royal Castle of Loches	296
---	-----

CHAPTER XVIII

Chinon—The Castle of Chinon—Death of Henry Plantagenet and of Richard Cœur-de-Lion—Jeanne d'Arc at Chinon —Castle of Azay-le-Rideau—Castle of Langeais—Castle of Cinq-Mars—Castle of Luynes—Tours	311
--	-----

CONTENTS

CHAPTER XIX

	PAGE
The Castle of Chenonceaux—Castle of Amboise—Castle of Chaumont—Castle of Blois—Castle of Chambord . . .	326

CHAPTER XX

Châteaudun—Siege by the Germans—Story of Dunois . . .	341
---	-----

CHAPTER XXI

Le Mans—Berengaria of Navarre—Rennes—Saint Melaine —Bertrand du Guesclin—Mont-Saint-Michel—Story of King Arthur and the Giant of Mont-Saint-Michel . . .	351
--	-----

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

IN COLOUR

Sortie de la Grande Messe, Saint-Trophime, Arles. By L. Lelée	<i>Frontispiece</i>
At the Fountain. By C. R. Andreae	FACING PAGE 148
A Quiet Corner — La Cité — Carcassonne. By C. R. Andreae	256
Church of Saint Saturnin, Toulouse. By C. R. Andreae	280

*The Picture on the Cover depicts a typical Street in
Southern France*

IN MONOTONE

Château Gaillard	5
Saint-Germain	8
Fontainebleau	34
Auxerre	60
Ambert	86
La Chaise Dieu	90
The North Door of the Cathedral of Le Puy	98
The Arch of Marius, Orange	114
The Throne of the Popes, Avignon	129

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
The Tomb of Benedict XII., Cathedral of Avignon	130
The Castle of the Bishops of Cavailon, Vaucluse	163
La Tarasque. By M. Delor	172
Frédéric Mistral, 24th September 1910	195
Arc de Triomphe, Saint-Rémy	200
Le Château des Baux	203
The Bridge of Bénézet, Avignon	224
The Chapel of Saint Honorat, Les Aliscamps	235
The Oratory of Saint Trophimus, Mont-Majour	236
La petite Côte de la Cité, Carcassonne	252
La Cité, Carcassonne	258
The Gorge of Pierre Lys	262
Built-in Rock Shelters, still inhabited, Haute Laugerie	289
The Donjon of Loches	306
A Room in the Donjon, showing Carvings by the Prisoners	308
The House of Richard, Chinon	315
The Castle of Azay-le-Rideau. By J. Stanley Burmester	318
The Castle of Luynes. By J. Stanley Burmester	324
The Castle of Chenonceaux. By J. Stanley Burmester	326
The Castle of Amboise. By J. Stanley Burmester	330
The Entrance to the Castle of Blois	335
The Castle of Chambord. By J. Stanley Burmester	340
The Castle, Châteaudun	348
Château Branlant, Rennes	356

All the above Illustrations are from Photographs by W. A. & F. M. Gostling, with the exception of those to which the Artist's or Photographer's name is added.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

CHAPTER I

Le Havre—Lillebonne—Caudebec—Duclair—Rouen—Château
Gaillard—Saint-Germain.

SIX o'clock, and twilight falling. Already, in the east, a white moon is hanging like a great snowflake, and the west has faded to an amber glow. For miles and miles we have been making our way, slowly and painfully, along a road paved with cruel granite cubes, till gradually all consciousness of our surroundings has narrowed down to an intense overmastering desire to reach the journey's end.

All day we had been travelling up the valley of the Seine—the broad gracious valley, with its luscious meadows and stately rows of poplars, its white cliff villages, and sparkling sun-decked waters. We had only landed at Le Havre that morning, and the sense of our holiday was upon us. I remember breakfasting at a preposterous little café on the quay—"Le Ruban Bleu"—a

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

sort of French seaman's shelter, a place one would never dream of entering on any ordinary occasion. The coffee was chilly and weak, and, if our spirits had not been so high, the butter would have depressed them. But who can think of butter on the first morning of a ramble among the castles of France? Poor little "Ruban Bleu," with its stacks of unclean table-napkins, its carefully sanded floor, and wonderful pictures, intended, no doubt, to sustain the faltering intentions of the Blue Ribboner. There was "Le Buveur," looking regretfully at a great heap of barrels, evidently thinking of the good times he had had before he came to the end of his money; and a pale and rueful "Tempérant," contemplating an impossible-looking red villa—all he had to show as a result of twenty years of evenings spent at "Le Ruban Bleu"! And there was a naval combat between the great dreadnought "Tempérance" and a poor little insignificant cruiser called "Alcool," whose crew were trying to escape on barrels of gin and whisky.

As we came out of the white-curtained door, the quay was waking up. Dogs were stretching themselves after their night's sleep, while their mistresses banged dirty mats against the door-posts. I tried to think of Henry, Duke of Richmond, embarking here in 1485, on his way to Bosworth Field; but the sight of our car,

JOURNEY UP THE SEINE

standing ready to start, was far more interesting than mere changes of dynasty, and, having filled up with petrol, we tucked ourselves comfortably in, and started away in the direction of Paris.

Of Le Havre I remember nothing, save a network of modern streets, from which, after a while, we made our escape upward to the plateau of Normandy. How good the fresh air was, after the stuffy cabin in which we had passed the night! The sun was still early and pale, and long shadows lay across the road. Everywhere there were carts, carts, carts, all with grey horses and sleepy drivers. And industrious white-capped women were at work in the fields, their cows feeding beside the road. In short, it was France! France! France!

At Lillebonne, I remember, we stopped for a moment to look at a Roman theatre, and an old ruined castle, once the residence of William the Conqueror, the place where he and his barons decided on their plans for the invasion of England.

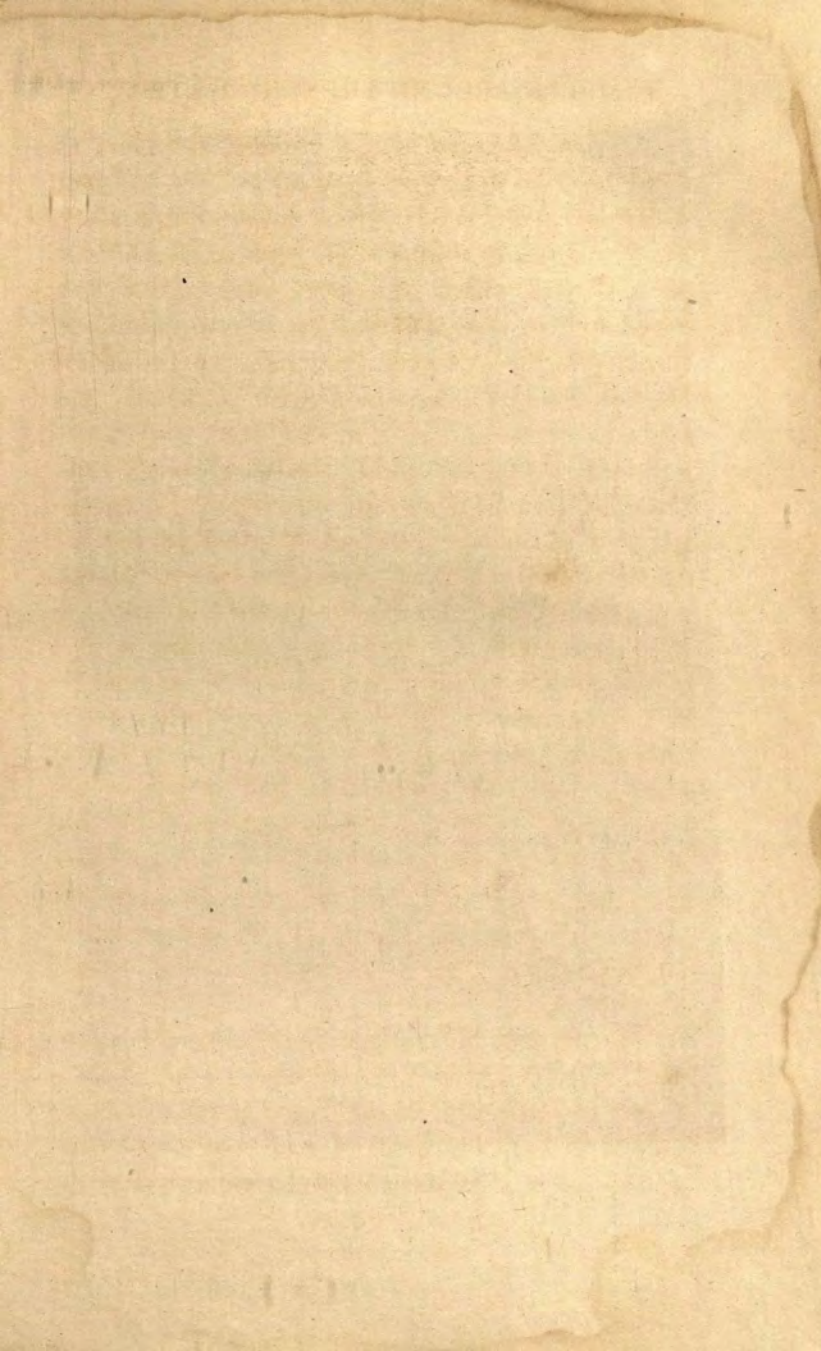
There was Caudebec, too, fit home for the glittering fairies with which the Seine seemed spangled that September morning. I left my heart at Caudebec, and mean to go back some day in a motor-boat and fetch it. What a place to spend a week, dreaming among the willow shadows, or sitting at the little restaurant, looking down on the busy *place*!

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

But Duclair made me almost faithless to Caudebec, so charming it was, with its ancient dwellings, hollowed in the flower-hung cliffs. Then up again, among the rosy purple of the pine woods, where the sun shone through a coppery mist, and the bracken was beginning to turn. The hedges here were like the hedges of England — wild, festooned with clematis and bryony.

Suddenly, to the right, the view opened, and there lay Rouen, fairy-like, unsubstantial, dreaming in a turquoise mist, and guarded by poplars drawn up in single ranks across the valley. Down, down, down into the city, to find the Hôtel de la Poste, "suitable for bachelors," according to one of my guide-books, by no means to be scorned by a hungry lady. There is a story told of our Charles II. arriving travel-stained and shabby at Rouen, and of the trouble he had to gain access to any hotel. We were dusty and travel-stained, in good sooth; but no sooner had we drawn up at the gate, than half a dozen servants ran out to welcome us. So much has competition done for travelling since the days of the Stuart Kings!

We left our automobile in charge of a legless man, who, strapped to a wheeled board, made a living by regulating the traffic in front of the hotel. He told me that he had been crippled by an explosion of gasolene while he was in the navy,





CHÂTEAU GAILLARD.

ROUEN AND CHÂTEAU GAILLARD

and had brought up his fourteen children by this trade of his ; brave old fellow that he was !

After lunch, we wandered round the Cathedral and the Church of Saint-Ouen, making our way through the flower market to the shadowy Place Jeanne d'Arc, of awful memory ; and then off again, up the river valley, to Les Andelys. It lies before me yet, that wonderful view of white cliffs—ghostly weird cliffs—long lines of trees, the sparkling curve of the meandering river, and, dominating the whole, Château Gaillard, the "Saucy" Castle, built by Richard Cœur de Lion to defend Rouen, his Norman capital, against Philip Augustus and the French. The taking of this castle in King John's reign was considered one of the greatest achievements of the Middle Ages, and the story of the eight months' siege perhaps equals in horror that of the taking of Calais by Edward III. They say that the famine was so awful, that a hen, having fluttered its way in, was eaten, feathers and all, by a starving soldier, and that a newborn baby was fought for to the death.

That castle is almost the last thing I remember clearly ; for, as the afternoon wore away, and the sun sank lower, I became more and more fatigued, and fell to watching the mile-posts flying by, faster and faster as night approached. Presently it became too dark to see them, and we had to slacken our speed, because of the terrible paved

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

road. The villages had grown squalid and continuous, till they formed at last a long street, through which we jolted and bumped our weary way. Then again the houses ended, trees began; we were in a wood. . . . For a moment I woke up, and began peering about in the moonlight for the ghosts of the royal huntsmen who once disported themselves in this Forest of Saint-Germain. But I could see nothing save the trunks of trees, and the paved road stretching away into the distance. Suddenly there was a light, another; we were in a town, a sleepy old-fashioned quiet town. A ghostly palace was looming to the left; and to the right were shops and cafés, already closing, the day's work over.

"Pavillon Henri Quatre!" we cry; and when, at last, a man hears us, he points silently along the ill-lighted street to an archway over which glimmers a feeble lamp.

I remember little of that night. From the moment I entered the low white-painted hall, with its many looking-glasses and curtained recesses, I realised that here we were in the Petite Maison of that gay dog, Henry of Navarre. I know that the place has been rebuilt, that only one room remains of the original Château Neuf. But if ever a building was haunted, it is the Pavillon Henri Quatre. Our luxurious rooms were full of mystery, hung with pink brocade, the folds of which fell secretively over the doors

SAINT-GERMAIN

as soon as we had closed them. There were great cupboards, and hidden exits opening on to back staircases ; and the dressing-tables and wardrobes were redolent of forgotten intrigues. So it is no wonder that I woke more than once in the night, fancying that Gabrielle d'Estrées was bending over me, asking what business I had to be in her bed. Just at dawn, I dreamed I saw the great feathered hat of her royal lover, peeping round one of the pink curtains. But it turned out to be only a spray of white roses, shaken loose by the breeze.

Next morning, when I woke, the sun was so radiant and golden, it made me ashamed of lying there, when there was so much to see and so little time in which to see it. So I made haste down, and sauntered out on to the terrace. How splendid it is—this *chef-d'œuvre* of Le Nôtre. How could Louis XIV. leave it for the formal flatness of Versailles? For nearly two miles the magnificent drive runs level, straight and majestic along the top of the cliff, which here borders the valley of the Seine. Below are terraces and gardens ; and like a wall at the back are the regular ranks of trees which form the park. But what gives the terrace its wondrous and unique charm, is the great stretch of country over which the eye seems never tired of wandering. It is like sitting on a very high wall overlooking a vast garden ; only the wall is so broad, that on it there is room for a forest, a castle, a park, a

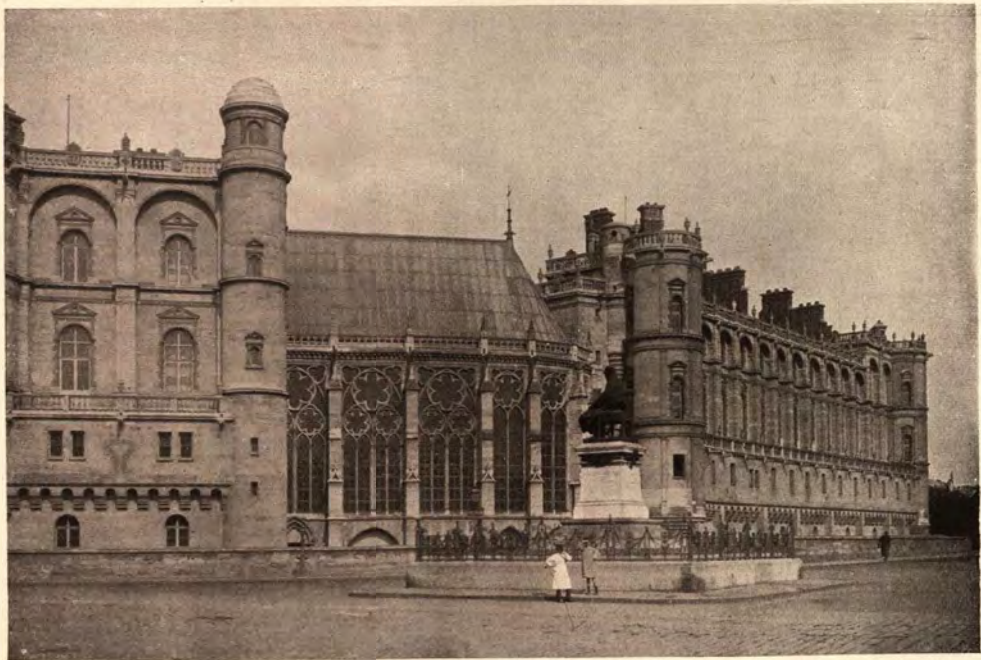
RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

town; and the garden occupies the whole of the Ile de France.

It is easy to understand why the kings of France chose this spot to dwell in. There, beyond the Seine, far away toward the horizon, veiled in a fairy mist, lies the capital. As Marie de Medicis said: "When I am here, I feel that I have one foot at Saint-Germain, and the other in Paris."

Like many towns, Saint-Germain owes its origin to a chapel. Long, long ago, in the tenth century, Robert the Pious, that delightful and perfectly impossible monkish king of the house of Capet, founded here a chapel to Saint Germain and Saint Martin. I daresay they used his music in the Offices of the Church, for he was a fine composer. Some of his chants and sacred songs are yet in use. "His tall, gracious form, with gentle eyes, and beard of comely length," as Helgaud the monk of Fleuri has it, is the oldest ghost that walks these haunted precincts: with him he brings, not his fierce second wife, Constance of Arles, the mother of his three sons, but the gentle Bertha, daughter of the Count of Blois, whom he so loved, and who was so cruelly separated from him by the Church.

It was Louis the Fat, however, who began building the Castle at Saint-Germain—the great castle that lies behind the park; and Louis the Saint who finished it, and set up the exquisite



SAINT-GERMAIN.

SAINT-GERMAIN

chapel, with its delicate traceries, and the faces of his mother and himself carved high up in the vaulting. Here it was that the mad Prior Guillaume Stedelin made his confession of having sold himself to the devil. As if that counted anything at Saint-Germain! Here, too, the mad King Charles VI. and his wife Isabel were sitting one Sunday at Mass, thinking about a new tax they had just levied on the already overburdened people, when the sky darkened, the wind began to rise, and such a storm burst over Saint-Germain, that the remembrance of it has never died away. "With a terrific crash, a window was blown in, the glass falling over the very altar. Springing up in terror, Isabel ran and cast herself at the feet of the officiating priest, vowing if only her life was spared, she would have the tax repealed." In this chapel, Francis I. was married to poor little lame Claude of France, and three of his children were brought here to be baptized. To-day it is a Museum of Christian Sculpture, where you may study stone coffins of every size and period.

"Keep on your hat, monsieur," says the *gardien*, "it is cold in the chapel!" Fancy keeping on your hat before the altar where Saint Louis prayed, and Henrietta Maria of England knelt with her fatherless children! For it was in this old castle, then a mere gloomy fortress, that Anne of Austria invited her un-

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

fortunate sister-in-law to take up her abode. The royal family of France, when at Saint-Germain, occupied the beautiful Château Neuf of Henri IV., whose site is now covered by the hotel of which I have spoken. Here Louis XIII. lived "comme en particulier," as Madame de Motteville says, amusing himself with his painting and music, and, above all, learning to lard chickens. It is here that he had his mild love affair with Mademoiselle de la Fayette, and here it was he parted from her. It is a charming story, a little oasis of innocence among the coarse amours of the period.

His wife, Louis had never loved. How should he? She had been thrust upon him, whether he would or no. He had had no choice in the matter. Even her beauty failed to attract him; her chestnut hair, which the Court so loved to see combed and dressed, her white hands, which were the admiration of all Europe, her beautiful neck which she took such pains to hide. But when he met this young girl Louise Motier, or "La Fayette" as she was called, all his heart went out to her. She was his friend, his confidante. To her he confided his hatred of Richelieu, and all the weariness which possessed his soul at finding himself a slave to the Cardinal. And she comforted him. But one day, no doubt as they were walking here in the terraced gardens of Saint-Germain, the King, unable to control

SAINT-GERMAIN

himself, spoke of his passion, and implored her to go away with him to Versailles. She herself loved the melancholy young King with all her heart, but she loved her virtue better. There was one refuge in those days for a girl like "La Fayette,"—the convent. . . . When they told Louis that she had made up her mind to enter religion, he fell back on the bed, from which he had just risen, and burst into tears. Yet, all the time, he knew that she was right.

"It is true," said he, when he could speak for weeping, "that she is dearer to me than all the world, but if she feels that religion calls her, who am I to stand in her way?"

At one end of the hotel is a room which formed part of the original palace. From its windows we may look over the broad valley of the Seine, to where, far away, rise the towers of Saint-Denis. It was the favourite view of Louis XIII. All day long he would watch the great church.

"That is where I am going to dwell so long!" he would say; adding, with a whimsical touch of humour, "but the roads are very bad. How battered my poor body will be when it gets there!"

He was lying looking at the view, when his son was brought to him on his way from the chapel, where he had just been christened.

"Well," asked Louis, with a smile, "and what is your name?"

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

“Louis the Fourteenth,” answered the boy proudly.

“No, no, not yet,” said his father; “but if God wills, it will not be long!”

A few days afterwards, as he lay there dying, the sound of laughing came from the next room.

“Hush!” said some one, shocked. But Louis only smiled faintly.

“It is the Queen amusing herself,” said he, and shortly after he passed away.

I don't know why I tell the story, but my mind was very full of this poor King as I walked on the terrace that morning.

His wife Anne continued to live here after his death, and when her sister-in-law Henrietta took up her abode in the antiquated and unhealthy old castle beyond the park, there were gay doings at Saint-Germain. Henrietta was terribly poor, sometimes even in actual want, but Anne of Austria always treated her with the greatest politeness. Indeed, ceremony seems to have been her particular virtue. Even when the poor English Queen scarcely knew where the next meal was coming from, a seat of equal height to that of her French sister was kept for her, and an armchair, a great honour in those days, for her son Charles. What would not one give to have seen one of those receptions, when the whole Court was kept waiting, because one Queen refused to be seated before the other!

SAINT-GERMAIN

And Charles, the Prince of Wales, he must have found it rather dull at Saint-Germain. Not a word of French could he speak, though he heard nothing else spoken around him, and it was his mother's native tongue. There is a curious scene described by Mademoiselle de Montpensier of the young Prince holding a torch, while his mother Henrietta dressed this beautiful young cousin of his for some ball. And all the time, the handsome boy, with his dark, gipsy face, stood there mute, though I daresay, judging from his character of later days, he made eyes at the pretty Mademoiselle. This daughter of the Duke of Orleans might have been Queen of England, if Charles had been quicker at languages. But she found it very difficult to take her courting second-hand, though Henrietta, her aunt, certainly did her best as a go-between.

But let us enter the castle, and see where our English Queen found a refuge during those early days of her banishment. We had a good deal of difficulty in persuading the *gardien* to let us in, for it was a closed day. However, at last he opened the great gates and we found ourselves in the entrance hall. But how cold and bare! The Government has turned the whole of the ancient *château* into a museum, and a museum of sculpture, the most impossible kind of place in which to find the ghosts of the past, for which one craves! It is true that the great courtyard

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

is the same on which the exiled King James II. looked down; the same from which he departed for Ireland, with the troops and money with which Louis XIV. had so generously provided him. But I cannot see the two Kings taking leave of each other, nor hear Louis' hearty farewell: "The best I can wish you is that I may never see you again; but remember that, if you are obliged to return, you will find me the same as ever."

Louis had already spent millions in enlarging and restoring Le Vieux Château, meaning, I suppose, to live in it, as his ancestor Francis had done. The great Mansard was engaged for the work. But, happening to look out of his window one day, the King caught a glimpse of Saint-Denis. Unlike his father, the sight of his future burial-place had no charms for him, and he moved away to Versailles, thus setting the Castle of Saint-Germain at liberty for his exiled cousin of England.

For a while we wandered through rooms full of ancient gods and goddesses; came to a stop before the horned Cernunnos brought from Rheims, where he was once worshipped; and studied the great four-faced altar, which was found buried beneath Notre-Dame de Paris. But even with the help of Reinarch's guide, I came away unsatisfied! I wanted my Stuarts, with their courtly out-at-elbows' grace; my Valois and

SAINT-GERMAIN

Bourbons, with their extravagance and even worse characteristics. I would rather have seen portraits of Louis' mistresses—Mademoiselle de la Vallière, Madame de Montespan, or that great martinette, Madame de Maintenon, than these cold and dead vestiges of the past. What a museum it would have made if they had restored it as of old.

There we might have wandered, living again the story of those naughty, but all-too-fascinating times, studying the motives which actuated these Kings and Queens, sharing their confidences, shocked indeed by their actions, but understanding their temptations, so that when we left Saint-Germain lying on its height, we should have had a history lesson which might have thrown some light on the ignorance so many of us still have of that epoch.

CHAPTER II

Saint-Cloud—Assassination of Henri III.—Death of Henriette d'Angleterre—Versailles—The Kings at Versailles.

STRICTLY speaking, the Castle of Saint-Cloud ceased to exist after the siege of Paris by the Germans. Blackened walls, heaps of unsightly rubbish, a few solitary columns and shivering statues, were all that they left of the home of Henriette d'Angleterre. When first I visited it, years ago, it was in this state, and I thought I had never seen a more melancholy place. There was the glorious park, its trees as luxuriant, its lawns as velvety as ever. Even the flowers were blooming in the gardens,—roses, reminding one of the frail beauties who had once tended them,—for, as we know, “Saint-Cloud was full of roses in summer.” The fountains, too, lay sleeping in their mossy basins—above all, the great cascade, so admired by Louis XIV., and which was always kept playing when he came to visit his brother, the Duke of Orleans. Yes, it was all as I had pictured it, the birds, the sunshine, the sweet fresh air, and below, the flowing

SAINT-CLOUD

waters of the Seine ; and I was living two centuries back, when suddenly I came within sight of the Palace. It was like finding a skeleton among a bed of roses. All kinds of melancholy thoughts came thronging into my mind, and, to this day, the memories I have of Saint-Cloud are memories of death scenes.

It was Clodowald, the son of Clodomir the Merovingian King of Orleans, who founded Saint-Cloud. He had seen his young brothers murdered by their uncles Childebert and Clotaire, after the usual manner, to avoid any disconcerting questions as to their rights to the throne ; Clodowald himself would have shared their fate, save for the devotion of a faithful servant, with whose help he took sanctuary. Then, judging that he was not wanted by the world, he prudently left it, cut off his long hair, the sign of his illustrious origin, and became a monk. He died in the cell he shared with his friend and master Séverin at Nogent-sur-Seine, after having made himself so beloved by the people of the neighbourhood that ever afterwards the place was known as Saint-Clouard or Saint-Cloud. From that time it was visited by pilgrims, and presently a monastery sprang up. Later, one of those Italians who followed Catherine de Médicis to France built a splendid house at Saint-Cloud, and called it the *Maison de Gondi*. It was in this house that there took place the first great tragedy of Saint-Cloud.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

It is the first of August 1589 ; Saint-Cloud is glowing in the sunshine. Henri III., driven out of his capital by the League headed by the Duchesse de Montpensier, sister of the murdered Duc de Guise and his brother the Cardinal, is living here in the Maison de Gondi. He has just risen, and is about to be dressed. He has heard that, the night before, a young monk has arrived with important news from Paris. Henri is very anxious about Paris, for he has been told that the people are attending Masses day and night, in memory of the dead Duke and Cardinal ; that women, children, and students are marching barefoot and fasting, going from chapel to chapel, to pray for the souls of the enemies he has just murdered, and he knows what that means in a Parisien. So the young monk has been well entertained for the sake of the news he brings. He is a curious young fellow, much given to talking of fights, so that his fellow-monks have nicknamed him "Captain Jacques Clément." Sitting among Henri's servants the night before, they noticed that he cut up his meat with a long, sharp, black-handled knife.

"The monks of your Order are very much opposed to the King, are they not?" asked one man. "I have been told that there are no less than six who have sworn to kill him."

"Oh, there are good and bad," replied Jacques laconically.

ASSASSINATION OF HENRI III.

As Henri sits there waiting, that bright morning, the young monk enters, cool and self-contained.

“I must speak to your Majesty alone,” says he, “the message is for no ear save yours”; and Belgrade and La Guesle, who are in attendance, retire.

Then the monk, who is kneeling at the King's feet, draws out a knife, a long, black-handled knife, and . . . delivers his message. When the lords rushed in, he was standing, his arms stretched wide, waiting. As for the King, he died next day, making a great demonstration of piety, like all his race, crying: “My God, have pity on me, and pardon my sins!” And certainly he had many to pardon, for he was perhaps the most utterly despicable and worthless of the whole house of Valois.

The old Maison de Gondi had been rebuilt and beautified when the next tragedy occurred. Louis XIV., always careful for the grandeur of his family, had turned it into a splendid palace, and given it to his brother, the Duke of Orleans, commonly known as “Monsieur.” “Monsieur” had lately married that sweet and beautiful lady, Henriette-Anne, the baby girl who had been born to Henrietta Maria and Charles I. immediately after the battle of Exeter. It is she who haunts Saint-Cloud; her delicate, long face, with its bright eyes and fair curls, flits about everywhere

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

among the trees. It must have been a case of Beauty and the Beast, this marriage of hers with Philippe d'Orléans ; for, while she was one of the most charming women of her time, with all the fascination of the Stuarts, and a sweet amiable nature, which, as Madame de la Fayette says, "gained for her the love of men and the adoration of women," "Monsieur" was undoubtedly the most odious little brute imaginable. As a child he had been considered very pretty, and his mother, Anne of Austria, had, for a long time, delighted to dress him as a girl. When at last the fat little man took to male attire, he was never happy unless he was decked out with ribbons and necklaces, bracelets and rings. While his brother Louis was working seven and eight hours a day, fulfilling all the duties of his own Prime Minister, and trying to make up for his defective education, "Monsieur" was playing with his jewels, or decking himself before his mirror. Poor Henriette-Anne, it must have been a miserable life for her at Saint-Cloud. When that last day came, and she felt herself dying, I wonder whether she was sorry to go? She was still young—under thirty. Over in England, where she had been staying at the Court of her brother, Charles II., she had been fêted, admired, and loved. Now she was back in the humdrum life of Saint-Cloud. As she said to Madame de la Fayette, the very morning of the day she died :

DEATH OF HENRIETTE D'ANGLETERRE

“I am so tired of all the people around me. Sometimes I do not know how to bear with them.”

When I again visited Saint-Cloud, only the other day, a fête was being held in the park. All the way from Saint-Germain I had been thinking of Henriette-Anne and that lamentable 29th of June 1670; and I was not prepared for the crowded entrance, the holiday-makers, the noise, the laughter, the fun. It seemed like joking at a funeral. It reminded me of the account of Madame's death-chamber, given by Mademoiselle de Montpensier. At news of their sister's illness, the King and Queen set off for Saint-Cloud with La Grande Mademoiselle.

“Madame is dying,” said the Queen in a low voice, “and what is most terrible is that she thinks she has been poisoned.”

They found her in her great curtained bed, so changed that she looked as though she were already a corpse, her face pale, her nose shrunken. And all the while people kept coming and going, laughing, talking, and joking as though nothing unusual were taking place.

“I told the King,” says Mademoiselle, “that some one should speak to her of God,” and, finally, Bishop Bossuet was sent for, and remained with her to the end. What a strange melancholy scene is this! One by one they left her there to die—the King, the Queen, Mademoiselle, Madame de Montespan, and La Vallière. Even her odious

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

little husband thought of nothing but how to get hold of her money and jewels. At last she was alone with the Bishop and one or two of her women . . . and it was thus the daughter of Charles I. passed out into the night. In all the story of that heartless reign, I doubt whether there is a more pathetic episode than the death of Henriette d'Angleterre at Saint-Cloud. "Oh, disastrous night! Oh, night of terror! When, like a clap of thunder, suddenly is heard the astounding news: Madame is dying! Madame is dead!"

I did not enter the park; I had no wish to see the great school which has arisen on the site of the old palace: I preferred to keep my dreams, melancholy though they were. So we turned away from the noisy gateway, and set off for Versailles. Some difficulty we had in finding our way out of the town, for Saint-Cloud lies high above the Seine, and all the streets seem to end in flights of steps leading down into the valley. At last, however, we escaped, and so by a shady road to the great pleasure-house of Louis XIV.

What a city it is, this palace of Le Grand Monarque. Our chauffeur, who, up to this time, had been too much impressed with his own superiority as an Englishman to allow himself to show surprise at anything he saw, here broke down.

"Well," he said, as we drew up in the great

VERSAILLES

courtyard, "who'd have thought of seeing such a place in these parts!"

I found that he took the palace for a sort of terrace of houses, and his amazement was great when I told him that it was the Castle of the King of France, built by Louis XIV., and that it took eleven years to finish. As he followed us from room to room, his wonder seemed to increase.

"Where does our George come in?" I heard him mutter. "He ain't in it, he ain't."

He was very contemptuous about the portraits of the Court beauties, remarking that "anyhow he didn't reckon that they were no class." I, however, explained that they were probably some of the very few women who had escaped being small-pox marked, which accounted for their being reckoned handsome. When we entered the little apartments of Marie Antoinette, he cheered up, saying he thought we could beat *them* anyway. But his national pride sank to zero as we surveyed the great garden front of Mansard.

"I call it a shame," said he, "our King ain't got nothing to touch it. Why, they must have kept a dozen housemaids at least, and then they'd have had all their work cut out."

I thought of the three thousand souls who formed the household of Louis XIV., and smiled. But it was no smiling matter to this loyal Englishman.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

“Does the King live here now?” he inquired; and when I told him that there was now no King in France, “Well, I never!” said he, “think of that now! And with a palace like this to live in!”

He was particularly interested with the fountains, especially when he heard how, after the whole place was finished, it was discovered that there was no water to speak of.

I remember reading in the “Mémoires” of Madame de Sévigné that thirty-six thousand men and over a million horses were employed to bring the waters of the Seine to the new palace, and she goes on to speak of the frightful mortality among the workmen: “Every night,” says she, “waggons full of dead were taken away. There was one poor woman who, having lost her son from this enforced labour, waylaid the King, and accosted him, crying, ‘Tyrant, adulterer, royal mechanic!’ and a thousand other foolish and extravagant things. The King, surprised, stopped, and asked, ‘Are you speaking to me?’ ‘Yes,’ said the woman, and went on raving. So she was taken, condemned to be whipped, and then imprisoned. The whipping was administered with extreme severity, yet never a word said the woman, suffering like a martyr, and all for the love of God.”

After a while we sent our chauffeur back to his car, and wandered about by ourselves, trying to

VERSAILLES

repeople the great gardens with the gay crowds of courtiers who once thronged them. What a frivolous set they were. How utterly selfish and intent on their own interests. As one reads the "Mémoires" of Madame de Motteville and Mademoiselle de Montpensier, this is what specially thrusts itself upon one's attention. Yet among this flippant crowd we occasionally catch glimpses of quite other characters. See! here is the cassocked form of Bishop Bossuet, with his strict code of morality. . . . Bossuet, who, for a few days actually prevailed upon the King to give up the company of Madame de Montespan; and spoke such thrilling words to the favourite, that the lady developed a religious turn of mind, and for a full week visited churches, fasted, and wept for her sins; till, growing tired of such unaccustomed virtue, she went back to her old life at Versailles.

And there goes Fénelon, disciple and friend of the great Bishop—Fénelon, the good tutor of the naughty little Duke of Burgundy, Louis XIV.'s eldest grandson. They say that it was for the delectation of this young Prince that "Tele-machus" was composed.

And Pascal we meet—purest and most mystic of men; and Voltaire, magnificent sceptic; and Corneille and Racine; and La Fontaine with his simple, almost childish, eccentricities.

And, above all, there is Molière. What a story is that of the youth of this Jean Baptiste. How

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

he tormented his respectable relations with his unconquerable craving for the stage! Again and again he came to grief; now his theatre failed, now he was imprisoned for debt, now he was running hither and thither over the country like a vagrant. Yet, all the time, he was thinking of his plays, his comedies; studying the life of the people, learning their language and ways of thought, till at last, after seven years, he had his heart's desire and saw his *Précieuses Ridicules* performed before the King and his Court. Truly the struggles of the playwright have been the same in all ages.

And it was here, in these very gardens of Versailles, that Molière had his open-air theatre. How we should all like to have been present at that first performance of his, and how we should have laughed, for the wit of Molière, like that of Shakespeare, never grows old.

How overwhelming is this Versailles, how difficult it is to concentrate one's mind on any particular scene or character. Here comes Mademoiselle de la Vallière, demure little maid of honour, with her big blue eyes, her silvery fair hair, and the slight limp which is said to have made her so attractive. Do you remember the story of how, one day, a storm having broken over the gay party when they were far away in the park, every one made for the nearest shelter, leaving the King to take care of the lame girl.

LOUIS XIV. AT VERSAILLES

“Take my arm,” said Louis, “we will go to the Château.” But they never got there! The young King knew the grounds quite well enough to lose himself for an hour, when he had a mind. “I am getting very wet, your Majesty!” ventured the lady presently. “Count the drops of rain,” answered the King, “and I will give them to you in pearls.” It was in honour of this same little heroine that many of the great fêtes were given at Versailles. Gorgeous indeed they must have been. The King himself, “Le Roi Soleil” as he loved to be called, would appear clothed in cloth of gold spangled all over with diamonds, glittering like the sun, his emblem. It was, too, I think, at Versailles that the lottery was held, when Louis gained the diamond bracelets, and, passing by his meek little Spanish wife, and his expectant sister-in-law, placed the jewels in the hands of the blushing La Vallière. “How beautiful they are,” said the young girl, making as though she would return them to the King. “The hands in which they find themselves are too lovely for them ever to return to mine,” answered the King. Poor La Vallière—after all, was she not more sinned against than sinning? At all events, she had the merit of loving the King for his own sake, which is more than can be said of any one else, except, perhaps, Anne of Austria, his mother. At last, having lost what little beauty she ever possessed, and finding herself neglected, Louise

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

de la Vallière retired to the Convent of Chaillot, and with her departure the poetry vanished for ever from the life of Louis XIV.

But at Versailles things went on as gaily and indecorously as ever. See, here is the tall fair form of Madame de Montespan. Quite another character is she from the frail and gentle Louise. In one of the galleries there is a portrait of her, by Mignard. How superb she looks in her red gown smothered with lace and pearls! What other blonde would have dared to put that red feather in her hair? As some one has well remarked, she was not *a* beauty, she was *THE* beauty. Looking at her, we can well imagine the Marquis, her husband, mad with jealousy, forcing his way into the King's presence. It was here, in the Hall of Mirrors, that they met—the gorgeous Louis and the stern courtier in his sombre black. “Why this deep mourning, monsieur?” inquired the King, who hated anything even remotely connected with death. “Sire,” replied the Marquis in a tone of deep meaning, “I am in mourning for my wife.” “For your wife?” echoed Louis, startled. “Ay, Sire, I shall never see her again!” and, turning on his heel, he left the astonished King without another word, returning in his mourning coach to Paris, where he gave out to every one that his wife was dead.

We have no time to follow the life of this gay lady, and indeed it is not an inspiring theme.

LOUIS XIV. AT VERSAILLES

She was selfish, avaricious, shameless, ill-humoured, and, for my part, I think that her husband was well rid of her. At last she wearied the King with her arrogance and her tempers. "Madame," said he, one day, "I would have you know that I do not choose to be vexed by any one." Yet even then Madame de Montespan did not recognise that her reign was over.

For some time past, Louis had conceived a friendship for the beautiful and accomplished Madame Scarron, better known as Madame de Maintenon. He had plenty of opportunities for seeing her, as she had been appointed governess to his children. Gradually Louis fell into the habit of spending long hours talking with the handsome governess, and, before long, it became apparent to every one that Madame de Maintenon had accomplished a work in which even Bossuet had failed; she had reformed the King—Louis was becoming respectable! Whether the lady would have succeeded in her task had she been plainer, it is difficult to say. I have never understood the character of Madame de Maintenon. Was she really a good woman, or merely a consummate hypocrite? I believe it is impossible to tell. All that is certain is, that, after she took the King in hand, he became a reformed character, and remained so to the end of his life. The poor, neglected Queen Marie-Thérèse, who had never lost her love and admiration for him, was en-

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

chanted, and had no words to express her gratitude to the good fairy who had worked the miracle. When, two years later, his wife died, Louis married Madame de Maintenon, and from that day the Court at Versailles was as correct and uneventful as any "Mrs. Grundy" of the period could desire.

Louis xv. followed closely the example of his great-grandfather's unregenerate days, though without possessing his talent or strength of character. The Court of his reign had all the vice and none of the scanty virtues of that of his predecessor. On one favourite alone, Madame du Barri, he is said to have squandered more than £3,000,000! Is it a wonder that the people at last rebelled? The sight of these vast palaces and the extravagant fêtes which were constantly being given, would have roused a less excitable mob than that of starving Paris. The storm of the Revolution had been a long time brewing. We forget the terrors of La Fronde which preceded it, but the English Queen, Henrietta Maria, had realised even then what the attitude of the people meant. "Take care to conciliate your subjects," said she to Anne of Austria. "The mob is a wild beast. Once roused, no one can tame it!" Yet, instead of conciliation, the policy of the Bourbons had been one long system of oppression and aggravation, and it was just when things were at their very worst that there rose on

MARIE ANTOINETTE AT VERSAILLES

the scene that young Queen, whose phantom always haunts us as we make our way about Versailles.

I have mentioned the little private rooms of Marie Antoinette. They lie at the heart of the giant palace. Poor Marie Antoinette, one cannot but feel great sympathy for her, in spite of her appalling extravagance, and fits of irresponsibility. She and her husband, the good Louis, are but one more example of the truth of the ancient dictum: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." As we enter those little rooms of hers, they recall to our memory a young boy and girl waiting for the news of an old King's death. They dare not go near the sick-chamber for fear of infection, for Louis xv. is dying of small-pox, and has sent away even his mistress, Madame du Barri. At last a lighted candle, which has been placed as a sign in the window of his room, is extinguished. There is a sound of many footsteps approaching. Every one is running to salute the new monarch. "Le Roi est mort! Vive le Roi!" cry the courtiers. But the new King and Queen are on their knees, weeping. "God help us!" says Louis xvi. "How shall we govern this great nation, and we so young and unused to rule?"

On the great terrace of Versailles I always see this Queen flitting about with her children. See,

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

here is her portrait! Alas! it was here, at Versailles, she finished the work of Le Grand Monarque, with her reckless extravagance, her fêtes, her balls. And finally, it was to these very rooms of hers that the fishwomen of Paris came in all their fury that terrifying October morning.

As we cross the courtyard, on our way to the automobile, it suddenly occurs to me that these are the very same granite blocks over which the royal carriage rolled, when Marie Antoinette and her children set out on their slow ride to Paris. And I stand there, looking down the long straight road, till it seems to me I have but just bidden her adieu, and that I can still hear in the distance the coarse voices of the shrieking mob. I am recalled to myself by an old cabman who is smoking a cigarette, as he waits for the return of his party.

"It was a large cottage for one man, eh madame?" says he. I nod. "You still have a king in England?" pursues the man. "Has he a house like that?"

"No," I answer, smiling, "I cannot say that he has."

"Ah no!" replies the driver, "and he does not look as if he had. I saw him one day—your Edward, I mean. He might have been my brother, so pleasant he looked, bowing and smiling as if he knew us. Ah, he had no need of a palace

VERSAILLES

like Versailles; he lived in the hearts of his people. Madame, if our kings had resembled him, there would have been no Revolution. Mon Dieu! The French would have died for a king like your Edward!"

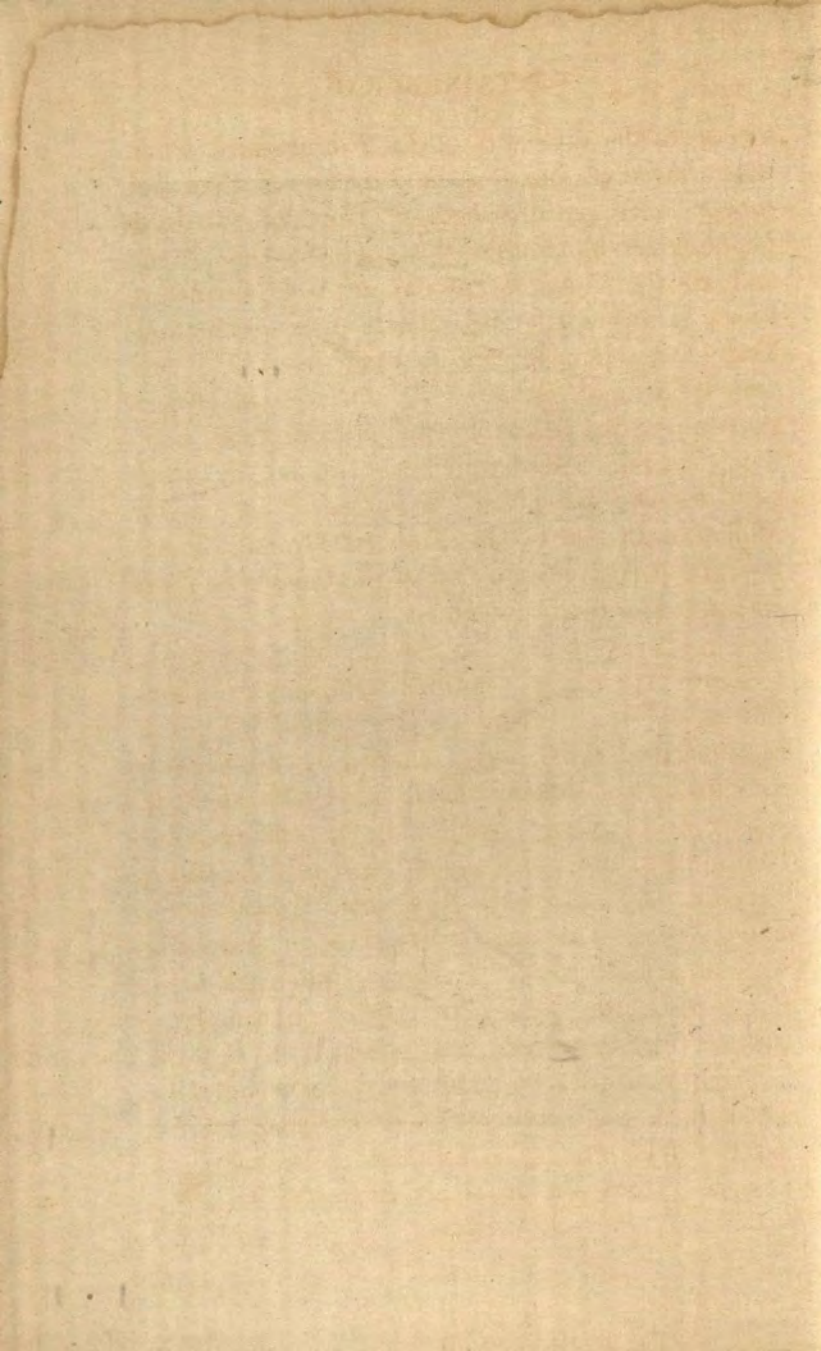
CHAPTER III

Fontainebleau—The Forest—The Hôtel d'Armagnac—The Palace and its Royal inmates—Napoleon at Fontainebleau.

OF all the royal residences of France, and truly their name is legion, not one can rival in charm Fontainebleau. I should loathe living in a palace, but I think even I could make myself happy in the Pavillon d'Angle, looking down over the Etang des Carpes. It would need some alterations, of course. There are too many secret passages and back stairs, and I myself am not partial to Judas windows—they spoil one's sense of privacy. It would want refurnishing, too—some good warm Turkey carpets and heavy curtains, a few screens, lounge chairs, and one or two comfortable shabby old couches. We should need books too, and a thousand little homely trifles to which we have grown accustomed. For Fontainebleau reminds one of those days when kings sent on their furniture before them, as advance luggage, when travelling from house to house. I remember reading of Anne of Austria's arrival at one of the royal palaces—Saint-Germain, I think. She had been obliged to leave Paris at a moment's notice,



FONTAINEBLEAU.



FONTAINEBLEAU

owing to the civil war of La Fronde, and, when she arrived at her destination, found that her rooms were unfurnished. "The King," says Madame de Motteville, "as well as the Queen and all the Court, were without beds, furniture, linen, or any of the necessaries of everyday life. The Queen herself had to sleep in a little bed which Cardinal Mazarin had, in view of such a possibility, caused to be sent on from Paris some days before. There were also two small camp-beds for the King and his brother, but as for Madame d'Orléans, she and La Grande Mademoiselle had to sleep on straw, and every one else was in a like predicament."

There is a very curious atmosphere about Fontainebleau. In spite of its splendour, it has retained its hunting-lodge character, and there is a suggestion of Bohemianism, so to speak, about it, which is peculiarly comforting to the plebeian heart after the cold splendours of Versailles. Probably even kings felt this, for it was always a holiday resort—a place where those of them who were so constituted that they could cast aside Court etiquette, did so for a while, and enjoyed themselves like ordinary mortals.

From Versailles we must travel slowly; for we are still in the neighbourhood of those horrible granite block roads, so common in the north of France. However, by dint of much bumping

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

and a distinct ruffling of tempers, we at last saw in the distance, lying over the horizon, the dark cloak which we knew to be the Forest of Fontainebleau. For a little longer we jolted onward, then found ourselves among the shifting shadows and purple tree-trunks of the haunted wood. Long slanting beams of light fell upon the reddening bracken, and indescribable thoughts possessed me as my gaze wandered away among the fairy depths and vistas. It was my first visit to Fontainebleau, and I had been steeping myself in the memoirs of various courtiers, till my brain was in a perfect chaos.

“Let us stop a moment,” I begged at last. “Remember, this is a ramble we are taking.”

So we left the automobile beside La Croix du Grand Veneur (called after the wild huntsman, whose phantom appeared at these cross-roads to Henry of Navarre), and plunged into the forest.

It was hot walking. The golden air was full of the rustling of leaves and the humming of invisible wings. On every side the woods hemmed us round, with a dense, impenetrable padding of silence. Yet the whole world seemed quivering and alert. I don't think I have ever before so entirely understood the meaning of the word haunted, as I did in this Forest of Fontainebleau. Alone? Why, almost every King of France was there, from Robert the Pious, and good Saint Louis who built the hospital to salve his con-

THE FOREST OF FONTAINEBLEAU

science for having enlarged his castle, to the kings who had no consciences to salve. Gliding silently over the soft carpet of moss, they came crowding in upon us, thick and fast. And not kings alone. Here is Isabella of France, wife of our Edward II., come to seek her brother Charles, to complain to him about her wretched husband. Beside one of these trees, just where his horse has thrown him, Philippe le Bel lies dying. . . .

Hark! Is that a horn? Surely it is Francis I. with his beautiful Duchesse d'Etampes—Francis, who turned the gloomy old feudal castle of Philip Augustus into a fairy palace of delights for himself and his Court. These silent woods have often resounded to the laughter of his Flying Squadron, in which all the beauties of the time found place. For Francis, like all his race, was bent on having plenty of ladies about him. "A Court without ladies," he used to say, "is a year without spring, or a spring without roses." . . . Henry of Navarre, too, how fond he was of these woods! It was here that he and Gabrielle d'Estrées used to roam. And there was his son Louis, and his son's son Louis. Ah, there were naughty doings when the young King Louis XIV. used to ramble about in the forest with his sister-in-law, Madame d'Orléans, till two and three o'clock in the morning! Poor Anne, his mother, was dreadfully shocked at his unseemly behaviour.

One meets Madame d'Orléans at every turn.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

As some one has said, she was the very Queen of Fontainebleau! Louis had not cared about her before her marriage; he had found her too thin, too young. But when she appeared at the woodland Court as his brother's wife, he discovered that he had been mistaken, that she was, in fact, the most fascinating woman in the world—that is to say, the world of that particular summer! As we set off once more in the automobile, we overtake the lovely Henriette riding homeward in the afternoon sunshine. She has been bathing with her ladies. What a gay cavalcade they make, with their fluttering plumes and fair ringlets! Bah! They are only ghosts, like the rest! The air is full of them here at Fontainebleau.

Suddenly we come upon the little town. One minute we are in the Forest, the next threading our way, with much hooting and barking of dogs, through the narrow streets toward the *place*.

I don't know why we had set our minds upon the Hôtel d'Armagnac, but it was a happy inspiration which prompted us. It is a delicious little place, with an atmosphere well according with the old-world spirit of the Palace. All day you wander about the royal gardens and galleries, to return at evening to the pleasant leafy courtyard of the hostel; and, as you sit and write out your notes, you may watch the cook in his copper-hung kitchen preparing the dinner.

THE HÔTEL D'ARMAGNAC

Sometimes one of the dear, clean old ladies, of whom there are several belonging to the Armagnac, will bring a great basket of radishes, and as she sits and trims them will give her opinion of the doings that went on at Fontainebleau before the Revolution—opinions which form a striking sequel to the memoirs of the various Court ladies to whom I have referred.

I simply loved the Hôtel d'Armagnac! I knew I should, directly I entered the archway. I loved the dogs, the dachshunds, the spaniels, and the big pointers, so evidently the descendants of those dogs which Louis XIV. used himself to go down and feed every night after supper. I loved the paved forecourt, with its separate rooms opening off it; the salon, the salle-à-manger, the smoking-room, the bureau. I loved the long, dark passages, and the quaint old-fashioned bedrooms, where we slept on such spring mattresses as would have made Francis I. open his eyes in astonishment, for all his gorgeous catafalque in the Palace. But, best of all, I loved the glass-roofed garden, hidden behind the wall of creepers at the end of the courtyard, for there I had my dinner.

It was like the scene out of a theatre—this garden restaurant—and the people were every bit as amusing to watch as a play. At the table next us was a horrid little girl, who, after the French fashion, was allowed to sit up and make

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

herself objectionable, when an English child of her age would have been happily and healthfully tucked away in bed. I don't think her hair could ever have been properly washed or brushed since she was born, though it was tied up most elaborately with pink ribbons; and her poor little face was the colour of putty. I couldn't bear this child, till I saw her father and mother, and a black earwig of a woman she called "tantot," and then I began to pity her. And behind them again, sat our chauffeur, suspiciously regarding every dish as it was handed to him, and making painful efforts to get acquainted with a brother chauffeur with whom he was sitting, and who spoke not a word of English. Over in another corner was a wedding party. They came in arm in arm, and drank the bride's health in bottled beer, till it was time for them to go to the special banquet prepared in the *salle-à-manger*. And everywhere, flitting about, was Madame, discreet and watchful, in a long woollen crochet coat, which she modestly described as "pratique" when I admired it. So there we sat, eating good provincial food and drinking good provincial wine, and enjoying ourselves hugely.

There was a good deal of noise that night, for the bridal party kept it up till daylight, and, from the character of the singing, I think they must have indulged in something stronger than the *vin ordinaire* with which we had contented

FONTAINEBLEAU

ourselves. But, to be sure, it was never the fashion to sleep much at Fontainebleau. Bassompierre tells us that, in the days of Henry of Navarre, they played all day and all night, and not, I fear, at such innocent games as entertained our wedding party. "We stayed some days at Fontainebleau," says the same writer, "and not a day passed but at least twenty thousand pistoles (a pistole was worth about 16s.) were lost and won. The points varied between fifty and five hundred livres, and that year I won more than five hundred thousand livres (£25,000) though all the time distracted by a thousand follies of youth and love."

Next morning was bright and sunny. Outside our room was a little terrace, overlooking the courtyard, and there we breakfasted, I in my dressing-gown and slippers, and my husband in corresponding *deshabille*. Several people we had met the night before bowed to us from the open windows before which they were dressing, but no one seemed in the least surprised or embarrassed. It was Fontainebleau—one may still do anything at Fontainebleau. Do you remember Madame de Motteville's story of how, one very hot summer, the Court used to go bathing in the Seine, dressed in long grey cloth chemises, so that "*la modestie n'y étoit nullement blessée*"! For hours together they would disport themselves on the banks of the river, in

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

this light and airy costume, and then, when the heat of the day was over, saunter back through the Forest to dress for the evening.

The parish church of Fontainebleau is quite an interesting building, but we had little opportunity of seeing it, for by ten o'clock that Sunday morning it was so crowded that all we could do was to squeeze inside the door, where we sat on half a chair and listened while the Dean read an encyclical from the Pope against Socialism. Beside me stood a little group of beggars—a woman nursing her baby, while three ragged barefooted urchins leant against her skirts. The light from one of the windows fell upon them, calling out the russet tints of their rags and sunburned faces, isolating them from the rest of the dull crowd, till they stood out like some rich Murillo in a gallery of worthless daubs.

But, after all, we came to Fontainebleau to see the Palace, and here I am running on about everything else. Well, it is quite close. If you do as we did, you enter from the back, and straightway find yourselves among the glories of the gardens. That is the true Fontainebleau, the Palace of Francis I. and Henry of Navarre. It has been enlarged and altered considerably since their days, but so much remains that we seem to see the magnificent "Salamander" leaning over the balustrade, with the Duchesse d'Etampes by his side, feeding the carp, with which he has

THE PALACE AND ITS INMATES

stocked this lake of his. Somewhere in the gardens is, or was until lately, the Grotte des Pins, with its satyr-guarded entrance, where the Princess Madeleine was bathing, while James v. of Scotland ensconced himself behind one of the little peep-holes with which these baths were fitted, and watched her. Poor little Madeleine! She hated the unmannerly Scotchman, as well she might, but her father Francis obliged her to marry him, and in 1537 she left this charming home for the cold and barren north, where, six months later, she died of a broken heart.

Let us enter the Castle and wander through the galleries and gorgeous salons, and see where these great folk slept and ate, lived, loved, and quarrelled. There was a good deal of quarrelling, especially between Francis I. and his son Henry the Dauphin. Their respective lady-loves urged them on, for they hated each other like the poison which had just been introduced from Italy. Diane de Poitiers, Henry's mistress, had never forgiven the Duchess for declaring that she, herself, was born the year Madame Diane was married. And there were those terrible quarrellings among the Italian artists engaged by Francis to decorate his splendid gallery. Indeed, I suppose, women and artists were just as jealous then as now, and as ready to tear each other's eyes out, on the slightest provocation. It is really to Diane de Poitiers

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

that Fontainebleau owes the most magnificent of its rooms—the gallery of Henri II. As we enter it, we seem to see the beautiful woman, in her long white widow's robes, her bare throat, and that matchless complexion which was as perfect when she was sixty as that of any beauty of seventeen. Sometimes she is with the King, sometimes with Charles de Bourbon, and occasionally she lingers in one of the window embrasures with the handsome Bonnitet. For Madame Diane was more universal with her favours than her name warranted.

But here we are at the salon of Louis XIII., and a very strange scene rises before my mind as I enter. I see the great room once more a bed-chamber. The young Queen of Henry IV., Marie de Médicis, is lying there, and beside her is the old nurse holding a newborn baby. The King has just given the woman a spoonful of wine, which she puts from her own mouth into that of the child, just as we see a mother thrush do with a worm.

“Nurse! Nurse!” whispers the King eagerly, “tell me, is it a son?”

“Yes,” says the nurse.

“Ah, pray do not deceive me,” begs Henry, “or I shall die!”

And when at last he is convinced, “tears as large as peas” roll down his cheeks, and he says to the Queen: “Mon amie, you have suffered

THE PALACE AND ITS INMATES

much, but God has given us what we begged for. See, we have a fair son !”

Then, running excitedly to the door, he flings it open, and bids all the courtiers enter, so that the room is thronged, and the nurse, fearing for her mistress, who has fainted, remonstrates.

“Hold thy peace, good woman,” says the King, “the child belongs to all the world, and all the world shall rejoice with me !”

So, taking the baby in his arms, he holds him up before them all, and drawing his sword from its scabbard, places it in the tiny hands, saying : “Use it, my son, for the glory of God and the honour of France !”

It was while walking in the gardens of Fontainebleau, shortly after, that the Queen met Henriette d'Entragues, who also claimed to be Henry's wife, in right of that foolish paper he signed at Fontainebleau. She, likewise, was carrying her baby. The two women stopped and glared at one another.

“My dauphin is much handsomer than yours,” asserted d'Entragues, offensively ; and I daresay she spoke the truth, for Louis XIII. was never a beauty. However, no doubt, his mother thought differently, for next moment she had given the rival a stinging slap on the cheek, and turned haughtily away. It is a queer little bit of human nature to find in an old royal château !

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

In La Galerie des Cerfs, with its pictures of the great châteaux of France, we are confronted by quite a different scene. Very odd visitors sometimes came to stay at Fontainebleau. Among them, in 1657, was Christina of Sweden, daughter of the celebrated Gustavus Adolphus. Nobody wanted her in France at all. Christina, on a previous occasion, had made herself a little too notorious even for those days. Louis, a law to himself, had no intention of other sovereigns setting a bad example to his Court, so Fontainebleau being at the time vacant, she received a grudging permission to occupy it, and established herself there with her secretary Monadelschi. Mademoiselle de Montpensier gives a very curious picture of the Bohemian life she found this strange Queen living.

“I found her surrounded by an infinity of people,” says Mademoiselle, “so that she could scarcely advance two steps towards me. I had heard so much said of her extraordinary manner of dressing that I almost died of fear lest I should laugh when I saw her. But she surprised me, and not in such a manner as to make me laugh. She wore a grey skirt with gold and silver lace, a jerkin of flame-coloured camelot, with lace to match the skirt, and at the neck, a kerchief of Point de Gênes tied with flame-coloured ribbon. She had on a fair wig with a roll at the back, like the women now wear, and she held in her

THE PALACE AND ITS INMATES

hand a hat with black feathers. She is white, with blue eyes, and sometimes she looks gentle, sometimes very fierce. Her mouth is pleasant, though large, and she has fine teeth. Her nose is long and aquiline, and she is very small, her jerkin hiding her bad figure. Taking her altogether, she made me think of a pretty little boy."

This strange person was evidently bent on entertaining Mademoiselle, and, after asking an infinity of questions, and making several extremely outspoken remarks concerning various well-known people of the Court, took her guest to see a ballet, and afterwards a comedy, where she behaved in such a manner that Mademoiselle was quite scandalised.

"She swore by God, and lay back in her chair, throwing her legs from one side to the other, and putting them over the arms of her seat, in such attitudes as I have never seen used by any one, save Trivelin and Jodelet, who are both buffoons!"

Altogether, it must have been a very extraordinary evening, winding up with fireworks on the lake, which frightened poor Mademoiselle out of her senses, much to the amusement of the Queen of Sweden, who declared that the one wish of her life was to see a battle.

After this, no one went to call on Christina. I suspect that Mademoiselle, on her return to

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

Court, made the most of her experiences. Perhaps it was on account of finding herself boycotted that the Queen quarrelled with her secretary Monadelschi. She accused him of treason. . . . See, these are her rooms, opening off the gallery, where she had her interview with him! Madame de Motteville, who probably had the story from Père Lebel, who shrived the wretched man, says that Monadelschi fell at the Queen's feet, begging for pardon. But Christina, crying out that he was a traitor, merely bade him confess to the priest, and went back to her apartments to order her captain of the guard to go and execute him. I think I should be afraid to walk down this gallery on a moonlit night; I might hear the cries of Monadelschi, as the captain hacked at him with his sword, or see Christina's contemptuous face, as she called him "coward" and jeered at his terror. Somewhere or other, on the polished floor, I might stumble over a mat, and think it was a dead body, with the blood still oozing from the gaping wound in its throat. And all the while, I should fancy I heard the brutal Queen laughing and chuckling to herself in the room hard by.

But there are not many such horrible stories told of Fontainebleau. For the most part, people seem to have gone there with the intention of enjoying themselves, and to have succeeded only

THE PALACE AND ITS INMATES

too well! Louis XIV. always arrived in a carriage full of ladies, all in full evening dress! Shouldn't you like to have been on the horseshoe staircase when they emerged from the crowded vehicle, dusty and creased with the journey, yet smiling and gay, as courtiers must needs be, whatever their private feelings? Speaking of the staircase, reminds me of the reception of little Princess Adelaide of Savoy, whom Louis XIV. went to bring home as a bride for his young grandson, the Duke of Burgundy. Saint-Simon gives a most interesting account of the arrival of the King with the little girl, "who," he says, "looked small enough to have travelled in the King's pocket." Poor little thing, I wonder what she thought of the great state-room they gave her to sleep in. I daresay she cried after her father and mother—little brides often did in those days! But she had a charming young husband, and every one was as kind as possible to her, including her step-grandmother-in-law—the much-feared Madame de Maintenon.

There are many things I should like to write about Fontainebleau. The great rooms are so easy to repeople—the council room, the salon of Louis XIII. Gaily dressed courtiers seem once more to hasten up and down the galleries. Sometimes there is a comedy, or even a tragedy, played in la Salle de la Belle Cheminée; or la Galerie Henri II. is lighted up with torches of pink wax,

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

and turned into a ballroom. How gorgeous it must have been, with the light flickering on the rich mouldings and sculptures, showing the great paintings of gods and goddesses! The Swiss Guard, dressed in red and yellow uniforms, are drawn up on either side the entrance, and the gay crowd of nobles and Court beauties stand expectant. "The King, gentlemen!" cry the guards; and enter Henry and Catherine, followed by their young daughters Elizabeth and Marguerite. Then what curtsying and bowing, what hand-kissing, smiling, and ogling! The parquet looks as though a flock of gay butterflies had settled down upon it.

And there is the ancient Chapel of Saint-Saturnin, consecrated by Thomas à Becket: and the Chapel of the Trinity, where, in 1725, Louis xv. was married to Marie Leczinska.

It is pleasant, too, to recall Marie Antoinette at Fontainebleau, to picture her in her great bed, with its hangings of embroidered Lyons silk; to peep into the mysteries of her boudoir, with its exquisite painted ceiling; and think of her kindness to the poor peasants of the neighbourhood. Her husband Louis, too; we can hear him at his locksmith's work in the attic he fitted up above his apartment. And this magnificent suite of rooms, with its Gobelin tapestries and painted ceilings? Ah, that is where Pope Pius VII. was lodged, both when he came to crown the Emperor

NAPOLEON AT FONTAINEBLEAU

Napoleon, and afterwards during his long imprisonment at Fontainebleau.

And this brings us to the last great shade which walks the galleries. I can see the short stout form of Napoleon,

“With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind.”

Up and down he goes, up and down, restless, like a lion in his cage. Below, round the Court of the White Horse, his guards are quartered. But save for them and the servants, he is alone. For days his generals have been deserting him. True, they have done it in the most gentlemanly manner, making such excuses and apologies for leaving him as only a Frenchman can. But Napoleon knows very well that his day is over, and smiles a little bitterly, as he bids them farewell.

Up and down, up and down! What is he thinking of, this little man with the insignificant body and the godlike head? Is he reliving the days when he and Josephine used to pace together this gallery of Francis I.? Or have his thoughts wandered to the later time when he brought Marie Louise here, and showed her the pine gardens he had planted, to remind her of her Austrian forests?

Up and down, up and down! Presently he

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

stops and enters a room, called to-day La Salle d'Abdication. In the middle is a little round table, its very plainness marking it out from the gorgeous surroundings. Not even his bedroom, with its splendid Louis xv. bedstead, and the cradle of his son the King of Rome, can rival in interest this ordinary little piece of furniture. You know something wonderful once lay upon it, or it would not be there. See, what is written on this paper ?

“The allied Powers having declared the Emperor Napoleon to be the only obstacle to the re-establishment of peace in Europe, the Emperor, faithful to his oath, declares that he renounces for himself and his successors the thrones of France and Italy, and that there is no personal sacrifice, even that of his life, which he is not ready to make in the interests of France.”

They say that, a few days after signing the abdication, he tried to poison himself with an overdose of opium, but was saved by the sickness it caused. And so, up and down the long corridor he wanders once more ; till one April morning, when Fontainebleau is looking its loveliest, when the trees are breaking into a thin green mist of leaves, and the ring-doves, billing and cooing, are making us wonder whether they are not the spirits of lovers of former days, the little great man stops suddenly, and orders his carriage. Then, with his head held high, and his mouth,

NAPOLEON AT FONTAINEBLEAU

that mouth we all know so well, set and firm, he goes out to the Court of the White Horse. There stand the guards, the old soldiers who have loved and followed him through all his strange, and sometime glorious, career. Napoleon descends the great horseshoe staircase, and gathers the veterans around him.

“Soldiers,” says he, “my old companions in arms, whom I have always found on the road to honour, the time has come for us to part. I might have stayed longer among you, but it is useless to lengthen the struggle. It might even lead to civil war, and I will not again tear the bosom of France. Be happy, and enjoy your well-earned repose. As for me, I desire no pity. I still have a mission to perform, to make known to posterity the great things we have done together. I should like to embrace you all, but as that is impossible, this flag shall take your place.”

Then, drawing toward him General Petit, who bore the flag of the regiment, he embraced them both, and, amid the tears of the soldiers, flung himself into his carriage and drove away. And so vanishes the last hero of Fontainebleau, and we are left to make our way back to the Hôtel d’Armagnac, and think over all that we have seen.

What a luncheon party it is, out under the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

plane trees! The memories of the Kings and Queens soon retire before the dachshunds, the pointers, the children, the shop girls, the motorists and motoristes. What a babel of tongues! The air is full of tinkling, as the guests tap their glasses to call the attention of the waiters, who flit about with inconceivable rapidity.

“Prenez patience, messieurs! Je n’ai pas assez de bras pour servir tout le monde à la fois!” cries poor Henri, whose face is glistening with perspiration.

Madame is “désolée” that we have to wait. She has doffed the crochet coat, and is working as hard or harder than any one. It is she who presently brings us our strawberries and cream.

And then . . . Well, we set off once more into the enchanted Forest, and leave Fontainebleau to continue its dreams.

CHAPTER IV

Sens—Saint Théodechilde—Auxerre—Saint Germain d'Auxerre.

WE found the southern side of the Forest of Fontainebleau lighter and more joyous than the northern. Perhaps this was accounted for by our passing through it earlier in the day. At all events, we saw none of those disquieting phantoms which haunted us on our arrival. True, there was a road branching off to the left, leading to Avon, the village where the servants of Queen Christina buried the wretched Monadelschi. In the church, at the foot of the *bénitier*, you will find his funeral slab, with an inscription telling how he was put to death in La Galerie des Cerfs du Château de Fontainebleau, on Saturday the tenth of November 1657, at thirty-four minutes past three in the afternoon, and buried here two hours later. But after we have left this gruesome memory, we go cheerfully on our way, meeting fairies rather than phantoms. Fairy rabbits run across our path—only fairy ones, for game is not preserved as it is in England. Fairy birds are singing in the branches, and once I think I see

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

a fairy dog, called *Blaud*, hunting about among the moss and bracken, stopping and pointing, with lowered head and stiffened tail and body, to call the attention of his royal master to a rat which has just disappeared into a *fountain*. After we have laughed over this rather fanciful derivation of the name Fontainebleau, we go on talking of the old Palace and the old days, wondering whether beauty is dying out of the world with the advance of civilisation, and, as if to convince us that it is, here is Moret with its towered gateways, an absolutely impossible conception for an architect of the present day. The glamour of Fontainebleau is still upon us, and we give ourselves up to regrets for the past, till, suddenly, we are recalled to our surroundings by finding ourselves at Pont-sur-Yonne. A market was being held at Pont-sur-Yonne, and I had to keep my eyes fixed resolutely on the radiator, to avoid the sight of the miserable and exhausted chickens which the women were carrying about in bunches. However, we were soon out on the road beside the river, where it was pleasant to watch the Yonne sparkling and dancing on our right—and so, after a short run, we reached Sens.

I had always wanted to go to Sens, ever since hearing the story of Samothès, grandson of Noah, coming there with his clan, and establishing himself on the banks of the Yonne. Senones, they called themselves, and soon became one of

SENS

the most powerful tribes of Gaul. What trouble they gave poor Julius Cæsar! how they chased away Caravinus, the King whom Cæsar had set over them, threatening that if he tried to return they would assassinate him! Cæsar might well fear the people of Sens. It was they who, with Brennus at their head, had in 391 B.C. sacked Rome, and would have taken the Capitol itself but for the timely cackling of Juno's geese. Nevertheless, it was but a few years after the expulsion of Caravinus that Sens became a part of the Roman Empire.

It is, historically, a most interesting town. The Cathedral, once a temple of Mercury, was purified by Saint Savinien in the first century, and dedicated to Saint Etienne.

But here we are at the door of the great building. Let us go in and look at the splendid glass—some of the finest in France. The priests are singing the Office, so we cannot see the *trésor*, which is a pity, as there are vestments there once worn by Thomas à Becket. But it is infinitely restful to sit at the base of one of the columns, and think about the history of this ancient town. And through the rainbow twilight of the nave, the rich tones of the Gregorian music fall upon my spirit, weary with the dust and heat of the journey, soothing it and calling up all kinds of dreams and memories. There is Saint Loup, the brave Bishop of Sens, who,

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

when the town, besieged by the enemy, seemed obliged to capitulate, took his bell out on to the walls ; and, at the sound, seized with fright, the besiegers retreated helter-skelter, so great was the repute of saints in those days. And there is Bishop Ebbon of Sens, who led his townsmen against the Saracens in 731. But best of all, there is our dear little friend, Saint Théodechilde, daughter of the great Clovis, King of the Franks. You remember her coming with her mother Chlotilde to Sens one summer day, and finding Basolus in the prison ?¹ Well, she never lost her love of the ancient city ; and it was here she made up her mind to build the monastery of Saint-Pierre-le-Vif. The charter given by her father Clovis may still be read. "I give also to the said monastery, Duke Basolus, a presumptuous young man, swollen with pride, but now humbled, and whom I hold in irons with all his relations. I give, from to-day for ever, to the monastery of Saint-Pierre-of-Sens, the castles, towns, churches, and lands, which formerly belonged to Basolus—in fact, all he possessed," and so on, after the usual manner of the times. . . .

As I sit there, the music sweeps round the mighty pillars, rising into the vaulted roofs, till every corner is filled with a rich orgy of sound. And white-capped sisters creep about humbly

¹ *Auvergne and its People*, p. 259.

JOIGNY—AUXERRE

and devoutly, while here and there a priest kneels with his rosary. And I think of Abelard, the lover of Héloïse, called to account for his heresy in this very building, and condemned by Saint Bernard to cast his beloved books, the splendid labour of a lifetime, into the fire.

Then my husband, who has been looking at the tomb of the Dauphin, father of Louis XVI., comes and rouses me from my reverie.

“We must be going,” says he; and so, regretfully, I rise and pass out of the shadows into the bright modern sunlight.

Our road led through Joigny, an ancient town of which I knew nothing, save that the last lord was executed under the Terror. But so many of these places have a similar black record, that we find it impossible to stop at all, and so run through to Auxerre.

A wonderful old place is Auxerre. From the farther side of the river the town can be seen, stretching up on the high bank, fanwise, to where above rises the Cathedral, and the remains of the great Abbey of Saint-Germain. This abbey alone would provide subject for the most fascinating book, for most of the famous Churchmen of the fifth and sixth centuries came here to be educated.

It was dinner-time when we drew up at the Hôtel de la Fontaine. It is a nice, clean, homely inn, with a pleasant landlady, and a delightful

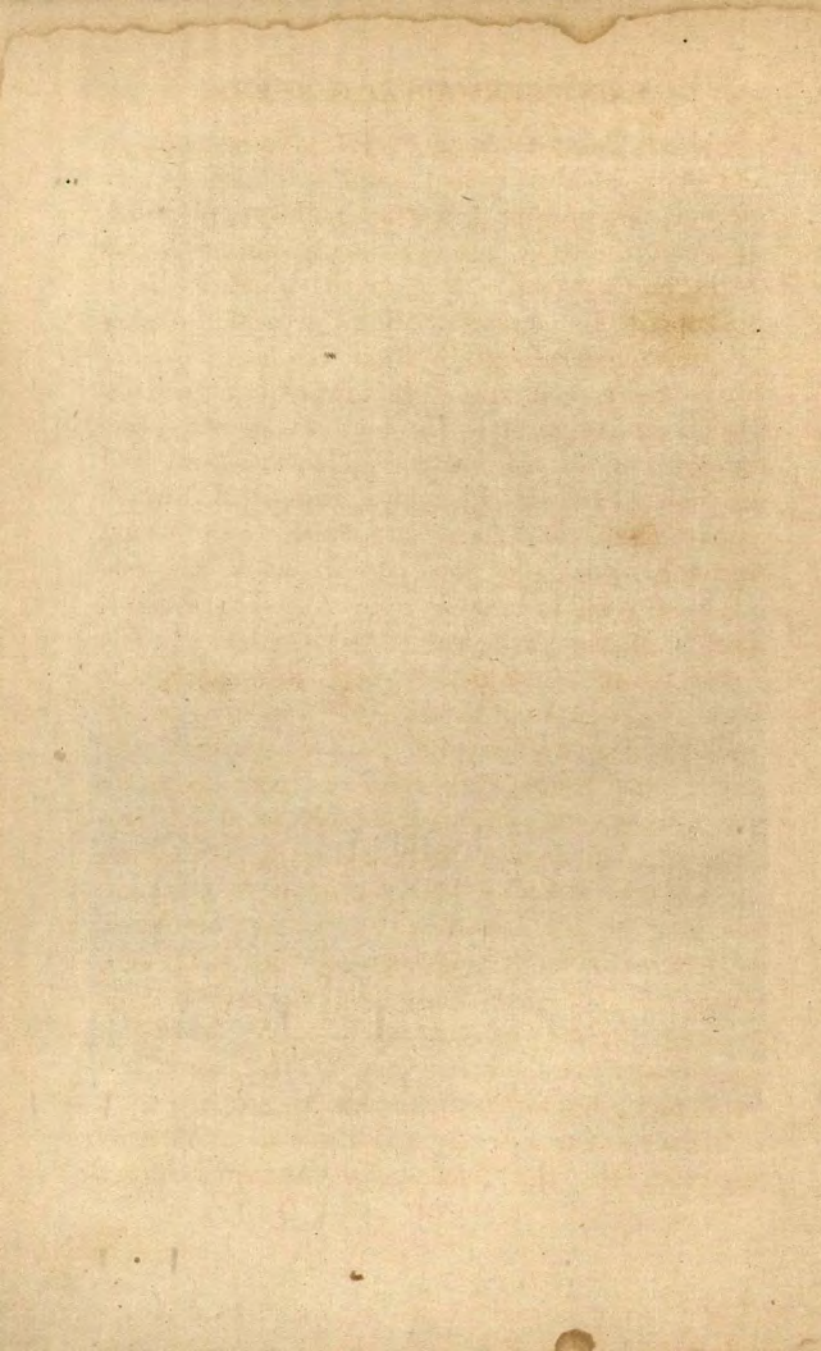
RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

“Maître Jacques,” called, I think, Guillaume. He it was who saw after the bedrooms, brought up the hot water, filled the bath, took charge of the automobile, drove the omnibus backwards and forwards to the station, cleaned our boots, brushed our clothes, polished the floors and stairs, saw to the wine (you could tell that by his nose), and, in fact, with the assistance of the cook and the landlady, ran the hotel. This portly personage took a fancy to us; he told me that he always liked the English, they were so “*faciles à contenter*.” During dinner, which we took in a sort of bar-parlour, with a window looking out on the stable-yard, the face of Guillaume more than once shone in upon us, like a great red sun, veiled in the purple mists of evening.

It was already dusk when we sauntered out to take a look round the town. I could not wait till the morning, and besides, I love seeing these old places for the first time in the gloaming. It is then that the memories, which haunt them, come thronging out of the dark corners, rousing one's imagination, and enabling one to live for some moments among the scenes of long ago. I knew I should love Auxerre. It is a place of saints, and I love the saints even better than the sinners, though even they are charming in their way, when seen from a safe distance. But saints in the twilight, and



AUXERRE.



SAINT GERMAIN D'AUXERRE

above all Saint Germain! To be sure, there is old Peregrin, the original founder of Christianity in Vellaudunum, as Auxerre was formerly called. It would not be fair to forget him and his little oratory, with its fountain where he used to baptize his converts. But the dear old man is quite overshadowed by that wonderful personality—Saint Germain. Besides, Germain is a true-born Auxerrois. He met us as we came in sight of the old Porte de l'Horloge, and told us how, even in his days, this had always been one of the ancient gateways to the town, through which he had passed many a time, when he went to hear his master, Bishop Amâtre, preach in the Cathedral of Saint-Etienne. The great church lies just beyond, its magnificent west front forming the side of an ancient *place*, round which are the high walls of gardens, and mysterious houses, where no one ever seems to pass in or out. And it is all so quiet and ancient that, as I walk beneath the whispering trees, I can actually hear the spurs of Germain clanking on the ground! For he was a soldier, was Germain, before he was a saint; and though, owing to the pressure put upon him by his master Amâtre, he consented to be ordained, he always retained his love of the army and remained a fighter to the day of his death.

I have never seen any building which delighted me more than the Cathedral of Auxerre. Louis

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

the Fourteenth used to call it the most beautiful church in his kingdom. It is of ancient brick-work, embellished and enriched by sculptured stone, such as one sees only once or twice in a lifetime. Even at that late hour a glow seemed to linger about it, a flush of rosy pink and amber, like the last memory of a sunset. And the sculptured portals! They are a whole Bible in themselves. There you may study the exact method in which Eve was taken from Adam's side. She came out head foremost, rising up as straight as Venus from the waves. And there are the first couple regarding with surprise, as well they might, the serpent twined round the Tree of Knowledge; and the same pair trying on coats of skins, apparently with great satisfaction. But Noah's ark! Poor things, how crowded they look. It must have been very trying to sit at such close quarters for so many months, for they could never have moved; they would have upset the boat.

We were looking at these and other sculptures, when the door opened, and an elderly priest came out. I asked him whether it was too late to look inside the church, and in answer he smiled, and held open the door for us to pass.

"You should be interested in Saint Germain," said he, "he was twice in England"; and, as we walked slowly up the dusky aisle, he went on to tell us the history of the Saint, the struggles

SAINT GERMAIN D'AUXERRE

with the wild passionate Senones over whom he ruled, the visit to England, the story of his converts being attacked by the Picts and Scots, when the martial Bishop once more girded on his sword, and led the way to victory, pleased enough, no doubt, to find himself again in all the excitement of a battlefield. And I heard of his death, which took place in Rome; of the long, long journey back to Auxerre, and of the four mysterious Italian ladies who followed the body, and died one by one on the way. It was all so solemn and convincing, told amid the stately beauty of this ancient Cathedral.

“I can almost feel him near me,” said I, and I could see the priest smile approvingly.

“Yes,” he said, “I, too, feel him here at this hour; but he seems nearer still in the crypt. That has remained almost untouched since the eleventh century. There are even parts of it which are older still—stones which the very feet of Saint Germain himself may have trodden. The sacristan will show it to you to-morrow. But you must also go to the old Abbey Church. There you will find the tomb of the Saint.”

I have been, and what a story I have heard! All the history of Auxerre seems to centre round that great sarcophagus of the shadowy crypt. The Church, once the chapel of the monastery, stands on the spot where Saint Germain founded his first oratory. The woman

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

who showed us the place told once more the Saint's story, but how different from the calm, restrained, unvarnished narrative of the priest! With her, the plain garment of history had become overlaid and embroidered with an arabesque of legend, so rich and strange, that one was almost tempted to wonder whether, in its preservation, the story had not been interwoven with that of some wild pagan deity who preceded Saint Germain. There were those incidents . . . but let me try to tell it in the woman's words.

“You must know, madame,” said she, “that Saint Germain was a great traveller—it was in the blood, no doubt, he being a soldier and noble. One day in the course of a journey he came to a castle, where, being well received, he determined to spend the night. After supper, he noticed that the servants, who had already cleared the table, began to relay it with fresh meats and drinks. Now it was not Saint Germain's way to ask questions, as a less prudent man might have done, but he watched and waited. Presently, the family having retired to bed, in came a crowd of people, men and women, who sat down, and began to eat, drink, and enjoy themselves.

“‘Who are these people?’ said the saint; ‘they have a very strange appearance!’

“‘They are the neighbours,’ said one of the

SAINT GERMAIN D'AUXERRE

servants carelessly. 'Our master entertains them every night.'

"But Saint Germain was still not satisfied.

"'We will soon see about that,' said he to himself, and calling one of his monks—'Go round the town,' he said, 'and visit all the houses of the neighbours.'"

"What do you think he found, madame?"

"I am sure I don't know," said I, smiling.

"All the neighbours," said she, dropping her voice to an awed whisper, "all the neighbours, without exception, were in bed and asleep!"

"That was very startling!" said I.

"I believe you," said the woman, "but it was still more startling when Saint Germain took the holy water and flung it over the guests!"

"Why!" said I, "you don't mean to say——"

"*Mais si! Si!*" interrupted she, nodding her head up and down. "Demons! Demons, madame, every one of them, and for years they had been living upon the charity of that good lord of the castle! But it was the last supper they got out of him. Saint Germain saw to that, before he left in the morning!"

"Did he put a horseshoe on the door?" I inquired.

"No, madame," said the woman solemnly. "It was a cross, but it answered the same purpose. They never came again!"

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

“It was very sad,” said I, anxious to draw her out, “his dying away from home.”

“Ah yes,” she replied. “That is true, but it could not be helped. And perhaps, if he had not gone to Rome, the people of Italy would never have known or heard of our Saint Germain. As it was, the Empress thought so highly of him, that she asked him to dinner every day.”

“How kind of her.”

“Oh, I don’t know—our saint was fit company for Monseigneur Saint Peter himself! Still, on the first occasion, although very fatigued with his long journey from Auxerré, he felt obliged to go. He rode to the palace on an ass, and, while dinner was in progress, the beast expired. The Empress, hearing of this, sent for one of her own favourite horses. ‘I thank you,’ said Germain, ‘but I will return as I came’; and going up to the carcass of the ass, ‘Get up,’ said he, ‘we must be going,’—and the beast rose, with no more sign of weakness than if it had merely been asleep!”

The good dame went on to tell me of another day when Germain was dining at the palace, and how the Empress sent him a silver dish full of the most delicious meats, which he, immediately, after the manner of saints, distributed to the servants, merely keeping the dish that he might sell it for the benefit of the poor. Then, taking a wooden spoon, he put in it some black bread

SAINT GERMAIN D'AUXERRE

and sent it back to the royal lady, who received it humbly and thankfully, and had the spoon covered in silver, and preserved ever afterwards as a relic.

“And where did you find all these legends?” said I; “the priest, who showed me round the Cathedral yesterday, told me none of them.”

“No,” she answered, “no, maybe not. It is we women who treasure such histories; we have them from our grandmothers. But as for Saint Germain . . . you may read his story for yourself in the *Lives of the Saints*.”

We found this crypt of the Abbey Church most interesting. The great Ionic columns at the entrance mark it as a Roman monument. In the centre may still be seen the huge stone coffin where the body of Saint Germain lay, till it was destroyed by the Huguenots; while on every side are the tombs of the bishops and other holy men of the city who once slept their last sleep around the grave of their patron saint. It was here that, in 577, Mérovée, son of Chilperic, King of Soissons, took refuge; remaining hidden in this gloomy place for two months, at the end of which time, growing desperate, he emerged from the crypt, only to fall at the hands of his savage stepmother, Fredegonde.

All through the Middle Ages this crypt was a place of sanctuary, and many are the strange stories it could tell of tragedies and hairbreadth

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

escapes. These pillars have looked down upon Dagobert and Charlemagne, and hosts of other great men. And if we turn to the Abbey, we shall find, connected with it, the names of most of the sons of the Church.

The morning after our arrival at Auxerre was sunny and gay, and we hastened out to renew our impression of the town by daylight, and found it noisy with life. All down the Street of the Clock Tower shopkeepers had set out their stalls, that they might bring their goods more prominently before the passers-by. The great market hall was already thronged with buyers and sellers; the sound of their voices was like that of a mighty torrent flowing over huge boulders. Even the square, last night so solitary, was fast filling with market carts and horses.

And how wonderful was the Cathedral in the sunshine! Nothing can be more lovely than old time-mellowed brick. And on the south side of the Cathedral, living under its very shadow, we found the sacristan and his wife, who showed us the bishop's palace, and the Cathedral crypt with weirdly marked Byzantine-looking pillars. And we heard of the extraordinary game of ball which the bishops and canons used to play in the nave of the Cathedral on Easter Day. It was all so exactly as I had pictured it, so exactly as it ought to be, that when we set off across the high land which

SAINT GERMAIN D'AUXERRE

divides the valley of the Yonne from that of the Loire, I heaved a sigh of regret, as though I had bidden farewell to some old friend.

I don't know whether Saint Germain was offended at our leaving his town so soon, but shortly after starting it turned very cold and began to rain, so that I recall but little of the road to Nevers. I see *geese* mentioned in my notes, and I remember thinking that they seemed the only creatures who really enjoyed that pouring day. For it rained and rained, and the great white birds came out in crowds, and swore at us, with beaks so wide ajar, that we could almost see their webbed feet down their yellow throats.

At Nevers we lunched. But alas! not a sight did we get of the ancient and magnificent Castle, once the home of the Dukes of Nevers. Neither did we see the Cathedral, nor the great belfry. For Nevers was a mere soaking quagmire, shrouded in a mist of pouring rain, and we were thankful to sit by a fire and warm ourselves till it was time to start once more.

It was the same at Moulins, though here we did catch a glimpse of *La Mal Coiffée*, the great square fourteenth-century tower, which is almost all that is left of the Château of the Dukes of Bourbon. As we looked up at the huge building, our thoughts travelled back to Charles de Montpensier, Connétable de Bourbon, and his disastrous entanglement with Louise de

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

Savoie, the mother of the King. It was at this Castle of Moulins that he and Francis I. met to talk the matter over. But they came to no satisfactory conclusion. The Duke was not a man to be coerced into a marriage against his will. Besides, he hated and feared Louise. "For nothing in the world would I marry such a woman," he had declared to a friend. But he had to pay. One may still see carved here and there the arms of the Connétable—a winged stag, supported by flaming swords. Later, when he fled the country and took refuge with the Emperor Charles V., he alluded to this device. "I needed the wings of my stag," said he, smiling, "to fly from France. And I shall need the fire and the sword to take me back again!"

The rain had stopped by the time we reached Vichy, and soon, away, far away on our right, we could see the mountains of Clermont, but shrouded as in heavy veils. Then, just as I was watching, the grey curtains of cloud parted, so that I seemed to be looking into the mouth of a furnace; and all the sky flamed up purple and livid, as though the volcanoes were once more awake. Higher, higher rose the glory, till the whole western heaven was ablaze, and stray wisps of cloud, like rags of purple chiffon, flew hither and thither, recalling the wild gnomes and elves which are supposed to live in the hearts of these mountains of Auvergne.

CHAPTER V

Thiers—Saint Genez—The cutlers and card-makers of Thiers—
Ambert—Foundation of Ambert—The Huguenots at Ambert
—La Chaise Dieu—Legend of Saint Robert—Saint Anselm
at La Chaise Dieu—Castle of Pagnac.

THE picturesque town of Thiers is set on the side of the steep ravine which the swift river Durole has carved in the "Alps of Auvergne," as Fortunat the poet calls the wild rugged district which lies to the east and south. It is a charming old place, with narrow, winding streets, where all day you may watch the cutlers at work in their dark shops.

We had some difficulty in finding the Hôtel de Paris, and had to ask a man in a blue blouse who undertook to show us the road.

"Is it the best hotel?" I asked, as he mounted on to the step of the automobile.

"Oui, oui!" said the man, with a confidential smack of the lips, which spoke volumes. "But there is one in the lower town, beside the church, which is cheaper."

That smack of the lips, however, had excited our appetites, and we decided in favour of the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

Paris. It is an excellent and clean place, where any one might well stay for some days, studying the quaint and beautiful town, with its picturesque corners. On our way to the hotel, we passed one, where I noticed quite a wonderful little shrine.

“What is that carving?” I asked our guide.

“That?” said he, looking back carelessly, “ah, that is Saint Eloi. He is the patron of iron-workers, so he is popular in Thiers, where we are all cutlers.”

I had a look at the statue later, and found, indeed, that the Saint is represented working at an anvil, while below is carved the mysterious device: “Vivre Notre Seigneur Saint Eloi, qui protège Monsieur Jacques et ses compagnons! Vivent les compagnons!” I never found out who “Monsieur Jacques” was—probably some master cutler. At all events, he must have been a merry fellow, and we owe him one of the prettiest corners in Thiers.

When we came out from dinner it had ceased raining, and we strolled down to look at the Cathedral. The dark open shops of the cutlers were lighted up, so that one could watch the men at their work, and the air was full of the hissing of grindstones. In each black little den sat two or three men, working at their own particular section of the trade, so that, by the time we reached the end of the street, we had

THIERS

gained quite an insight into the craft. One shop held us captive for a long time. Through a low, arched window we could see a young man with a pale face, and long, lank hair, filing, filing, filing! In a corner, at the back, lighted by the ruddy glow of a small furnace, stood a burly blacksmith, forging knife blades. And as he blew the bellows, the fire leapt up, till the air was full of fine sparks like flame dust, and against the glowing background was silhouetted the clear-cut motionless profile of the young man, who sat with lowered eyes, filing, filing. It was a living Rembrandt. A little farther along an old man had just finished his work for the day, and came out as we were passing. I gave him a "good evening," and asked him the way to the Cathedral.

"I live close by," said he; "we will walk together."

In France, as elsewhere, one rarely finds a working man who knows anything of the history of the town in which he lives. But this old cutler was an exception. I had read a good bit about Thiers one way and another, but it was quite a different matter hearing the story of the town as we sauntered along those ancient narrow streets, where many of the incidents had occurred.

There was Viscount Guy VI., who claimed the right to dine with the Bishop for three days at

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

Christmas. And his son Stephen, who ran off with a nun from the Convent of Courpière, and was ordered to "put her back," and to pay the Abbess £30 toward the building of a new dormitory. And I heard of the Lady Jeanne, who married the Dauphin of Auvergne, through whom the town passed to the Dukes of Bourbon, and from them to that great heiress Mademoiselle de Montpensier, whose acquaintance we have already made.

As we came opposite the Cathedral, the old man stopped.

"That's the Cathedral," said he; "it used to stand inside the castle wall. The castle's gone, all save the tower. But the church remains. Think of all those lords and ladies who lived here. Dead, dead every one of them—even their tombs forgotten! But there stands the Cathedral as strong as ever. I hear they are talking of doing away with the church. Bah! let them try!"

"You are a Churchman?"

"Oh, sufficiently. I practice my religion, as my father did. In Thiers, we hold to the ways of the ancients. It is in the blood, look you. My father was an *aiguiseur*, as I am, and his father before him, and so for many generations we have followed the trade. And it is the same with other things."

"Can you tell me anything about Saint Genez,

SAINT GENEZ

to whom the Cathedral is dedicated? I never heard of him before."

"Never heard of Saint Genez!" exclaimed the man in surprise. "But he is the patron of Thiers."

"It is a curious name."

"Naturally. It comes from Greece." And he went on to tell me of the little boy of Mycenæ, and his mother Genesie, and of their coming overseas to escape the persecutions in Achaia.

"I have read of it all," said he, "in an old book which belonged to my grandfather. If madame will step in to the Cathedral, I will run round to my house and ask my wife if she can find it."

We were still lamenting the horrible manner in which the splendid old Roman arches and columns had been defaced by the gaudy paint, so loved of the clergy of these parts, when he returned with an old and much-thumbed volume in his hand.

"Ah!" exclaimed my husband; "Jacques Branche."

"Madame knows the book?" said the cutler, in a tone of disappointment.

"Yes, I know the book," I replied, with a reproachful glance at my husband. "But I don't know the story of Saint Genez."

So we sat down in the porch, beside the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHATEAUX

thirteenth-century tomb of some forgotten Viscount of Thiers, and half in his own words, half in the quaint seventeenth-century French of the Prior of Pébrac, the *aiguiseur* finished the story.

“It was to Arles that Genesis brought our saint; and Saint Trophime, who was the bishop of that city, received them hospitably, and baptized the young Genez, even offering himself as godfather. And, considering that this mother had quitted her country for the sake of God, he gave orders that they should have all things necessary provided for them, as though they had been children of the town. But one night, when, weary with the too great assiduity she had for prayer, Genesis had fallen asleep, behold her good angel!

“‘Take your son,’ said the heavenly visitor, ‘even as Abraham took his, and offer him to Saint Sirenat of Thiers as a disciple.’

“Now Genesis, never having heard of Thiers, nor of Saint Sirenat, hesitated somewhat. And as she waited, she saw a bright light, and from the light came a voice.

“‘Wait no longer,’ it said, ‘but go. And that you may know that it is God Himself who speaks, the child, who has no knowledge of the road, shall lead you the way to Thiers.’”

“I wonder whether they went by Ambert or by the Rhone valley!” exclaimed my husband,

SAINT GENEZ

with that thirst for information about roads which distinguishes the automobilist.

"Monsieur, I cannot tell," replied the man; "but be sure it was the most difficult, as otherwise the miracle would not have been so *éclatant*."

"Umph," grunted my husband, who had no liking for the roads marked "très dur."

The cutler went on to tell of the parting with Saint Trophime, "qui versait une grande quantité de larmes sur son visage," and made Genesie promise to return after leaving the child with Sirenat. And so, "joyous and content like the little Isaac," the boy started on his long journey.

We thought of him later, when we ran over the road in our automobile. Poor little lad, how tired he must have been by the time he reached the great black forest, in the depths of which was the hermitage where Sirenat was endeavouring to hide himself from the savage pagans who sought his life.

For a day or two the mother stayed with the boy; then, remembering her promise to Saint Trophime, with many tears and kisses, left her child with the strange old man of the mountains, who, by way of cheering her, prophesied that the boy would early be a martyr. And it was but a few years afterwards, when Genez was only eighteen, that the pagans caught him. And because he would not, even when they tortured

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

him, betray his master's whereabouts, they cut off his head. After this, there was some story about oxen discovering the grave of the Saint; of a great stone which was laid over the place, and which, after the manner of Druidical monuments, cured bad sight and various forms of paralysis; and finally, of the founding of a church to the martyr by Avit, Bishop of Clermont. And that, together with the robber castle which stood beside it, was, I fancy, the origin of Thiers. Go there one day, and talk to the cutlers; and when you find their close dens too poisonous, make your way down to the Durole and watch the women beating their clothes on the stones by the river.

The stream comes frothing over weirs, so that the narrow gorge is full of rushing roaring tumult, for we are in the neighbourhood of the paper mills and playing-card factories, on which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries most of the prosperity of Thiers depended. It was the greatest factory of cards in France, this little mountain town of Saint Genez—a curious combination, is it not, the boy saint and the “devil's books”! Montaigne, when making his way back from Italy in 1581, stayed at Thiers, and relates how he went over the card works of Palmier—one of the greatest firms. There were whole dynasties of these card-makers, the most celebrated being that of Delotz, whose cards you

CUTLERS AND CARD-MAKERS OF THIERS

may recognise as being signed "Jean Volay." Besides supplying France, Thiers did a large trade with Spain. It was the Spanish War which struck the first blow at the card industry. Later, when peace was restored, a factory was found to have been started at Clermont, and poor Thiers was soon left in the shade by the more modern methods and fashionable designs of her enterprising rival. But it was the Revolution which practically killed the card-making of Thiers. Look at this curious old document. It is the proclamation issued by the Republican authorities against playing-cards.

"EQUALITY! DEATH TO TYRANTS! LIBERTY!

"The general council of the Commune of Thiers to its citizens:—

"The French are free. They have overturned the throne of the last of their tyrants. All signs recalling royalty, indicative of the cares of the human mind, are proscribed. Play is usually the occupation of the idle and leisured classes, or of clever speculators. If it is to be permitted as a pastime, it must at least be certain that those who play have not continually in their hand, and under their eyes, the symbols of our ancient slavery. Packs of cards are composed partly of cards known under the names of kings, queens, and pages. They bear fleur-de-lys, sceptres,

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

crowns. The Republican ought to reject all such signs. He must tear them from those who do not blush at the sight of them in their hands. It is forbidden to all makers of playing-cards in this commune, to manufacture or sell cards with the afore-mentioned figures and signs upon them, and citizens making use of such cards, either themselves or allowing them to be used in their houses, will be regarded as *suspects* and treated as such."

Think what a frightful loss this must have occasioned to the card-makers of Thiers. They had to change all their designs—tens of thousands of packs of cards had to be destroyed—the trade never recovered from the blow.

We lingered about Thiers next morning, visiting the splendid sixteenth-century house called the Château de Poiou, built in 1425 for Guillaume Bouilher and his wife, Beatrix de Montrevel de la Faye. What did she think of it, I wonder, when it was finished, and the bill came in—£24 for all that superb wood-work? No doubt she was a magnificent dame, in fifteenth-century costume. I wish we had had her with us to stand for a model while we photographed her house.

The road, on leaving Thiers, runs down to the valley of the Dore, where at a great *carrefour*

AMBERT

we turn off to the south, and presently reach Courpière. As we run through the little town, we think about that nun who was stolen by the Viscount of Thiers, and wonder what happened to her after he "put her back." Did the Abbess have her bricked up alive, or were such occurrences too common in those days to make much stir? The road is very beautiful, but wild and rugged, and we picture little Genez, trudging along beside his mother, discoursing of the joys of Paradise to console himself for the hardships of the way. No doubt, here at Giroux, they slept in some barn or hovel, while around them a band of angels kept guard through the dark night. It is such a Leonardo da Vinci landscape, with its beetling crags, and purple blue vistas, that angels seem possible at any moment.

At Olliergues the valley broadens, but it is a lonely valley, cut off from the world, a place where all kinds of things might happen and have happened. And it is in this strange solitude, walled in on every hand by mountains, that, just as twilight is falling, we cross the old bridge and enter the clean little town of Ambert.

Ages ago, only five hundred years after the foundation of Marseilles, a colony of Phocæans came ashore in Southern Gaul. The poor things, who had had a rough time on the long voyage, hoped that their brethren at "Massilia" would give them a welcome. But the people of

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

Marseilles had no intention of being swamped by pauper aliens, and sent the immigrants packing. Northward they wandered, led by a chief called Ambertos. At last, one day they came upon a pleasant valley, curtained by mountains; and there beside the river, which they named the Dore, they settled and built a stockade—"Livradois," or as we should say, "delivered from the ocean," they named the district, where, after their many wanderings, they found peace and rest.

It was already too dark to see more than the outline of the square. Besides, the delicious perfume of roast pork, which filled the clean paved entrance of the Hôtel de la Tête d'Or, was so seductive that we forgot the Phocæans, and Huguenots, with whom Ambert is also associated, and hastened upstairs to prepare for dinner. Later, however, happening to pass through the bar, I saw the old grandmother, nodding over her knitting, in a corner. So aged did she look, with her toothless jaws and parchment skin, that suddenly the thought occurred to me that she herself might be some old Phocæan, who had, from her very insignificance, managed to escape the notice of Death when he came sailing down the Dore in his boat. Her daughter, the landlady, looked up from her ledger and smiled pleasantly.

FOUNDATION OF AMBERT

"I hear that you have a beautiful old town," said I. "Do you have many visitors?"

"Not many, madame, save for the Fête Dieu, and then only the country folk."

"Ah yes, I have heard of your Fête Dieu," I exclaimed, a sudden memory leaping into my mind. "I believe it is very curious? The book which spoke of it mentioned a sham sea-fight as taking place on the Dore."

The landlady shook her head.

"That must be long ago," said she, "I remember nothing of it."

"They no longer carry models of ships in the procession?" I inquired anxiously.

A spasm passed over the mask-like face of the old grandmother.

"Si, si," she cried in a high quavering voice, "the little ships, Françoise! Well, to think of madame remembering the little ships!" and she broke into a cackling laugh, which ended in an aged asthmatic cough. "We all had little ships in those days," she continued, "and very pretty they were, running on cords from side to side of the street, their little cannons firing as the procession passed below. I remember how startled Monseigneur l'Evêque was the first time he heard them. Pist! pist! they went. Crack! crack! bang! Oh, Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! How we children used to laugh!"

"Those little ships probably represented the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

vessels in which your ancestors, the Phocæans, came from the East ages ago," said I sententiously.

But at this the old woman shook her head emphatically.

"No, no, there was never any one of that name in my family," said she, "and I can remember back a good way, look you, for I shall be eighty-seven next Christmas."

The landlady, finding me interested, told me that crackers were still fired before the procession; and this, as far as I could discover, is now the only remnant of the great annual sports held at Ambert, in memory of the coming of the Phocæans.

My room at the Tête d'Or was vast and ancient, with black beams, from which all sorts of horrors may have hung during those awful days when Ambert was besieged by the Huguenots. I think it must have been the old grandmother who put the idea into my head, for she sat up telling me about Merle and his atrocities, till I was afraid to mount the dark staircase, for fear of what might be lurking in the corners.

I gathered that, in the sixteenth century, Ambert was more than tinged with Calvinism. In fact, the Protestant pastor, Massin, had a very large following. For a time all went well—Catholics and Calvinists living together peacefully enough. Then something happened. Perhaps

THE HUGUENOTS AT AMBERT

Massin preached a more than usually rousing sermon. The Reformers became aggressive, and one day marched with banners and music into the Place du Postel, demanding all manner of concessions from the Catholics. The priests refused; the Protestants resented the refusal. Massin was banished from the town, and took refuge with the Seigneur du Lac, who lived close by; and who, indignant at the treatment his friend and pastor had received, sent to Issoire to ask help from the great Huguenot leader, Merle.

As I entered my huge ghostly chamber, the light of the candle seemed to contract, so that only the round table with its patchwork cover was plainly visible. The beds, dimly outlined in their remote corners, were uncanny black and high; with knitted quilts so heavy that, when at last I fell asleep, I dreamt I was undergoing the torture of being pressed to death. Once or twice I was awakened by the old woman's cough, which from time to time sounded through the silent night like a death-rattle. At about six I rose and opened the window. Below lay the great Place du Postel, and in the centre stood the weird old church, which in days gone by watched alike the murder of Catholics and Protestants. Those arches have looked down upon Merle, when he and his soldiers forced their way into Ambert that carnival night, and found the townsmen all heavy with sleep and orgy.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

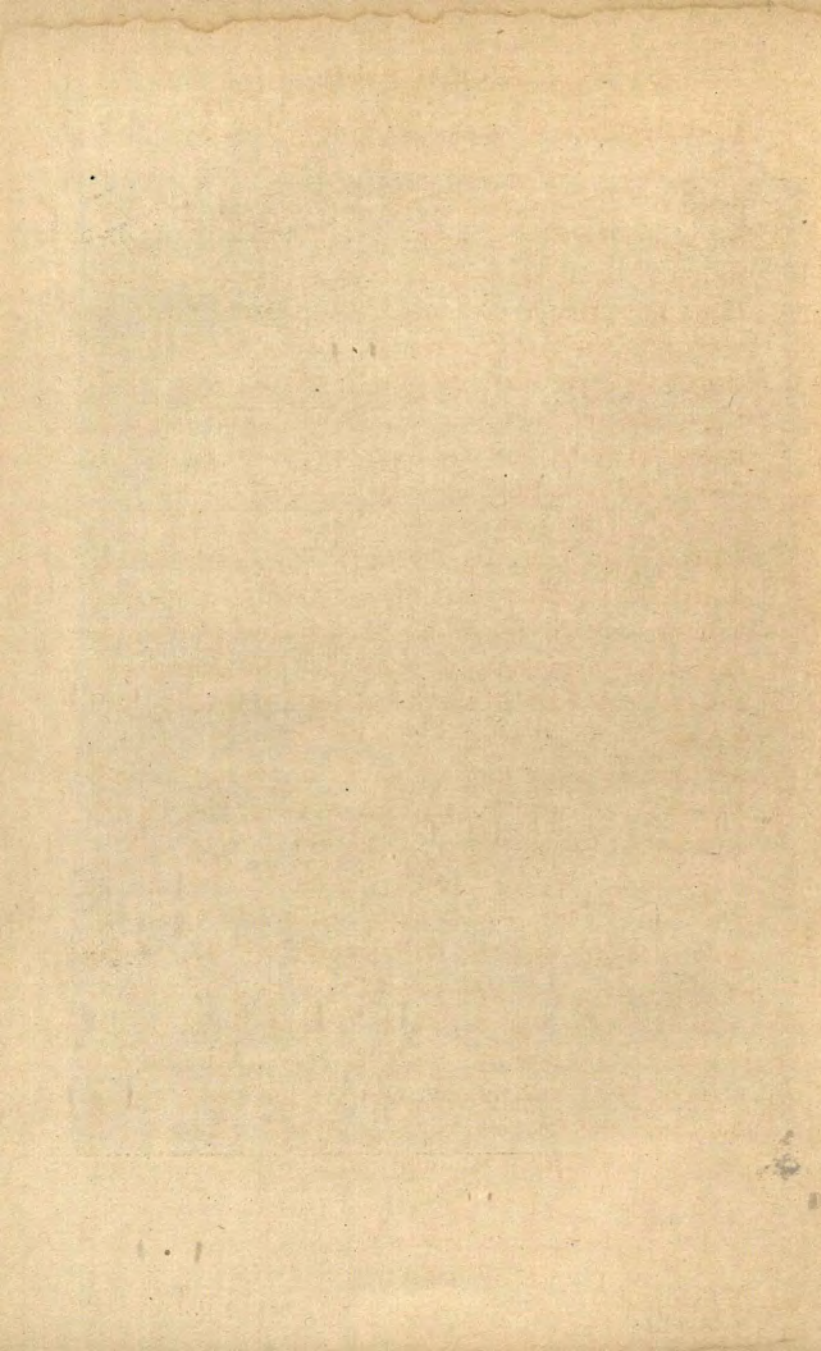
Here, on these very stones, fell the twenty-five murdered citizens, when at the fierce command, "Haut l'arquebuse en joue! Tirez!" the soldiers fired their terrible discharge. All around stand the mountains, veiled in mists, so that the town seems as though still mourning.

After a while I went back to bed, and lay dozing till a gleam of sunshine roused me, and looking out again, I found that, after all, some one was awake in Ambert. Two old countrywomen were setting up their stalls beside the church, while around, in the sunshine, lay their vegetables, bright and gaudy. Their donkey was drinking from the fountain; their dog wandered about nosing over the scanty dustheaps. But, even as I looked, a hearse came by, as though searching for the bodies which, in my fancy, I saw still scattered over the stones.

The church, when I entered later, was very still, fragrant with a memory of incense, and full of a strange solemn atmosphere, as though some great funeral were expected. The pillars soared into the vaulted roof, and the light fell through painted windows, filling the old building with a radiance like that of Paradise. Then, just as the light touched the vestry door, out came a gentle old priest. There were several boys kneeling in the church, and one mother, with an urchin in a black smock and a white scarf tied in a bow round his neck. As the priest passed



AMBERT.



LA CHAISE DIEU

them on the way to the confessional, he stopped, and, after the mother had talked to him a little in a whisper, stooped and kissed the boy, caressing the close-cropped head with his plump fatherly hand. The light from above wrapped them in purple and crimson, and I could not help wondering why the French Government should try to separate such as this good old man from the peasants who need and love him; unless indeed they have something better to give their people in exchange?

And now, it is ten o'clock. We are running down the valley of the Dore. Only when one tries to leave it does one realise how isolated is this arrondissement of Ambert. On either side the stream are meadows rising into hills, and beyond these, closing in the valley on every side, are purple mountains which we needs must climb to make our way to La Chaise Dieu, and thence southward to Provence, whether we are bound.

A faded blue sky dappled with white clouds, among which wanders an autumn sun, who seems scarcely to have made up his mind, as yet, whether he is not a mere reflection of that moon which still is shining in the west. Up, up we climb among the woods, where blue pines gleam out from the October mist, and each silver birch is spangled with diamonds and emeralds. Here

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

we find the mountain ash growing, as it was intended to grow, wild and unnoticed, its glowing berries the only touch of warmth in this high region; and everywhere beneath the trees are exquisite little cushions of moss, where, at night, no doubt, fairies come and sit gossiping, with tiny *limousines* wrapt over their flower garments—for it is cold up here in the mountains. Moment by moment the view opens: the valley below, carpeted with verdure, the distance shimmering with the iridescent colours of a sea-shell. What a Paradise! But how cold! We have put on all our wraps, and still are shivering. Should we shiver in Paradise, I wonder? Perhaps, at first, we should miss the dear warm earth, with its cares and responsibilities, and the joys, so much the sweeter because of the sorrows which precede and follow them. Then I suddenly remember that these are the very “delectable mountains” I have so often seen and wondered about from the summit of the Puy de Dôme. And the thought arises that perhaps death itself may after all be nothing but an awakening to the consciousness that we are among the glories of the unknown, seeing before us other heights to climb.

On the very loftiest point of all, we find La Chaise Dieu or Casa Dei, as Saint Robert named the great monastery he built in these mountains of Auvergne. He was canon-treasurer of the

LA CHAISE DIEU

monastery of Saint Julien of Brioude ; but found the rule too lax for his rather hyper-sensitive conscience. So, together with two monks, old family retainers who had followed him into religion, he came and settled himself in this wild mountainous district. It was the eleventh century, that epoch when founding a religious house was looked upon as the most glorious of human attainments. And indeed who shall say what this part of France owes to the influence of the great Benedictine monastery of La Chaise Dieu ?

I once had a friend, who used to say that the first thing to do on entering a new town or village was to order something to eat. Wise philosopher ! And while it is preparing, let us go and visit the great church of Saint Robert. His abbey has almost disappeared. Were the three monks to revisit the mountain, they would be almost as uncomfortable as they were on their first coming, when they had to live in the ruins of an ancient and abandoned chapel. But what can equal the magnificence of the church itself ? Shall we stop on the vast fan-shaped stairway leading up to it, and look at the glorious fourteenth-century façade, with the statue of the good Saint Robert, standing modestly outside the door ; while La Robertine, the only survivor of all that rich peel for which La Chaise Dieu was noted, sounds the Angelus ? Entering the nave,

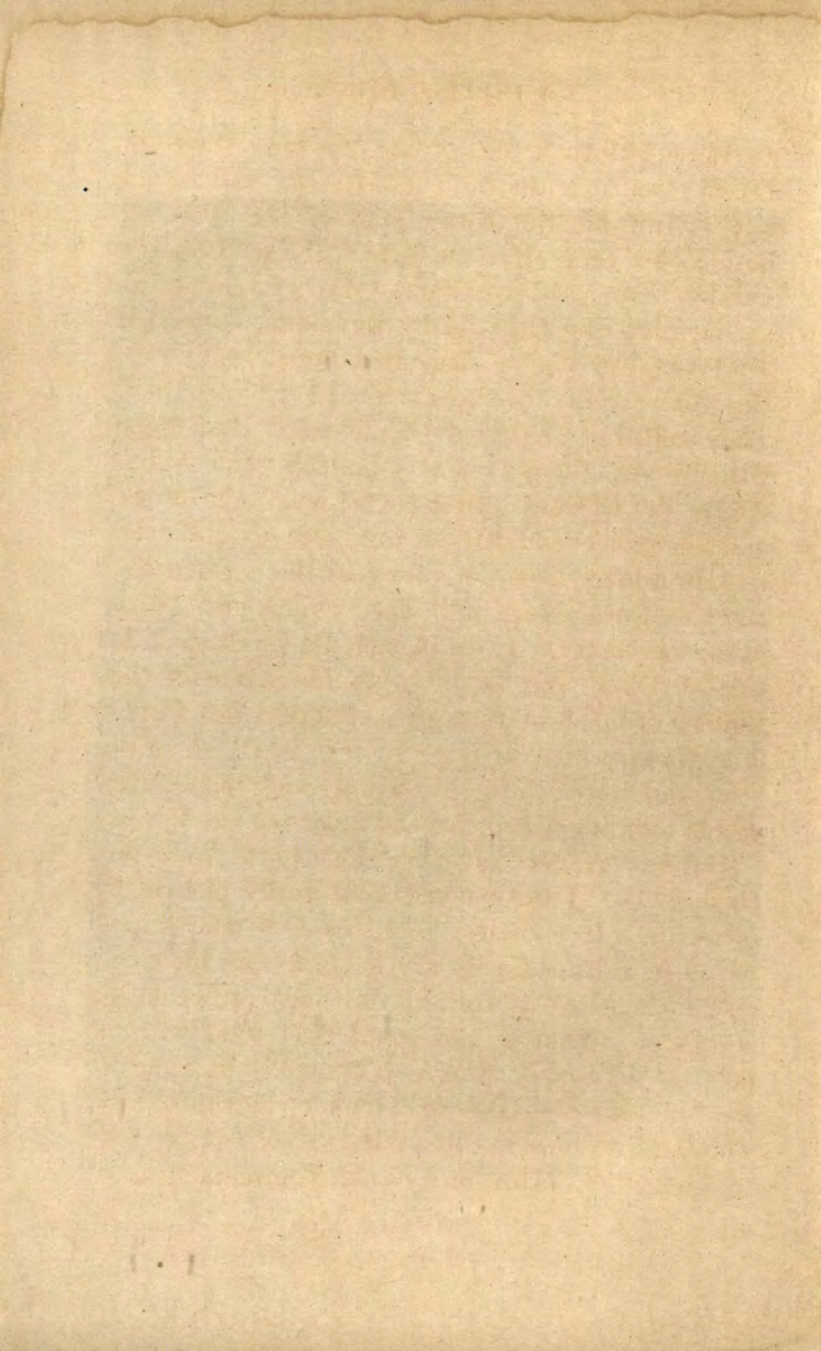
RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

whose sombre beauty suggests some great royal vault, we will make our way to the chapel beneath the screen, where the dead body of Saint Robert, after being washed in wine and sewn up in the skin of a stag, was buried on the 24th April 1067. Here it was that the miracles occurred, till at last the crowd of pilgrims became so vast, that the "noise and tumult of the sick coming to ask for health, and of those who went away healed, was such that it was only with the greatest difficulty one could hear oneself speak." These disturbances, at length, becoming unbearable, the elders of the monastery, fearing for the devotion of the monks, begged Saint Robert to "cease his wonder-working, and trouble divine service no longer" !

And there is the wondrous choir, where, in his tomb of black marble, Pope Clement VI. was laid to rest. The monument must originally have been magnificent, surmounted by its carved canopy, round which were grouped the statues of all the priests with whom the Pope had been associated during life. But much was swept away at the time of the Revolution. Some even say that the skull of the Pope was disinterred, and used as a drinking-vessel by the Republican soldiers. Now his statue lies there alone, still and venerable on the black slab. And around hang the wonderful tapestries, which for four hundred years have covered the walls. There is



LA CHAISE DIEU.



LA CHAISE DIEU

a strange painting, too, of the uncanny Dance of Death; and magnificent carved stalls and organ loft. And on the south side of the chancel, beside the very altar on which Saint Robert's wooden cup used to stand,—the cup taken as a charm to the Crusade by Raymond, Count of Toulouse,—is the battlemented door, leading to the fortress of the abbots of La Chaise Dieu. They called it La Tour Clémentine, after Pope Clement VI., though it was built by the Abbot André de Chanac. In time of war, the abbot and his monks could there take refuge, and even sustain a long siege, for they had their granaries, their well, their corn mill, their ovens, and every other necessary. It is, in fact, Le Château de la Chaise Dieu, and as it bears the name of the builder of much of that great Château des Papes d'Avignon, which we hope soon to visit, we must stop and notice how this tower, and indeed the whole building, resembles the Palace of the Popes.

But my readers must see La Chaise Dieu for themselves. I can never satisfactorily picture it in words. It is better to go back to the lunch which is waiting for us at the inn. As we turn and make our way toward the cloisters, we keep stopping. What is this great flat stone with a hole at the end? The sacristan tells us that it was on this slab the dead monks of the abbey were laid, to receive the washing they so objected to during life. How many great Churchmen have

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

not been exposed here? Perhaps even Saint Robert himself, and more than probably Queen Edith of England, who, after the death of her monkish husband, Edward the Confessor, came all the way to La Chaise Dieu to be healed by Saint Robert of a leprosy with which she was afflicted. Whether the treatment did not agree with her, I cannot say. At all events, though professing to be perfectly cured, she certainly died shortly after, and now lies buried in the choir, where you may see her tomb. Darras, in his *Histoire de l'Eglise*, gives a picture of this Queen which may interest my English readers:—

“I have often seen the pious Queen Edith, when I went to visit my father who was employed in the Palace. When she recognised me coming out from school, she would question me about the lessons I had learned, the Latin verses I had composed, and above all, as to the logical thesis, for she was very clever. Then she would take pleasure in engaging me in some abstruse argument, and finally, laughing at my confusion, give me three or four crowns to console me.”

In this abbey, too, during the time of his exile, dwelt Saint Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury. It was probably here that he received the message from Henry I., recalling him to England, after the death of William Rufus. There is a curious story, by the bye, told of this Saint Anselm while at La Chaise Dieu. A storm arose

SAINT ANSELM AT LA CHAISE DIEU

one day, and the barns of the monastery were struck by lightning, so that a fire broke out.

“All the monks,” says Darras, “had hastened to lend their assistance. I remained alone with Saint Anselm, who seemed as though unable to break off his meditations. After some time, however, he looked up and asked whether the fire had gone out. ‘Far from that,’ said I, ‘it is more violent than ever, even threatening to consume the abbey.’ ‘In that case,’ replied he, ‘we must certainly protect ourselves’; and he added, with a smile, this quotation from the Latin poet: ‘Tunc tua res agitur, paries cum proximus ardet.’ (When one’s neighbour’s house is on fire, one must think of one’s own.) And rising, he went to the place where the fire was raging, stretched out his right hand and made the sign of the cross, when immediately the flames died down, as though stilled by some supernatural power.”

As we reach the door, we pause to picture the last great scene which took place at La Chaise Dieu in 1786. Prince Louis de Rohan has been appointed abbot, and is on his way to La Chaise Dieu to take possession. But his reputation has preceded him, together with the story of the diamond necklace; and on his arrival he finds the abbey doors barred against him. We can picture the rage of the haughty prince. But in vain he stormed and threatened—he found him-

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

self helpless before the stern morality of these Benedictine monks, and had to retire to a little house they had hastily built for him to the left of the great façade.

When we left the church, it was already so late that we had to hurry over lunch, and start off once more through the forests. All along the road were teams of splendid oxen, drawing tree trunks: every time we met them we had to slow down, while the driver mesmerised the great beasts, laying his wand on the wooden bar fixed across their horns, when slowly they slouched away to our left, and made room for us to pass.

At Saint-Paulien we found a curious old church with memories of Saint George, the apostle of Velay. And so, as afternoon was deepening to evening, we came upon the home of that brigand race, which, for so many centuries, levied blackmail on the pilgrims going to Le Puy. For a while the trees hid the grim fortress. Then suddenly they ceased, and we looked out over an immense rolling plateau, which, toward the horizon, broke into the great mountains of Velay. And in the midst, close at hand, as though thrown up in a jet from the infernal regions, or wherever the old bandits originally came from, the huge black rock, with the square solitary tower, which is all that is left of Le Château de Polignac. Behind, I saw sprouting up other

CASTLE OF POLIGNAC

jets of rock—Espèly with its castle ; the rock of Corneille, with the great Virgin of France ; le Rocher d'Aiguille, with its strange chapel to Saint Michel ; and Mont-Anis, bearing the great Cathedral of Notre-Dame-du-Puy. For a moment we stopped to gaze at the matchless view, then, with every brake on the alert, began sinking and gliding down into the valley. And, as we descended, the rocks grew steeper and steeper, till, on crossing the bridge, we found them towering above us in the evening sky, as amazing as some landscape seen through the eyes of Baron Munchausen.

CHAPTER VI

A night at Le Puy—Crossing the Cevennes—The gorge of the Ardèche — Thueyts — Aubenas — Viviers — Bourg-Saint-Andéol—First view of the Rhone—Pont-Saint-Esprit.

WE have visited Le Puy, when travelling through Auvergne,¹ so on this occasion we must content ourselves with a night glimpse. But indeed, what can be more impressive than Le Puy by night? When the great Virgin of France, silhouetted against the darkening blue of the southern sky, stands watching over all the sanctuaries which crown the bristling rocks; when the lace-makers have retired with their cushions and bobbins, and silence has settled down over the valley; then is the time to climb Mont-Anis, and, passing the great iron-bound doors, sit for a while, trying, through the mysterious gloom, to distinguish the black features of the miraculous Virgin of Le Puy, as she sits enthroned among twinkling lights and glittering groups of candles. From the convent chapel, which opens off the nave, music comes pouring, in a rich volume of sound, canticles

¹ *Auvergne and its People.*

A NIGHT AT LE PUY

sung by women's voices, to strange old melodies never heard save in this ancient Cathedral of Velay. And presently a priest emerges, bearing the Blessed Sacrament, and, crossing the nave, enters the sanctuary, to deposit it beneath the very feet of Mary. Then women come to kneel in groups, murmuring their litany :—

“Virgo potens,
Virgo clemens,
Salus infirmorum,
Refugium peccatorum,
Consolatrix afflictorum,
Ora pro nobis. . . .”

The air seems full of the humming of bees and drowsy with the perfume of the incense, which still floats like a phantom winding-sheet in the radiance streaming from the door of the chapel.

As I sat there, watching, a story of Anatole France came into my mind. You remember it, no doubt, the charming legend of the magpie who lived in the belfry of Le Puy, and stole the little blue purse from among the rich offerings laid by pilgrims before the feet of Notre Dame. What a picture the writer gives of the Cathedral, as it was in all the glory of the fifteenth century. It is “Le Grand Vendredi,” the festival *par excellence*, when Good Friday happens to fall on the same day as the Festival of the Annunciation. What crowds! What feasting! What music! The pilgrims arrive in companies, for the country

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

around is infested with brigands, and the Lords of Polignac claim heavy dues from solitary travellers. All up the street the worshippers are pushing their way to the sanctuary, where they hope to receive pardon for their sins.

“They will surely be suffocated presently,” says old Marguerite, the lace-maker. “Twenty-two years ago, at the last Grand Vendredi, two hundred persons were crushed to death under the porch of the Annunciation. God have their souls in His keeping! Ah, that was a good time! I was young then!”

And the magpie? Oh well, you must read that story for yourselves. I should only spoil it in the telling. You will find it, together with many other delightful, though naughty, stories, in *Les Contes de Jacques Tournebroche*.

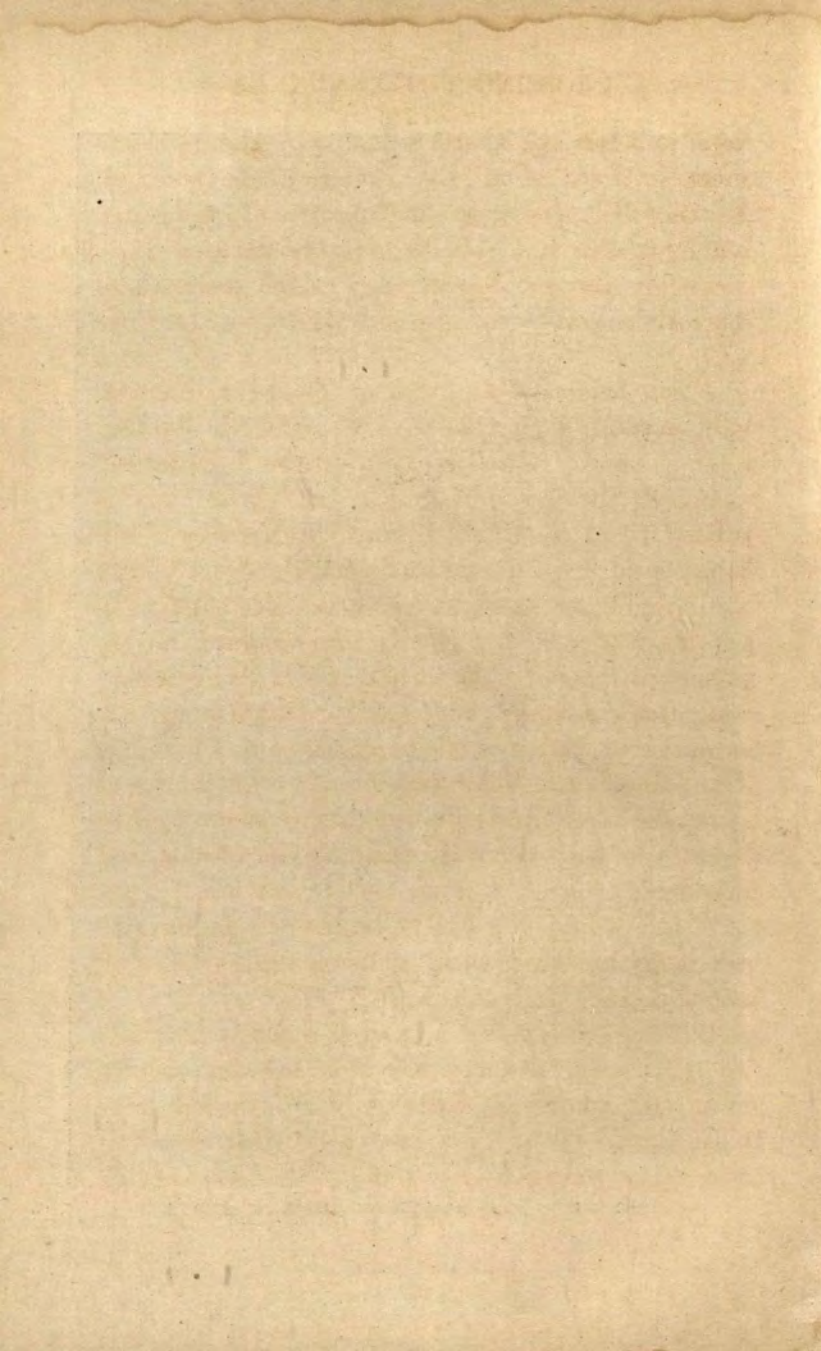
It was before this very sanctuary I sat gazing up at the Virgin, that evening of last October. “Petite et noire, couronnée de gemmes, dans un manteau resplendissant d’or, de pierreries et de perles, elle tenait, sur ses genoux, son enfant, qui, noir comme elle, passait la tête par une fente de son manteau.”

I, like the poor writer in the story, had many things to beg of the Black Goddess of Le Puy, and, like him, I ended my petitions:—

“And, Madame, if you grant me these favours, I will write a long and beautiful account of your holy image here present.” But so many have



THE NORTH DOOR OF THE CATHEDRAL OF LE PUY.



CROSSING THE CEVENNES

done it before me, that I am sure La Bonne Dame must be tired of all the adulation she receives. So we will leave her to Anatole France, and make our way through the ancient cloisters, and so, down by the great staircase, to the network of dark and narrow streets which constitute Le Puy.

“You had better put on plenty of wraps, madame,” said the landlord, as we were starting next morning, “it will be cold on the mountains.”

Cold? It was not the word. Even as we turned to catch a last glimpse of the huge bubbling cauldron of mountains, with the great Virgin watching over the sanctuary of Mont-Anis, an icy blast struck my cheeks and warned me to put up my collar. But that was a June breeze compared to what we were to find among the summits we had to cross on our way to Provence. The fierce north wind was blowing his hardest; even the cows in their rough red coats seemed to shiver as they fed behind the crags and boulders.

“How would you like to be here in January?” asked my husband, turning his laughing face, all red with the wind, toward me.

But my teeth were chattering too fast to allow me to answer. As a matter of fact, I should have suffered less in January, for I should have been dead. Then suddenly I remembered that it was in winter Cæsar and his legions crossed

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

the Cevennes, and that probably by this very route. So I managed to thaw my eyelids sufficiently to look around. There was the road still climbing, inexorably climbing among the grey-green summits, and, just overhead, a sky lowering like a heavy purple canopy, while the wind was howling and tearing and biting. How did the Romans make their way over here in winter, when the snow was six feet deep? No wonder Cæsar dwells on the labour it cost them to force a passage, and says that the Arverni, when they saw the cavalry riding down the mountain-side, thought them beings from another world, and were struck with terror and amazement.

Once, thinking we might have missed our road, we stopped at a stone hovel to ask the way. A woman sat crouching over a peat fire, while around her were huddled two children, a sick sheep, and a dog. She said it was the mistral blowing, and that it would very likely continue for several days, as it was only just beginning. Poor thing, she had toothache, and I had nothing to give her except a little brandy, which, however, brought a faint colour into her hollow cheeks. . . .

It was but a short distance after, that, turning a corner round a mighty rock, we came upon the entrance to the valley. Instantly the wind ceased, the towering walls of mountain sheltering us from every rude breath. We could still hear the mistral shrieking and howling above, could

THE GORGE OF THE ARDÈCHE

see the tormented clouds flying hither and thither, as he drove them southward. But for us there was peace! I ventured to emerge from the furs, and found we were running down a mighty canyon,—such a place as Turner might have painted,—a wondrous intricate gorge, full of turquoise mist, through which broad rays of silvery light were falling, touching with emerald and amethyst the vast shoulders of the mountains, the buttresses which hold up the stupendous walls of rock, which are the boundary between the Loire and the Rhone. Presently, above the giddy track, we saw hovering an old deserted castle, whose ragged keep still guards this defile. More and more magnificent grew the scene. Here, set high on a crag, was a little chapel; there, a thousand feet below, rushed a foaming cataract—the baby Ardèche. Even our chauffeur seemed impressed.

“Splendid, isn’t it?” I exclaimed enthusiastically.

“It is indeed,” said he. “I don’t know what my old mum’d say if she saw me here!”

And now we have reached Thueyts, loveliest of villages, where the vines begin, and the chestnuts flourish, and there is a southern touch in the buildings and in the costumes of the people. A few minutes later, we notice, on a crag, the first olive tree, soon followed by a little group; now

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

the valley is grey with them ; and the mulberries are beginning, and the figs. And how handsome the women are, with their large dark eyes, and splendid figures ! They, at least, still bear witness to Cæsar and his passing. The gorge opens, the mountains sinking and stretching out in long ridges into the broader landscape, and high on a spur behold Aubenas !

Very few people know the department of Ardèche, and yet it is one of the most beautiful in France. But it is not on its beauty only that Ardèche prides itself. It has a wonderful history, and in the very forefront of that history stands Aubenas, the old sentinel, guarding the valley to the west. There must always have been a fortress at Aubenas, even when Alba was the capital of the district. As one enters the strange-looking town, it seems as though it still formed one great castle — passages, stairways, gates, and, no doubt, below dungeons, though these have been abandoned since the time of the Revolution.

Under a heavy archway we found the inn, a "family inn," as a gentleman apologetically styled it, when I complained of its defective sanitary arrangements. The dining-room, when we entered, was full of commercial travellers, at sight of whom my spirits rose, for you may generally be sure that "where the food is, there will the *commis-voyageurs* be gathered together." And once

AUBENAS

again did this excellent adage hold true. Oh, the great slices of amber melon, the crisp trout, the melting *bouchées à la reine*! To this day, I often think, regretfully, that I might have eaten another, if I had not been ashamed.

After lunch, our chauffeur, who had been sitting at the long table with "les voyageurs," introduced us to a gentleman, a native of Ardèche, an agent for some new American phonograph. Finding I was interested in the town, this kindly individual suggested showing us the Castle, and we all strolled off together. He was a most patriotic person, and gave us a great deal of information as we went along. According to him, never since the birth of time had there been any country with such a story as that of Ardèche. It began with those mysterious people who scattered the world with dolmens, cromlechs, and menhirs. Ardèche, or the land of the Helvii as it was called, must have been quite a cemetery, if all these monuments were, as our friend supposed, tombs. Then came the Romans on their way from Italy. Cæsar had not yet had his temper spoiled by the stubborn resistance of the Arverni; and, thanks to his friend Valerius Priscillus, who happened to be one of the Helvii, left the little state independent. And independent the Helvii continued, though their chief city Alba was subsequently destroyed by the Vandals in 411 A.D.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

“But the Vandals passed,” as our phonographic acquaintance expressed it, “while the Helvii remain !”

Alba, it is true, never recovered. We shall see her ruins this afternoon, when we pass along the Roman road. And we shall go through Viviers, the new capital which took the place of Alba, and continued to flourish all through the Middle Ages, under the rule of a chief called “Le Prince de la Cité.” This Prince was one of the twelve barons of Ardèche. They ruled in turn, and the first of them was the Baron d’Aubenas, who dwelt in this old fortress we have just reached. It overhangs the road, like a vulture’s nest, and, like all lords in those days, the baron derived his living from the plunder of travellers. There were two methods of plunder then in vogue among “ces messieurs-là.” Some of the nobles, like Le Sire de Glun, without any beating about the bush, fell upon people, robbing and killing them if they resisted ; if they acquiesced, leaving them to continue their way, after taking all their possessions. The better class of nobles, however, contented themselves with levying toll on all wayfarers. In either case, travelling became a dangerous and expensive luxury. It is said that in traversing the short distance between Pont-Saint-Esprit and Rochemaure, one had to satisfy these rapacious foot-pads no less than five times. No wonder that people preferred to stop at home.

AUBENAS

As we stood on the terrace of Le Château d'Aubenas, looking down over the great valley, our new friend,—who had seated himself on the wall, and lighted a most execrable cigarette, about which even he seemed to have his doubts,—told us stories of sorcerers. One I remember was particularly horrible, relating as it did to a poor girl of Montpezat, a town near which we had passed that morning.

“C'était une hallucinée, une toquée, une folle, who had denied God, and given her soul to Barabam !”

“Barabam ?” I inquired, puzzled.

“It is a devil, madame, who, the peasants say, is very efficacious in punishing one's enemies. It was said of this poor girl that Barabam appeared to her under the form of a black hare, giving her a little black stick, by means of which she could both kill and cure.”

He went on to relate how the poor half-witted creature was fastened to the wall of the town by an iron ring, and for three days exposed to the cruelty and insult of the populace ; and, on the fourth, at two in the afternoon, was burned to death. And then we heard of the great reform ; of the stone crosses, which formerly stood at the gates of Aubenas, broken one April night of 1561, the Reformers even daring to preach in the Church of Saint Laurence, while Jacques de Montlaur, lord of Aubenas, sat in his chair of state to hear

RAMBLÉS AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

them ; of the cold-blooded Saint Chamond and his Catholic murders ; of the ferocious Baron des Adrets and his Protestant retaliation.

“ Bon Dieu ! ” as our narrator observed, “ what was it all about ? Words, madame, mere words ! As long as men speak, there will be these little differences of opinion. It was but a few years afterwards that the people of Aubenas were once more as Catholic as one could desire, though, for me, it is all one, since I possess not the religious instinct.”

It was to this Castle of Aubenas that the body of the handsome Maréchal d'Ornano was brought by his wife Marie de Montlaur. He had dared to revolt against the all-powerful Red Cardinal, and paid the price, dying poisoned in a dungeon at Vincennes. You may see his tomb in the parish church of Aubenas.

Of the ancient Château des Montlaurs little remains save an exquisite spiral staircase, adorned with grinning heads ; reminding one of those which fell so plentifully at the time of the Revolution. The Château Neuf has been made to serve as the Hôtel de Ville, the Public Library, and the Municipal Theatre ; and, though the change has deprived it of its romance, who shall say it is not for the best ? Aubenas suffered much from these same lords of hers in olden days ; now it forms part of the great republic, and each man is as good as his fellow, if not decidedly

BOISSY D'ANGLAS

better. Yet, all the same, if it were a question of the return of the monarchy, it would be difficult to say what Aubenas would do. Would she cry as at the return of Louis XVIII. : "Vive le Roi ! Vivent les Bourbons !" ? I cannot say. They are a strange excitable people, these inhabitants of Ardèche. They need a Boissy d'Anglas to lead them.

Everyone has heard of the great Boissy d'Anglas, the popular hero of Ardèche. He it was who represented his department during the Terror.

Ardèche has always been a country of extremes. During the wars of religion it became so Protestant that even to the present day it is a question whether there are not more followers of the Reformed Church than of the Roman. And when the Revolution broke out, how violent they were ! Not a single deputy but voted for the death of the King. And it was as the representative of these people that Boissy d'Anglas sat in the Council. When all others were afraid, he dared to take the President's chair, even keeping it when muskets were levelled at him. Nothing terrified this Boissy d'Anglas. When the still bleeding head of his friend Féraud was presented to him on a pike, he dared to salute it ; and never, even to please the very people who sent him to Paris, would he do what he felt to be wrong.

At last we left the town, and cautiously, with

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

much hooting, set off once more down the hill, on our road to Avignon.

It was a very curious track, leading us over the river Ardèche, into that region, variously called "Le Berg" or "Les Gras," a weird rolling desert of chalk hillocks, whose escarpments, interlined with straight rows of flints, call to mind some Galilean landscape. There it was we found the ruined Castle of Alba, once the centre of the great Roman city of Valerius Procillus; and, after winding about for a while round the bases of the hills, entered the enormous valley of the Rhone, where is Viviers, quaint and old.

A strange old place is Viviers. I wonder where Cardinal Richelieu lodged when he slept here on his journey up the Rhone? Perhaps in this curious Hôtel de Noé, with its Renaissance carvings. But we have no time to ascertain, for we must begin our long run down the valley, if we are to reach Avignon before dark.

At Bourg-Saint-Andéol market is just over, and we meet numberless droves of sheep and oxen. The road still hugs the low cliffs which bound the valley to the west, so that we are too far off to see the river. And here we are again overtaken by the mistral, who is evidently in a great hurry to announce our arrival, for he rushes down the road, sweeping the bamboos almost to the ground, and raising such a cloud of dust that the vines turn white, as with a sudden frost.

FIRST VIEW OF THE RHONE

I must confess that the first sight of the Rhone valley disappointed me. We had heard so much of it, had come so far to see it. Level it is, monotonously level, and cultivated till it reminds one of some huge market-garden. It is so broad that the mountains on either side scarcely relieve the universal flatness. The great river, which flows down the centre, has so many pebbly beds that he never seems to be able to make up his mind which he shall use; and though there is a good serviceable channel enough, goes on scattering stones and rubbish in a fashion which, to the superficial mind, seems both ridiculous and extravagant. Yet the Rhone, turbulent masterful stream that he is, knows very well what he is about, and ever since he first came into existence in those vague and distant days which most of us designate as prehistoric, has been steadily at work at the amazing and audacious task of creating anew this southern portion of France.

We are told that originally the coast here was rocky and precipitous, that where the rich flat plain of Provence now lies, a great fiord existed, walled in by gigantic cliffs, of which the present hills on either side are the summits. Little by little, the great Rhone filled up this fiord, by bringing down stones, earth, and all the things rivers do bring down, leaving them, in his untidy way, scattered about, as we shall see him still doing when we cross the river bed at Pont-Saint-

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

Esprit and Avignon. And all through the ages, Dame Nature, in her neat economical fashion, went on rearranging this rubbish, grinding, mixing, transforming it; till, by the time man made his appearance on the banks of the Rhone, he found the valley filled with rich alluvial deposit, where, after he tired of the things which grew by themselves, he could raise abundant harvests of corn, wine, oil, and every delicious fruit which his soul desired.

And still the old river is at work on his delta. Having filled up the fiord, he is now, in conjunction with his elder brothers, starting on the Mediterranean. Nothing seems to deter or frighten him. If you try to keep him within bounds, he will bide his time, and then burst out, wrecking everything, flooding the vineyards, burying the corn and vegetables. For he has the manners of a schoolboy, though he is indeed the father of the province. As such, the Provençaux love and honour him. The great Mistral (the poet, I mean, not the wind) has written a whole book about him—*Le Poème du Rhone*. And indeed, it was a very short time before I myself took a fancy to the giant river, and ever since I left him have been fretting and longing to get back to him, and learn to know him thoroughly.

It was at Pont-Saint-Esprit we first saw this erratic yet glorious stream. Pont-Saint-Esprit. . . . Does not the very name remind us of the

PONT-SAINT-ESPRIT

good Frères Pontifes who built this bridge, much as we see it to-day? Twenty-two stone arches it had originally, and twenty there are now, two having been replaced by a broad iron viaduct, to allow the passage of the steamboats. There has always been at this spot a crossing-place leading from the Kingdom of France into Provence, which once formed part of the Holy Roman Empire. The boatmen of the Rhone, when calling out their directions, still cry, not "port" or "starboard," but "Kingdom! Empire!" (*reiaume! emperi!*). It was a difficult and dangerous passage, when, as yet, there was no bridge higher than Avignon. So at last those holy bridge-builders,—Les Frères Pontifes,—who made it a matter of prayer and life devotion to carry roads over rivers, undertook the work. And because it seemed to them that no power less mighty than that of the Holy Spirit could have nerved them to the task, they named the bridge and the village which grew up at its entrance—Pont-Saint-Esprit. Forty-five years it took to build, and the good brothers would never have achieved the undertaking had not every one, from the French King Saint Louis to the humblest farmer in Provence, contributed his share toward the vast expense.

What battles have been fought round the entrance to the bridge! There is Froissart's story of Guyot de Pin and the little Méchin, who rode

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

all night, and at daybreak took the Castle of Pont-Saint-Esprit, murdering all the inhabitants of the town, and peopling it with the terrible Companions, who were for so long the scourge of France. Pope Innocent VI. was terrified when he heard they had obtained possession of this strong place, and proclaimed a crusade against these "wicked Christians, who, like the Vandals of old, were doing everything in their power to destroy Christianity."

And there were all the troubles at the time of the wars of religion. Indeed, whatever Western powers had designs on Provence, and there were always plenty who desired to plunder this district, must needs possess themselves of Pont-Saint-Esprit. It was the gate to the province. As long as the good river had been left alone, he took care to protect this land which he had created. But directly man began interfering with his methods, building bridges which anybody might cross, difficulties arose, and the keeping of the bridge of Pont-Saint-Esprit forms one of the important chapters in the history of Provence.

CHAPTER VII

Orange—The Château of the Princes of Orange—The Roman antiquities—The Martyrs of Orange.

I HAVE said that my first view of the Rhone valley was something of a disappointment. But the feeling vanished completely the moment we had passed the Pont-Saint-Esprit—“la porte sainte, la porte triomphale de la terre d’amour.” For yes, we are entering the land of love, the land of song, the land of troubadours and saints. But the land too, remember, of the Tarrasque and the Drac. See, there on the height is the old Castle of Montdragon, “dont nous voyons se cabrer les tours sur les rochers escarpés de la cluse.” And here, again, perched still higher, is le Château de Mornas, scene of many a black tragedy. But most suggestive of all is the road itself, surely the work of that old grandfather dragon who “shall be nameless betwixt you and me.” Oh what holes! What bumps! What bruises, and, above all, what language! I am sure there is no other road so villainous on the Carte Taride. It ought to be marked “impraticable.” And it was so unexpected too—

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

the great national road from Paris to Marseilles, the road by which the Romans entered Gaul. And all the while the wind was rushing, so that the air was filled with tumult, and the leaves of the plane trees tossed and moaned. Yet, to be sure, it was only the mistral trying to tell us about his country:—

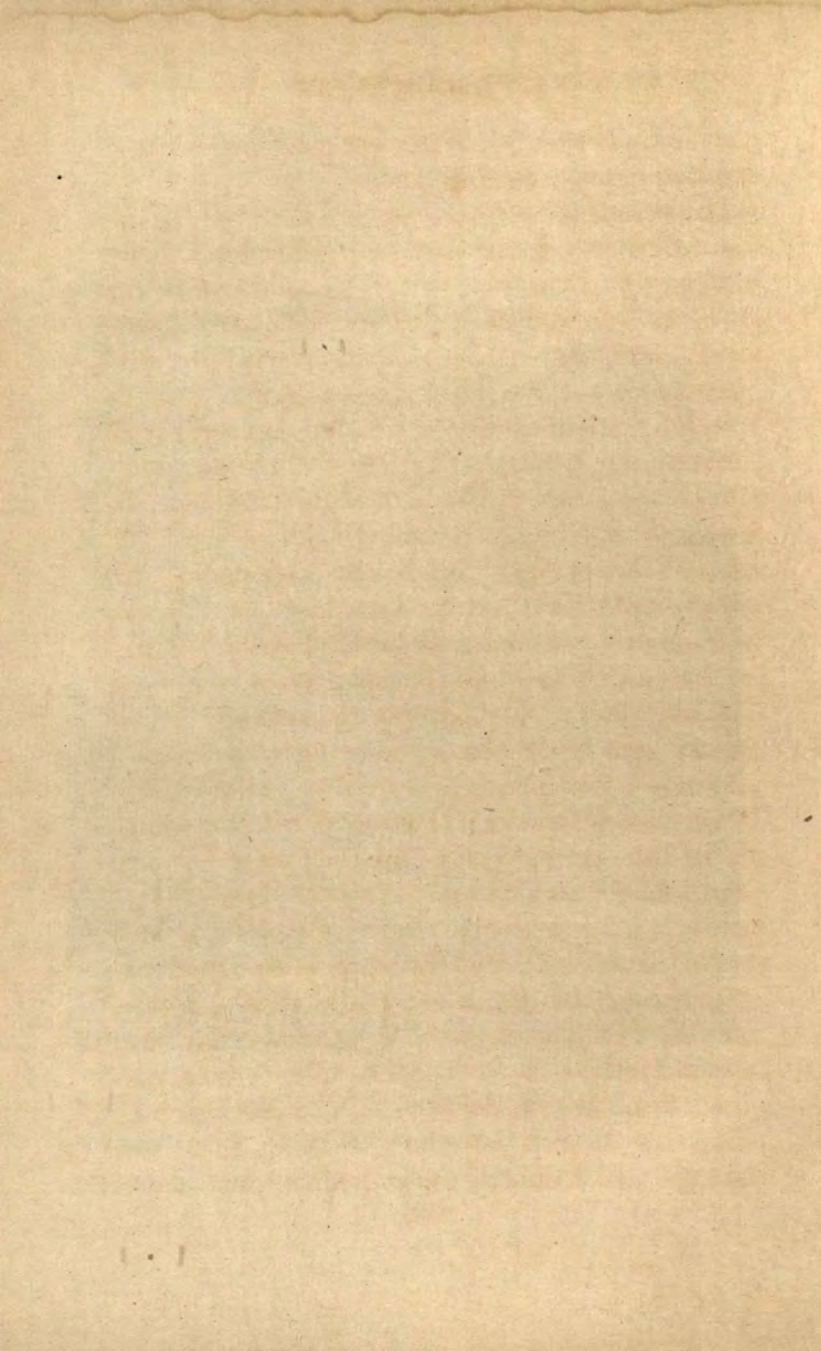
“Souffle, brigand de chasse-mouches!
Souffle, débraillé de Dieu, à te crever!”

he cries, and the “chasse-mouches” blows the little midges into my eyes, and “débrailles” me to such an extent that we have to stop for a moment at Orange for me to tie my veil afresh. And so it happens that we pause before passing the great Roman archway which marks the actual threshold of the Promised Land.

Ever since I began writing this volume, I have been looking forward to the chapters on Provence. I have friends in Provence, the kindest and best of friends, who have made it their pleasure to tell me about their beloved country as none but Provençaux could do. And yet, here am I sitting before my notebook, with my thoughts as “débraillées” as my garments were when I reached the great Arch of Marius. And how am I to begin setting them in order? For the old stories and pictures come thronging in upon me, blown by the mistral and lesser winds, till I am bewildered. It is such an ancient civilisation, this of the Rhone valley. Every little village has its



THE ARCH OF MARIUS, ORANGE.



SAINT-MARCELLIN

history and legend. Wherever we turn, we find material enough for a library.

For instance, as I sit lost in admiration before the glorious monument, a diligence comes rattling down the road which branches off to the left. It is from Vaison, the ancient Greek settlement, with its marble column raised to the memory of the Roman Emperor Gallien, by the grateful Christians whose worship he permitted. Near by, on a hill, is the Chapel of Saint Marcellin, where, every first of June, is held the festival of the vine. It was the Prior who told me of the strange symbolical ceremony. No women are permitted to take part—I suppose because, in Provence, as formerly in ancient Rome, it is said that wine is only good for men. “Drink water,” they say to the young girls—“water will give you a beautiful complexion.” (*L'aigo fai veni poulit.*)

“It is some years since I visited Saint-Marcellin,” pursued the Prior, “just before the French Government obliged us to quit France. Ah, what a sorrow that was! My Provence! I thought I should have died,” and his gay smile faded out at the remembrance, leaving him with what we call his “English face.” “I preached one year at the Festival,” he continued, after a moment’s pause, “and a fine sight it was, to see the long procession of men and boys making their way from the parish church to the little ancient chapel

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

on the hill. Each held in his hand a bottle of his best wine, and following Monsieur le Curé came the mayor and his counsellors, with the town clerk bearing glasses and full bottles. At the head of the cortège was borne the banner of Saint Marcellin, and as we marched gravely along in the warm June evening, we sang the old canticle :—

“Saint Marcellin, notre appui, notre père,
Ton vieux Boulbon s’unit pour t’applaudir !
Daigne bénir notre prière,
Oh Saint Martyr, oh Saint Martyr !”

“Arrived at the chapel, the priests and civil dignitaries made their way into the sanctuary, and the nave was quickly filled by the men. And then I talked to them.” The Prior’s eyes grew wistful again, and I knew he was living once more that evening when he had preached at the Festival of Saint Marcellin. I could picture him telling the peasants in his forceful poetic language—the language which is his by the inheritance of ages—of the martyrdom of their patron. How he was flung naked into a sombre dungeon, the floor of which was covered with glass,—broken wine-bottles as likely as not,—so that “from a thousand wounds the blood poured like a river,” or, as one should say, “the new wine as it flows from the press”; how an angel delivered him from this torture, thus giving him a last opportunity of celebrating mass, and converting a large number of pagans; and finally, how, together

FESTIVAL OF SAINT-MARCELLIN

with his friend Peter the exorcist, he was beheaded, and the two souls borne visibly by angels to heaven, so that the very executioners were converted to the faith for which the martyrs suffered.

“And,” pursued the Prior, “after the sermon came the blessing of the wine. The Curé, standing on the altar steps, says, ‘Uncork your bottles and keep silence.’ And then are sung the prayers for the benediction of the wine, and all the people cry ‘Amen!’ And the mayor presents a glass of wine to each of the priests, taking one himself. And when all are served, each makes the sign of the cross, and stands ready:— ‘A la santé de toutes les familles, des présents et des absents. A la santé des corps et surtout à la santé des âmes!’ cries the priest. Ah, the clinking of the glasses and bottles! I can hear it yet. And when all is finished, each one recorks his bottle of precious wine to keep in case of fever, or of any malady of the stomach. For you know we say in Provence:—

“‘Bon vin fait bon sang!
Un det de vin
Fai enrabia lou médecin!’”

(“Good wine makes good blood;
A finger of wine vexes the doctor!”)

But while we have been wandering off to Saint-Marcellin, the afternoon shadows have been

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

growing. Upon the height stands the ruined Castle, once the home of the Princes of Orange. A mere skeleton to-day is its great tower Crève-Cœur, and fallen are the triple fortifications which once rendered it one of the strongest castles of Europe. It is supposed to have originated with a Roman fortress, to which every Prince of Orange added his share of stones. But it was Prince Maurice of Nassau who erected the mighty tower and completed the work. He built it in the form of a pentagon, so that, according to all the traditions of magic, it ought to have stood for ever. But the days of magic were over, and at the word of Le Grand Monarque, Orange fell!

As I looked upon the old fortress, it seemed very pathetic. There it sits, solitary and deserted, with the ivy climbing about its ancient walls, the only visitors the few sheep which graze between the ruined fortifications. Only once a year does the Castle awaken, when a procession climbs its way up from the village to pray on the tomb of Saint Eutrope, who, by the bye, concerns us, if only as being the family saint of our King William III., or, as they would say in Provence, William XI., Prince of Orange. I am sorry to say I have forgotten the story of Saint Eutrope. I believe he came over with the other saints, Martha, Mary, Lazarus, and the rest, who arrived so miraculously at Les Saintes Maries,

CHÂTEAU OF THE PRINCES OF ORANGE

But it does not very much matter. It is the festival which is interesting. While the faithful go to kneel in the chapel, the boys and girls roam about gathering oak apples, as their Druid ancestors once did, laughing and shouting for joy, just as their fathers shouted on this very spot when they welcomed the first great Prince of Orange—Guillaume-au-Cornet, or Court-nez,¹ who, flushed with his victories over the Saracens, had come to take possession of the old Roman fortress. A strange man was this Guillaume: one of those curious centaur characters—half-warrior, half-saint. At the height of his glory he suddenly made up his mind to leave the world, and retire to a remote monastery among the mountains of Provence. They say that Charlemagne wept like a child when it came to saying farewell to this great general of his. And for years Guillaume lived a monk; and when he died, his people of Orange were informed of the fact by the bells, of their own accord, breaking into the most beautiful tunes. He was followed by a long line of Philiberts, Tiburges, Adhémars, and other queer-named heroes and heroines. It was a great family. Charles I. gave his eldest daughter Mary to a Prince of Orange; it was her son, born some months after his father's

¹ It was in punning allusion to the short nose of this Prince that the house of Orange bore a cornet in their arms.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

death, who came to the English throne as William III.

Most people when visiting Orange spend their time admiring the great theatre, and the superb so-called Arch of Marius, and they are too well known to require any word from me. We visited them, of course, and in the theatre sat looking down at the stage, trying to picture the scenes once enacted there. But the Romans seem so far off and dim. The tragedy, the true Orange tragedy, which rises to my mind, is of later date.

It is the year of grace 1794, though to be sure there is little enough grace about it; for the Terror is abroad, the Terror that walks not only by night, but at every hour of the twenty-four. And most vigilantly did he walk at Orange. No less than 324 victims fell beneath the guillotine, and of these 32 were nuns, whose only crime was that they refused to deny their faith.—Why should we celebrate the festivals of the martyrs of old and forget those of yesterday? I think of them as I sit looking down on the stage, and wonder whether any tragedy was ever played there so noble as that of the martyrs of Orange.

It is at the little Convent of Bollène that the first act takes place. The sisters have received orders to quit their home, and, as evening approaches, their friends arrive and take away

THE MARTYRS OF ORANGE

these helpless creatures. I can see the good Mother de la Faure standing at the door, comforting and encouraging her nuns, as they weep and cling to one another.

Then the scene changes. We are in the prison of La Cure. Day by day the sisters are re-assembling, and the hourly routine of prayer and praise is once more begun. Sometimes a great joy comes to them, when, from another prison, a priest manages to send them secretly the Eucharist. Always they are bright and gay, inspiriting each other, and cheering the other prisoners who are in a like case with themselves, but have not their faith. Sometimes it is a poor girl, desolate at leaving her parents. "But you will soon be with your Heavenly Mother," says a sister, putting an arm round her. Or, there is a father, plunged in grief at the thought of leaving his helpless children. See, one of the nuns, finding him too stunned to listen to her words, begins praying. "For more than an hour she kneels beside him, her hands stretched out to heaven. And when the last summons comes, the man rises cheerfully, going to his death with a courage of which no one would have thought him capable."

Day by day they are called—the good sisters. "Thérèse Henriette Faurie," and, with a smile, a young girl rises, and together with five of her friends, disappears.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

“Come, Henriette,” says Président Fauvety, “you are still so young. Why do you wish to die? A word, a nod of the head, and to-morrow I will send you back to your mother.”

“I have sworn allegiance to God,” says the girl, proudly, “and I will swear it to none beside.”

Ah, and the next scene! The heads have been falling this evening. Many have looked in through the little window. Madame La Guillotine must be tired. Yet here comes the little band of sisters, singing their song:—

“Si je crains pour ma faiblesse,
En Dieu je mets mon espoir ;
J’attends tout de sa tendresse,
Ma force est dans son pouvoir. . . .”

As they reach the guillotine, which has been set up in the Cour-Saint-Martin, one of the six stoops and kisses the wood. . . .

“Mon Dieu!” murmurs a young girl, “and we have not said vespers!”

“No matter,” replies Henriette Faurie, “we will say them together in heaven in a moment.”

And Marie Cluse, the beautiful nun—they say that, as she came to the foot of the scaffold, the executioner fell in love with her, and promised to obtain her pardon, if she would marry him.

“Marry you?” she cried, pushing him back with horror. “Why, I am just on my way to my

THE MARTYRS OF ORANGE

Heavenly Husband! Do your work quickly, the angels are waiting supper for me."

And all the while the crowd is yelling "Vive la nation! Vive la nation!"

"Ay," cries Jeanne-Marie de Romillon, as she mounts the scaffold, "I, too, say 'Vive la nation'—the nation which on this glorious day procures for me the honour of martyrdom."

What heroines! Not one of them but might have saved her life by a word. It was the old question of sacrificing to false gods, and, like the Christians of earlier days, they preferred death to apostasy. They were martyrs according to all the rules of martyrdom. Yet how many remember them? How many who stand lost in wonder before the Arc de Triomphe, or spend hours in the Roman theatre and arena, know of the humble chapel at La Plane, which, with its cypress trees, marks the spot where lie the victims of the Revolution? The Chapel of the Martyrs it is called; and though no special cult is offered to them, a Requiem Mass is often celebrated for the repose of the souls of those who fell in the days of the Terror.

Oh, the long, white road! And the leaves are flying, flying. One fell into my lap just now—a yellow sycamore leaf, with the dust still thick upon it.

"How fast are we going?"

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

"Fifty!" says my husband briefly, his eyes fixed eighty yards ahead.

And so we fly on toward Avignon. To the right the sun is setting, carmine and blood-red, on a primrose ground. It will be dark directly, and I hate travelling by dark.

"Oh, don't go so fast!" I cry. "Surely this is more than fifty miles an hour!"

"The indicator won't register more than fifty, madam," says the chauffeur cheerfully.

Darker, darker it grows, the trees overhead intercepting even what little light remains. But gradually the road is becoming more frequented, so that, to my relief, we have to slow down a little. Evidently we are entering the suburbs of Avignon. By the time we reach the first gate, night has fallen, suddenly, as it always does in the south.

"Anything to declare?" asks the *octroi*, peering in among my furs.

"Nothing. We are merely travellers."

"*Bien!*"

But it was not "bien." We had come to the wrong gate. The hotel lay on the other side of the town, and we had to make our weary and difficult way half round the fortifications before we reached the Gate of Petrarch, the entrance to the great Cours de la République. What a startling change! One moment we were groping along in darkness and silence under the battle-

AVIGNON

mented walls ; the next, we were in the rush and glitter of the city. So crowded it was under the plane trees, that it seemed impossible to make our way up the great street to the hotel, which is named "Crillon." It was a nice hotel, clean and comfortable. We dined in a courtyard shaded by trees, which, in the electric light, looked like a green-painted roof overhead ; and we slept in a charming little apartment with a red-tiled floor and double windows. So the noise of the electric trams, and the rushing and soughing of the wind among the trees was softened, and I fell asleep, to dream that I was indeed in the house of Le Brave Crillon. That, in fact, the great General was in the inner room, beyond the curtained archway, kneeling before his crucifix.

"Oh, Seigneur Jésus !" I heard him cry passionately, "if I had been there, they would not have dared to crucify You !"

CHAPTER VIII

Avignon—Le Rocher des Doms—La Métropole—Benedict XII.—
The Legend of Bénézet—Le Brave Crillon—La Reine Jeanne
—The Palace of the Popes—Villeneuve—Fort-Saint-André.

IT had been arranged long ago in England that the Prior was to meet us at Avignon. He was about to take a short holiday, and where could he spend it better than with his old friend the Chaplain?

We found them walking in the garden, among the palms and oleanders; and presently followed them to the shadowy study, where we were entertained with Châteauneuf-du-Pape, which we drank true Provençal fashion, in silence too deep for words:—standing, clinking our glasses, sniffing the bouquet, sipping, and finally glancing at each other to watch the effect of the magic draught. Then for a while we sat chatting, making our arrangements for Sunday afternoon, which we were to spend at Maillane, with the poet Mistral.

“I should like to come and show you the town,” said the Prior, as we rose to go; “but I have a good many old friends to see during my short visit. Eh, mon cher?” he added, turning to the Chaplain.

LE ROCHER DES DOMS

"Madame will understand," said the other, regarding me apologetically. "It is so long since we met!"

"Till to-morrow then!" cried the Prior, "unless indeed we were to look in for a cup of coffee after dinner this evening."

And thus it was settled, and we left the good men, and hurried off to gain our first glimpse of the town.

If you want to understand the origin of this city of Avignon, you must begin by visiting Le Rocher des Doms. The very name is suggestive, is it not? The Rock of the Dwellings. How it carries our thoughts back to the time when this rock was the one dwelling-place of the district. On it, or rather in it, the tribe of fishermen who first inhabited this portion of the Rhone valley had their habitation. In those far-away days Le Rocher des Doms was an island, surrounded by the river: its southern face, sheltered from the dreaded mistral, and honeycombed with caves, was a desirable abode. And because their rock village was the strongest place in all the valley, these early men called it, with a superb extravagance of vowels, "Aouenion," or as we now say Avignon, the Sovereign of the Waters.

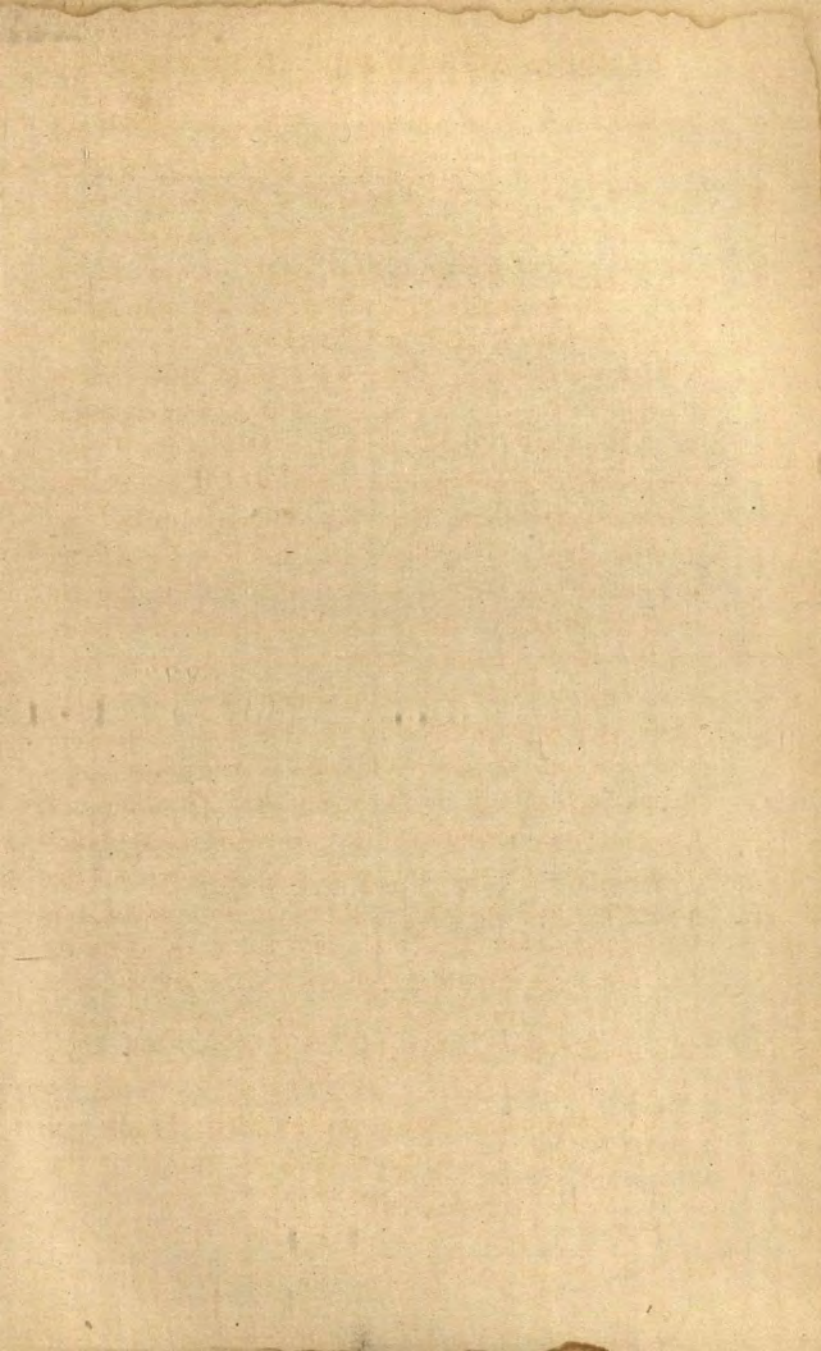
Since then, Father Rhone has abandoned some of the erratic habits of his youth, and adopted the more or less settled courses of middle age. The river, retiring westward, has left, at foot of the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

rock, a space over which the village has gradually spread, till to-day it is a village no longer, but a great town, the mighty city of Avignon.

On Le Rocher des Doms was the citadel, the castle of the Governor, the Roman temple to the North Wind,—oh yes, even in Roman times *Mistral* was worshipped in Provence,—and it was probably on or near the site of this Roman temple that, in the first century, was founded the Christian church of Notre Dame des Doms. You know the story, how Martha of Bethany, the Hostess, stayed at the rock village during one of her apostolic journeyings, and converted the inhabitants. There used to be an inscription about it at the entrance to Notre Dame des Doms, or the Métropole, as it is called. At that time the Virgin Mary was still living, and it was to her that Martha dedicated this first Christian worshipping-place of Avignon. Since those days it has been rebuilt more than once. The Emperor Constantine was the first to take it in hand. This curious Byzantine porch is his work. It is all that is now left of the church, which, according to legend, Our Lord Himself came down from heaven to consecrate. Before this porch is a little terrace on which the Pope used to stand and bless the crowds gathered below.

Mass was being said as we entered the Métropole, so we took our chairs and sat down in the





THE THRONE OF THE POPES, AVIGNON.

THE MÉTROPOLE—BENEDICT XII.

north aisle, trying to fancy that the officiating priest was the son of Simon the Cyrenian, Saint Ruf, first Bishop of Avignon. Inside the altar rail is a marble seat, with a lion carved on the side. It is the ancient chair of the Popes of Avignon, in which they sat to be crowned. There are their portraits hanging round the apse. One or two have beautiful faces; but some, such as Benedict XIII., look more like bandits than the Vicars of Christ.

Beside me, in this chapel to the left, lies Benedict XII., the son of the miller of Toulouse. As I looked at his monument, exquisite even in its ruin, and at the robed and mitred statue of the great Pope, a story flitted through my memory of this same Benedict.

It is somewhere about the year 1340. Avignon is in all its glory, shining in the afternoon sun, purple and splendid, as befits the dwelling of the Popes. Along the white road from Nîmes trudges an old man, a miller, judging by his clothes. At the entrance to the bridge which Bénézet has lately built across the Rhone, he stops, gazing with wonder and delight at the fairy Palace gleaming above him.

“Ah!” says he, his face lighting up, “so that is where he lives. How glad he will be to see me, my son Jacques!” and, mounting the steep street, he is soon before the great entrance.

“I wish to see the Pope!” cries he eagerly;

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

adding, "he will know who I am if you say that my name is Fournier. Yes, I am his father."

Then what consternation in the courtyard of the Palace!

"He cannot appear before His Holiness in this guise," cry the lords and cardinals. "It would be a disgrace, an indecency."

So, much against his will, the old miller is robed in silk and satin, and finally, stiff and ill at ease in his borrowed plumes, is conducted to the Hall of Audience.

"And who is this?" inquires Benedict XII., with a look which makes the old miller more uncomfortable than ever.

"Does Your Holiness not perceive that it is your father?" says a courtier, surprised.

"No, no!" says the Pope, shaking his head and smiling. "This fine gentleman is not my father. My venerable father is a poor miller of Toulouse, who never in his life wore silk or satin."

I can see the old man, cannot you?

"Let me out," he cries, "give me my own clothes. I was a fool to let myself be dressed up like a popinjay."

It was but a few minutes later that the miller of Toulouse, once more dusty and white with his trade and his journey, entered the Hall of Audience, and made his way toward the Pope.

"Ah, my lord father!" cries Benedict, springing



THE TOMB OF BENEDICT XII., CATHEDRAL OF AVIGNON.

THE LEGEND OF BÉNÉZET

up, "and is it you? What joy! What joy!" and hastening forward he clasps the old man in his arms, and father and son break out weeping on each other's shoulders.

The story is probably true, for it well accords with the character of this Pope, who, for all his magnificence, was austere and ascetic, and could never be prevailed upon to enrich his family at the expense of the Church.

How wonderful it seems to be sitting here beside his tomb, picturing him once more in his great marble chair in the sanctuary. The voices of the red-cloaked canons, behind the altar,¹ rise and fall, and the incense floats upward like the souls of some of the Holy Fathers—one or two, I am afraid, judging by what we are told, had no souls to speak of, or if they had, they went downward rather than upward. As I sit listening to the music, all kinds of scenes which have taken place in this church rise before my eyes. See, there is Bénézet, the good shepherd boy, pushing his way in at the great porch, interrupting the Bishop in the middle of his sermon.

"Listen!" cries the boy, "Monseigneur Jesus Christ has sent me to make a bridge over the Rhone."

¹ The canons of Avignon have the right to wear the *Cappa Magna Cardinalice*. It was granted them by Clement x. in the seventeenth century, in memory of the sojourn of the Popes and Cardinals at Avignon.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

How angry the Bishop is: I can see his face turn purple with rage.

“Take him to the Viguier,” he cries, “and have him well beaten. Then send him back to his sheep.”

“Never trouble about the sheep,” says Bénézet; “the pilgrim with the shining face, who brought me all the way from Viviers, promised they should be well looked after in my absence. For me, the bridge is my work.”

Then we can see the brawler hustled away down the steps into the *place*.

“A bridge across the Rhone?” cries the Viguier, “what? This miserable beggar, when not even the great Charlemagne himself dared to undertake it?”

Then it is said that the miracle happened; for, in the face of the Bishop and all the town, the boy took up a huge block of stone, which Nostradamus declares was 30 feet long by 7 broad; and, putting it over his shoulder, as if it had been his shepherd’s crook, made his way to the river side.

“Here is the foundation stone at least!” he cries, laying down his burden.

Seated in the almost empty Cathedral, I fancy I hear the voices of the people shouting at the wondrous sight. And subscriptions came flowing in, for miracles succeeded one another ceaselessly, till the greatest of all was accomplished, and the

LE BRAVE CRILLON

bridge, with its nineteen arches and little chapel for the Guardian Spirit, stood complete; "en-jambant le Rhône enflé, tel qu'un chemin d'arc de triomphe, un majestueux pont de pierre, d'une longueur peut-être unique."

I am still dreaming about it all, when an old scarlet-gowned man approaches with a silver dish.

"Dieu vous le rende!" says he, as I drop in my offering. "Dieu vous le rende!" He makes one ashamed of the smallness of one's gift. What would Clement VI. have said to my half-franc? Ah well, he is dead. We saw his tomb at La Chaise Dieu, if you remember. In fact, they are all dead, though it's difficult to believe it, sitting here listening to the "Gloria in Excelsis," sung, just as of old, by the great sonorous voices behind the altar. For nothing seems to have changed. There is the tomb of Crillon, "Le Brave des Braves." When we go outside, we shall find his statue in the Place du Palais, looking as haughty as he did when his dancing-master told him to bow and retire.

"Moi?" cried Crillon, "Moi plier? Moi reculer? Jamais!" And never did Crillon learn to dance. But he knew how to review troops, which was of more consequence; and even to-day, in the person of his bronze effigy, has the satisfaction of assisting at the exercises of the recruits of the Republican army. As you may imagine,

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

Avignon is haunted by stories of Crillon. I saw, later, l'Hôtel de Crillon, the house where Les Quatres Henris played their ill-fated game of dice. They happened all to be sitting together—Henri III., Henri Roi de Navarre, Henri Prince de Condé, and Henri Duc de Guise. It was but a few days since the Cardinal de Lorraine had been assassinated, and the talk was too gloomy to please the King of France. Some one had even the bad taste to wonder aloud, which of them would be the next to die.

“Why do we not play dice instead of talking of such things?” said Henri III.

A table was at hand, a white marble table, and Crillon produced the dice. But as the King, after shaking the box, threw the dice on to the table, he gave a cry. A pool of blood lay there. The Princes gazed at one another; only the King of Navarre pretended not to care.

“Si la mort nous frappe en chemin
Qu'en gais instants la camarde nous trouve!”

he sang. But when his three companions had all died a bloody death, he must surely sometimes have recalled the omen, and wondered when his own turn was to come.

Truly this Avignon is full of wonders. For one thing, it is a city of sevens. There are seven letters in its name, seven collegiate churches it had, seven brotherhoods, seven

AVIGNON

great gates to its ramparts, seven enormous towers to its Palace, and, above all, seven bells to every church. "L'Isle Sonnante," Rabelais called it, and Mistral (who, by the bye, also has seven letters to his name), remembering the bells, cries—

"C'est Avignon, et le Palais des Papes !
Avignon ! Avignon, sur sa roque géante !
Avignon, la sonneuse de la joie,
Qui, l'une après l'autre, élève les pointes
De ses clochers, tous semés de fleurons."

For the Palace itself, it had but one bell of solid silver. Yet, when it sounded, it made more stir than all the other peals ringing together; for it meant that a Pope was dead, or that his successor was about to be enthroned.

". . . la cloche d'argent
Ne tintait jamais dans l'espace,
Que quand le pape était intronisé
Ou quand la mort venait pour lui."

Opposite the entrance to the Palace is the ancient Mint—for the Popes coined their own money in those days, and spent it too; though they were sometimes tight-fisted enough, like Clement VI., who bought Avignon from La Reine Jeanne, and when once he had got possession of it, refused to pay. Yet he could be generous on occasion, for we are told how, shortly after his accession, he issued a brief inviting all poor clergy to Avignon to partake of his bounty; and

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

in spite of the hundred thousand who accepted his hospitality, he used to boast that not one went away unsatisfied.

As for La Reine Jeanne—she is a great heroine at Avignon as elsewhere in Provence. She was only twenty when she murdered her husband, André of Hungary, and came to Avignon to ask the Pope's permission to marry her cousin Louis de Tarante. Poor Jeanne! She had never had much chance. Her old grandfather, Robert of Sicily, had married her, before she was out of the nursery, to the well-meaning but extremely unattractive André of Hungary. Jeanne had hated him from the first,—and the writers of the time may whitewash her as they please, they will never persuade me but that the young Queen knew all about the terrible murder. After the old King's death, his second wife, Queen Sanci of Maiorca, had given the little Jeanne over to the care of a certain Philippine, a washerwoman, who had gradually wormed her way into the favour of the royal family. This woman and her relations formed what was known as the Italian party, while around the young André gathered a crowd of Hungarians, led by a dissolute Dominican monk named Robert; and these parties hated each other with a deadly hatred.

It was about a year after Jeanne's marriage, and every one already knew that she was in love with her cousin, the handsome Louis de Tarante.

LA REINE JEANNE

All sorts of stories were afloat. One night in September the young King and Queen had just retired to bed, when a message was brought to André that he was wanted on a matter of state importance. Scarcely waiting to dress himself, he hurried out into the passage, closing the door behind him. In a moment he was seized, a hand pressed over his mouth, a cord flung round his neck, and he found himself swung up to a gallery that ran above, while a man (I think it was the son of the washerwoman) hung on to his feet till he was dead. They threw the corpse out of the window, and were about to bury it, when they were disturbed by the young King's nurse, who gave the alarm. The murder made more sensation than had been anticipated—indeed, André's brother, the King of Hungary, refused to let it rest; especially after the Queen had actually gone the length of marrying, within a few months, the fascinating Louis. So Jeanne found herself obliged to deliver up her accomplices to justice. The washerwoman, together with her son and daughter, were publicly tortured; the old Philippine dying under the question, and her son Robert, with his sister Sanci, being torn to pieces with hooks, skinned with razors, and cast into the fire with gags in their mouths. But the furious people would not wait till they were dead, but broke through the barriers, pulling their scorched and quivering bodies from the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

stake, tearing them to pieces and dragging their bleeding and blackened limbs through the streets. And still the avengers were not satisfied. Even though the Pope took Jeanne's side and sanctioned her marriage, she never made her peace with Hungary. Her brother-in-law knew too well the kind of woman with whom he had to deal.

Yet what a fascinating creature she was! There is a story told of her in Provence, how one day, at a ball, she was dancing with a certain Galéas de Mantone, who, falling a victim to her charms, made a vow as he led her back to her seat that he would travel through the world till he could overcome and present to her, as slaves, two of the bravest knights in Christendom. Through Italy he went, through France, Spain, England, and Germany, till at last he met two gentlemen who refused to acknowledge that his lady (whom, of course, they had never seen) was, without doubt, the most beautiful and virtuous woman in the world. So he fought them, and having overthrown them, led them to Naples and presented them to Jeanne. Then what balls were held—what entertainments and feasting! The Queen knew very well, in this instance at least, what was expected of her, and showed off her court and kingdom to the utmost; at last allowing them to leave with their pockets full of money, and each laden with a heavy golden chain as a mark of her generosity and their captivity.

THE PALACE OF THE POPES

Such was the historical Jeanne, whom the Provençaux, even to-day, idealise as a sort of female King Arthur. There is scarcely a castle which (according to legend) was not either built or inhabited by her. Did anything wonderful happen, it was in "the days of Queen Jeanne"! It was the Golden Age; Provence was then Arcadia, and Jeanne the queen of the fairies. And it is this Jeanne we can see as we look down from the fortifications over the river. There she is, sailing up the Rhone toward the quay at Avignon. Eight cardinals were sent to meet her, and beneath a canopy of cloth of gold they led her up from the river to their town of Villeneuve, where, already, Louis her lover was lodged. But after all, it is the Palace itself we have come to see—"le colossal entassement de tours, que le soleil couchant enflamme et peint de splendeur royale, de pourpre splendide."

I shall never forget my first view of the Palace of the Popes. There is something super-human about it—cyclopean, stupendous. So must the Potala of Lhassa appear; such must have been Valhalla, the abode of the gods. It crushes one to the earth with a sense of one's helpless insignificance. Whoever designed it—and there were many architects, as there were many builders—must have had some wonderful mystical ambition to carry out in stone,—the soft white stone of Fouvielle, which "hardens and goldens

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

with the wind and the sunshine,"—a parable of the eternity of the Church. Do you know a feeling which comes over you at the sight of something very vast—the Great Pyramid, the Parthenon, the Coliseum, the broad Atlantic, the night sky? Well, you have it as you come face to face with the Palace of the Popes. I have read their stories again and again, have seen where they lived, walked, dined, and slept. They were but men as we are,—but they built the Palace! At last they fell sick and died—we have just left their tombs in the Métropole—but they built the Palace! They did many things they ought not to have done, and left undone many things they ought to have done—but they built the Palace! And there it yet stands, as Froissart says, "the strongest and most magnificent house in the world."

It was John XXII. who began it—John the witch-finder, who lies in the Cathedral sacristy. Miserable, unhappy, cruel old miser! What must he have felt when he came to die, and thought of all the human blood he had shed? No wonder Benedict XII. destroyed the Palace of his predecessors! It was too full of "familiar devils shut up in looking-glasses, circlets, and rings!" Too full of money also, for the vicar of One who said: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." Eighteen millions of gold florins were found there, beside seven millions in plate and jewels! Moreover, there were

THE PALACE OF THE POPES

strange stories of Margaret, Countess of Foix, who had given the Pope his serpentine ring, to guard him against the evil wiles of the sorcerers who, he believed, were melting away his waxen effigies. A fine hunt they had for this ring when it was stolen. The Pope pledged all his goods to get it back, pronouncing a curse against any who should withhold it from him. But no penitent jackdaw was forthcoming, and this curse took effect in all kinds of horrible tortures inflicted on innocent people.

Benedict XII., the miller's son, was the first of the Palace Builders proper. That portion adjoining the Cathedral is his work—the ancient chapel, where the archives are now kept (what would I not give to have the run of it for a month!), the Cour du Cloître, and, above all, this great Tour Trouillas, which Mistral mentions in "Nerte." The old rooms of Benedict are very interesting. His chamber, where sometimes he used to sit at his window, thinking perhaps about his humble home in far-away Toulouse. Look, too, at the long Salle des Festins, with its vaulted roof and little frescoed chapel opening from it. There are a good many chapels in the Palace, but not one too many considering the characters of most of the people who lived there!

The girl who took us round had a cold, and kept blowing her nose so much that it was difficult to hear what she said. In any case, she

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

knew nothing whatever about the Popes, and cared less. So presently we wandered away, and sat in the window of Clement vi.'s bed-chamber, looking down into La Cour d'Honneur, where is the great well of Urban v.

"I daresay Clement used to sit on this very stone seat, reading his Breviary," I murmured sentimentally, picturing the old man in his long white gown.

"I hope he had a cushion," said my husband, "for it's very cold even to-day!" And indeed little sunshine finds its way in at those long narrow windows.

As we sat there, we fell talking of Rienzi and Petrarch arriving with the idea of persuading the Pope to remove the seat of government to Rome. Useless mission! Who could influence Clement vi.? Not the haughty impetuous Rienzi, who soon got into trouble, and found himself lodged in the Tour Trouillas. And not Petrarch, who, one morning in the Church of Sainte-Claire, beheld for the first time his Laura, and for ever after lost himself in the mazes of that love he has rendered immortal.

Well, I suppose we must leave this Château des Châteaux! It is time to go back to lunch in the little garden under the plane trees, and think about it all. It will take a good deal of thinking over; even then, one can never hope to give any idea either of the Palace or its story.

DOGS

At lunch, as usual, we had dogs about us—darling dogs, short-haired and smooth, just the right height to put their heads on one's lap. I don't know what breed they were. It didn't matter. They were dogs. Why they came to me, I don't know either, unless, indeed, they felt in their wise doggy way that I wanted them. I certainly did—it is so homely and comfortable, when one puts down one's hand, to find a soft ear to play with. Besides, dogs come in so well for tough pieces of steak or veal cutlet. And when you come to think of it, how much nicer they are than people! We humans all belong to different nations—dogs are cosmopolitan. You never meet a French dog or a German dog or an English dog. He is a dog, unless, as often happens, he is an angel! That is why they are so comforting when one happens to feel a little lonely in a foreign land. All dogs speak the same language—my language, your language, whatever nation we happen to be.

But look at that man over there. Do you want his head on your lap? Would he understand you if you poured out your soul to him? Yet the dog does. And the toad-faced lady with a motor cap, and a jewel set just above the middle of her forehead! What language does she speak? And the disagreeable man, and his fat son in socks and sailor suit? Ah yes, decidedly I prefer the dogs!

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

I think it was after lunch that day that we found our way to Villeneuve. Just below the Place du Palais is the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville. It is not a stone's-throw off, yet, in passing from one to the other, you step from the Middle Ages right into the midst of the twentieth century. The square is paved, for the most part, and surrounded by cafés of every shade of political opinion—the most frequented being, apparently, the Republican Radical Socialist Club, round which there is always a noisy excitable throng. It is in the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville that the men of Avignon spend the greater part of their time, walking up and down together, or standing in groups talking at the tops of their voices. I suppose it must be very easy to get a living in Provence. At all events, the people have much more spare time than in England. On their way to the R.R.S. Club, they invariably take the steam tram, which, about midday, when they are returning home for *déjeuner*, looks as though a swarm of bees had settled all over it. And the omnibuses! Never did I see such immense omnibuses, and always *archicomblées*! They are low-seated platforms, built lightly, char-à-banc fashion, with flapping awnings overhead, and a couple of ridiculously inadequate-looking horses in front.

It was in one of these astounding vehicles, on which was a flaring advertisement: "Habillez-

VILLENEUVE

vous au bon diable," that I found myself that afternoon, on my way to Villeneuve, the old town where the cardinals and nobles used to live in the palmy days of Avignon. It was only just across the bridge, but one soon grows lazy in Provence. Besides, the omnibus was so amusing. The conductor, a little girl of twelve, in a knitted cap, was quite a mature person, who not only took our money, but collected and distributed parcels on the route, shouted directions to her father, the driver, kept a sharp watch to see that no would-be passenger was overlooked on the road, and joked and dallied with the young men in quite a grown-up and artistic fashion. Soon after crossing the bridge over the Rhone, we stopped for a moment at the foot of the tower of Philippe-le-Bel, to set down a huge bundle of quacking ducks and an old woman, and then continued our way up the hill into the town.

What a charming place it is! How the sun pours down! I am a regular salamander—like my namesake Francis I., I love the sunshine. And I had it! It followed us even into the church, lighting up the great tomb opposite the door, and within the altar rails, lying upon the beautiful marble chair, in which, no doubt, Cardinal Arnaud de Via, favourite nephew of John XXII., sat, when he came to worship in this sanctuary he had built. In the Chapel of the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

Hospice is the tomb of Innocent VI., and everywhere are ruins of the great mansions, where dwelt the cardinals and princes of the Holy See. But the chief thing to see is the Fort-Saint-André. We had already taken a photograph of the splendid towered gateway, when I noticed a fine old veteran watching us.

“So you have been photographing *l'ancien Fort-Saint-André*,” said he, as soon as he saw he was observed. “Well, and what do you think of it?”

I replied that it was very fine.

“I believe you,” said he, “you will not find such another between here and Avignon”—which seemed rather evident.

“Is there anything to see inside?” I inquired.

“Anything to see!” cried the old man, indignantly, “but there is everything to see!”

So we followed him over the ancient fort, up winding stairs, into vaulted chambers, through low archways. We were shut and bolted into dark prison-cells, just to see how it felt to be a prisoner.

“Not very consoling, when you heard the bolt shoot like this, eh madame?”

We were shown guard-rooms with great hearths; a room above the gate, where, I suppose, they heated the boiling oil and water, for it had also an enormous chimney. And all the while, the old man kept up a slow, steady, resistless flow of

FORT-SAINT-ANDRÉ

explanation. Once or twice, my husband, growing impatient, asked a question.

“We shall come to that directly, monsieur,” the guardian would answer with a stony stare, and return to the very sentence from which we had tried to lure him. One great room is paved with slabs, on which prisoners have carved inscriptions and devices, and respecting these the old man waxed so eloquent, that, at last, we were obliged to stop him—not that I was tired of his long-winded phrases—they were infinitely amusing—but I was afraid of keeping the Prior and his friend waiting after dinner.

“I expect you could tell me a great many stories about the Popes,” I said, as we came out under the archway, and saw Avignon rising gloriously beyond the river. The guardian gave me a look.

“I believe I might find one or two,” said he, dryly, “but it would be better to come in the morning, when the day is before us. The worst of tourists,” with a withering glance at my husband, “is that they are always in a hurry. For me, I cannot talk when I am hurried.”

Good old man! I have followed your advice. Once more in the “*Habillez-vous au bon diable*” have I crossed the bridge, and made my way to Villeneuve. Again have I wandered over the fort, been shut into the same dungeons, and have

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

listened to the same long explanations in the same deliberate voice.

“And the Popes?”

“The Popes? Ah yes, to be sure, the Popes!” There was a long pause while the old man looked meditatively out over the river.

“Have you ever heard of John XXII.?” he inquired at last.

“Yes, I have seen his nephew’s chair in your church here.”

The old fellow turned, and regarded me reproachfully.

“I was coming to that,” said he, in a disappointed tone. “However, since you have seen it, no matter.”

There was another silence which I longed to break, but did not dare.

“Now, I daresay,” observed the guardian at last, “that over there in Avignon you’ve heard all kinds of stories against Pope John XXII., eh?”

“Well, as you ask me, I have heard one or two.”

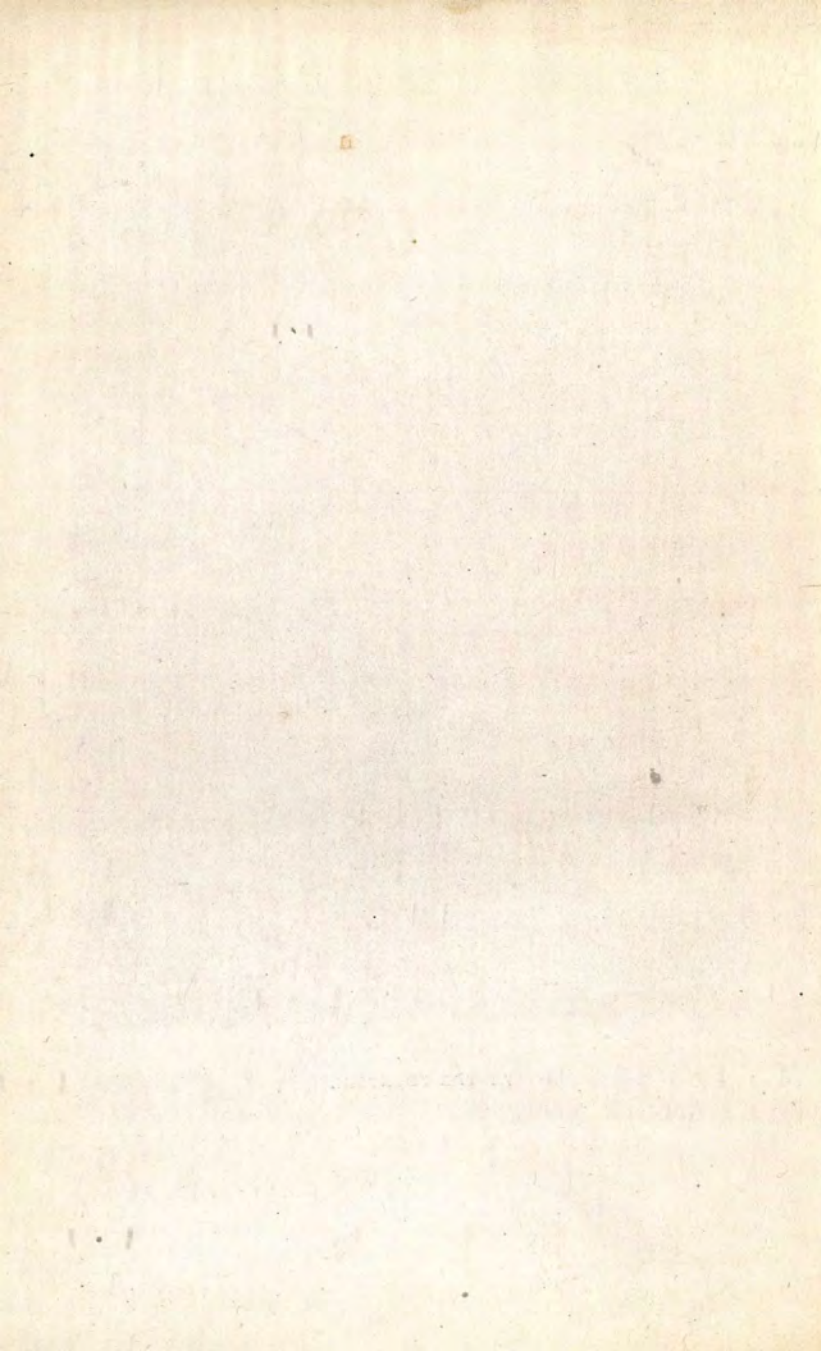
“Yes,” he said. “I thought as much. But for all that, he was a wise man, a very wise man. He understood women as well as men, and there are few of us who can say that!”

This reflection led to such a long pause of meditation that I feared he was going to stop altogether.

“Yes,” he resumed presently, shaking his head.



AT THE FOUNTAIN.



POPE JOHN XXII.

“He was a wise man, was John XXII., none wiser. There’s a story told about him. . . .”

“A story,” I interrupted eagerly, “oh, do tell me.”

“Well, I am trying to remember,” said the man testily, “but it’s a long time since I told that story, a very long time, and if I am interrupted. . . . Let me see, where was I? John XXII.—women as well as men . . . to be sure. Well, it was like this: The nuns of the convent here had been begging to have women confessors appointed them. They’re always wanting something new, are women. ‘We should feel so much more at our ease,’ said they, ‘with confessors of our own sex.’ ‘Well,’ answered John XXII., ‘I will think over the matter. I am going away for a few days, and on my return will let you know what I decide. By the bye, will you keep this box for me, during my absence? I am particularly anxious that it should not be opened.’ After the Pope left, there was a great to-do among the nuns. ‘What can be in the box?’ said one. ‘I cannot hear anything rattle,’ exclaimed another, shaking it. ‘I have a great mind to look,’ whispered a third. ‘Oh no,’ cried every one, ‘His Holiness said it was not to be opened.’ Yet opened it was, you may be sure, and out flew a sparrow.

“Shortly afterwards, the Pope returned. ‘And you have kept my box safely?’ he asked. The

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

nuns looked at one another. 'Ah,' said he, as he opened the lid and found it empty. 'I was afraid how it would be,' and, shaking his head, he turned away. 'And how about the confessors?' cried the nuns eagerly. 'Oh,' said John, 'to be sure, I had forgotten the confessors. Well, I have considered the matter, and I have come to the conclusion that those who cannot keep a bird in a box, are not capable of keeping secrets in their own bosoms.' Ah, he was a wise man, was John XXII."

But this visit to the old guardian was days later. On that first evening we had to hurry in a fashion which would have completely bewildered the poor man. Even so, we were late for dinner. Fortunately, the Prior and his friend were late also. They had been sitting, talking of old days, and had forgotten how the time was flying. It was delightful to see the pleasure of these good men at being together again. Each confided to me privately that the other had a heart of gold, which was true enough. As for the Prior, he wore his Provençal face, and positively sparkled with happiness and fun.

"I saw Mistral to-day," said he; "I thought it better perhaps to remind him. It seems that two o'clock on Sunday will be a propitious time for us to arrive."

"I hope our visit will not trouble him."

"On the contrary. He bade me say how

MISTRAL

pleased he should be to see you. He was at *déjeuner* when I entered. It was a picture! Ah, you do not know the old kitchen yet! 'But where are your friends?' he asked, as soon as he had greeted me. 'I have come to ask at what time I shall bring them on Sunday.' 'Good!' he exclaimed. 'I was afraid they were not coming'; and he went on to tell me that he should be alone by two o'clock, as there is to be a fête at Saint-Rémy to which all the world is going."

We sat talking till ten, when they rose to go.

"I brought you these journals," said the Prior, putting into my hands a bundle of *Les Annales*. "You will find there the early part of the 'Mémoires' of Mistral. Read them afresh, and you will feel on Sunday that you are talking to an old friend."

CHAPTER IX

Vaucluse—Petrarch and Laura—The story of the building of the aqueduct.

WHAT a golden glittering morning! I can see a band of solid flame shining through the crack in the shutter. As I pull open the window, Avignon laughs in upon me, with its trees and twittering birds and all the cheerful morning life of the Cours de la République. I am watching one of the waiters, conscientiously sweeping the side walk, when, suddenly, the sound of a motor horn reminds me that I have not yet breakfasted, and that the car is ordered for nine o'clock to take me to Vaucluse, where I have an appointment with Petrarch and Laura.

The mistral has quieted down, and the air is sparkling and radiant, as though it had been washed through and through, and dried in the hot sunshine. Oh, that sunshine of Provence! How can I make you feel it in cold, grey, northern England?

There is a well-known story told of an English lady, who, at a London dinner-party, happened to sit next to a Persian.

OFF TO VAUCLUSE

“Do you know,” said she, after they had talked for a while, and she had found him particularly interesting; “there is one thing that I cannot understand. You won’t be offended if I ask you?”

The Persian smiled reassuringly. “I can promise that,” said he.

“Well,” continued the lady, “I want to know how it is that you, a cultivated man of the world, can remain a sun-worshipper.”

“Ah, madame,” said the Persian, “but then, you English have never seen the sun!”

And so the poet of Provence cries:—

“Ta flamme nous rôtit,
Fais briller ta blonde lampe,
Chasse l’ombre et les fléaux.
Vite! Vite! Vite!
Montre-toi, beau soleil!”

But there is no need this morning to cry, “Show thyself, beautiful sun!” The whole valley is flooded with his glory. As we turn aside from the Rhone, and make our way along the bank of the Durance, the country is white with heat. White is the road, and white the low cliffs sheltering us on the left; even the trees are white with the dust left by the mistral. Over all stretches a sapphire sky, where vaporous clouds are hovering and hesitating as though dazzled by the universal glory. Down the road come blue waggons piled high with purple grapes,

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

the bloom still thick upon them. And even they are drawn by white horses, the scarlet tassels of whose netting gives a momentary touch of colour to the prevailing blue and white. It is a vision of cloudland. One feels as though one were flying through the plains of heaven—so spiritual are the tones, so celestial and shining. As the sun rises higher, the olive trees and vineyards dissolve into the vague pale distance; and the sky is blue no longer, but turquoise, a living, flaming, palpitating radiance.

“Fais briller ta blonde lampe !
Vite ! Vite ! Vite !”

Presently we came to a little sleepy town—Le Thor; an ancient place, still sheltered by fortifications. Entering through the *Porte de l'Horloge*, we found a very fine Romanesque church, with a beautiful porch, which we photographed, assisted by most of the youthful spirits of the town, who, as usual, wanted to pose as saints in the niches left empty by the Revolution.

As we started off once more, the engine back-fired. Dear, dear, what a commotion there was ! The boys jumped back, as though they had been shot; two or three hens, who had been pecking about under the motor, flew out clucking with terror; dogs rushed up barking; women appeared at the windows, screaming to each other and to their children below. “*Courage, mon enfant !*”

VAUCLUSE

cried one fat mother. "Attention au canon!" yelled another. "Oh, mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!"

Well, and then we set off once more among the vineyards and the feathery bamboos.

And now, far away over the level plain, it seemed to me that the horizon was materialising into purple memories of mountains, which must surely be the mountains of Vaucluse.

Oh, the charming morning, the blue shadows clinging to the flanks of the hills; the air fresh and pure, with the passing of the mistral! There to the left, set on a height, is the old Castle of Saumane, once the home of le Marquis de Sade, descendant of the very Laura we are about to meet. And still we are heading for the mountains, which have grown into a high formidable wall, blocking the horizon to the east. As we are wondering where the village can be, we find a crack just wide enough for the car to pass by the river, which is winding its way out beneath a great modern viaduct, and so, entering, find ourselves in the Vallis Clausa, the "enclosed valley"—now called Vaucluse. There, sure enough, is the little village, its houses leaning one over another, as though trying to watch what is going on in the shady Place de la Colonne. What a doll's house of a *place* it is! There is a tiny stone quay, at which, of course, no boats ever draw up, for the Sorgue is still only a baby river, too ridiculously delighted at finding itself out in the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

sunshine and the air, to settle down to serious work. And there is the wee Church of Saint Véran, built in memory of the anchorite, who, in the Cave of the Adder, slew the monster which for ages had infested the valley. You can see the Saint's sarcophagus within the church, unless, as often happens, it is too dark to see anything. And there is the little bridge, and the toy post-office, and the quaint inn. And it is gay with sunshine, and fresh with the sound of running water; above all, cheerful with the bustle of much coming and going. For there are many visitors at Vaucluse. In summer the *place* is thronged with conveyances of every description—bicycles, carriages, automobiles, whose occupants have gone to visit the grotto, or climbed the hill to the ruins of the so-called Castle of Petrarch.

It has always been the fashion to visit Vaucluse. Every one will remember Petrarch's account of the coming of King Robert of Naples and his wife—Sanci de Maiorque. How the lords and ladies chased each other through the woods, fished the stream, and played a thousand games in the meadows, while the King ("wisest monarch since Solomon," as Boccaccio calls him) sat among the flowers under the shade of an immense poplar, his eyes fixed on the ground, trying to solve the riddle of the fountain's miraculous rise and fall. The fact is, Petrarch had made Vaucluse his home, and here held a court after the fashion of that

VAUCLUSE

which to-day surrounds Mistral at Maillane. All the world used to visit him. Not that he wanted them! According to his own account, he would rather have been alone, settling the differences which were constantly arising between his nymphs and his muses. I don't suppose Mistral wants us either. But we go to see the wonderful old man, when we get the chance. Besides, see how Petrarch boomed Vacluse! The account of his War with the Nymphs, written to his friend Cardinal Colonna, is enough to make one mad to go.

“The Sorgue leaps out of a den,” says he, “and, with a great commotion, its cold clear waters rush over a bed strewn with little stones green as emeralds. In the midst of these waters is a small field, in which I have undertaken to establish those poor Muses who have been chased away from everywhere else. And this is the cause of my War with the Nymphs. They are indignant that I should wish to replace them by strangers; and especially that I should prefer nine old maids to a thousand young virgins. By moving the boulders, I was gradually forming a little meadow which was beginning to thrive, when a troop of furious nymphs rushed impetuously down over the rocks, and ravaged my newborn pasture. Terrified at this sudden eruption, I climbed my rock and watched the damage they were doing. The storm past, I descended, ashamed at having run away, and set to work putting everything

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

back into place. But scarcely had the sun gone round the world, than the nymphs returned to the charge, upsetting everything, and establishing themselves under our very foundations." What a picture of the Sorgue as it rushes down the gorge in spring! Who, after that, will be bold enough to describe it?

And the poet's little gardens! "I have two gardens," he says, "which have not their equal in the world. One shadowy, suitable for study, consecrated to Apollo. That is higher up, near the birthplace of the Sorgue, bounded by inaccessible rocks. The other is near my house, more cultivated, a place that Bacchus would love, in the midst of the rapid river. Close to it, approached by a little bridge, is a vaulted grotto, where the sunshine never enters, and where I sit at midday, reading."

And the house—Petrarch's house, where he lived with his valet, Raymond Monet, and the dog, and the woman who "looked as though she had been burned by the suns of Ethiopia." The house where he heard nothing but the oxen lowing and the sheep bleating, the birds' songs and the murmur of the river. Where he lived upon figs, and nuts, and grapes, and almonds, and the fresh trout taken from the stream in nets. "I am silent from morn till eve," says he, "for I have none to speak to." Oh Petrarch, Petrarch! How some of us envy you as we read your letters!

PETRARCH AND LAURA

But, as I say, from time to time "certain people of importance entered, and would seize, forsooth, the poet!" There is that charming account of a Vaucluse picnic, given in a letter to his friend Guillaume de Pastrengo. The poet had been spending the day wandering on the banks of the Sorgue, looking at his laurel tree, which always reminded him of Laura. Thus dreaming, he suddenly realised that "night was unfolding her wings." It was time to go home. As he descended the gorge by the path constructed by Saint Véran, there met him a group of men and women. "The fashion of France has so confounded the dress of the sexes, that I could not tell which was which, for all were decked with ribbons and necklaces, pearls and rich head-dresses, rings, jewelled caps, and coats embroidered in purple. We bowed to one another, and then, what a pleasant surprise, my dear Guillaume, I recognised the fair one who causes your heart to beat. What a sweet face! What charming features, *mon cher*! Had she carried a bow and quiver, I should have said: 'It is Diana, herself.'"

He had, too, sometimes the company of his friends Cardinal Colonna, Luc Chrétien, and Mainard Accurse. It is even whispered that Laura herself may have visited the Vallis Clausa—if indeed Laura ever existed in the flesh. I wonder? When I am in Avignon, listening to

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

the singing in the Métropole, or wandering through the great chambers of the Palace, I am as sure of her corporeal existence as I am of my own. I know the names of her parents. She was the daughter of Andibert de Noves and Ermessende de Réal, and in 1325 she was married to Hugues de Sade. I have as good as seen her name in the parish register! I remember how Petrarch met her in the Church of Sainte-Claire that Good Friday morning, 1327, and how he wrote: "It was the day when the sun paled and hid his rays at sight of the anguish of his Maker, that I first saw thee, oh woman, and was caught by those sweet eyes, which have ever since held me captive." I see him shadowing her, perhaps even reading her the songs she herself inspired; watching her at the great reception, when, the guest of the evening, Emperor Charles of Bavaria kissed her in sign of homage on the forehead and eyes, moving poor Petrarch to rage and jealousy. I see the beautiful Laura bidding farewell to him for the last time, as he is starting for Italy, and I accompany her to her room, when she falls sick of the dreadful plague which is decimating Avignon. I even try to visit her tomb in the Church of Les Frères-Mineurs, but find it gone, together with the epitaph of Francis I. Ah yes, in Avignon, Laura is material enough!

But when we pass to Vaucluse, she vanishes into thin air, and becomes a myth like Apollo,

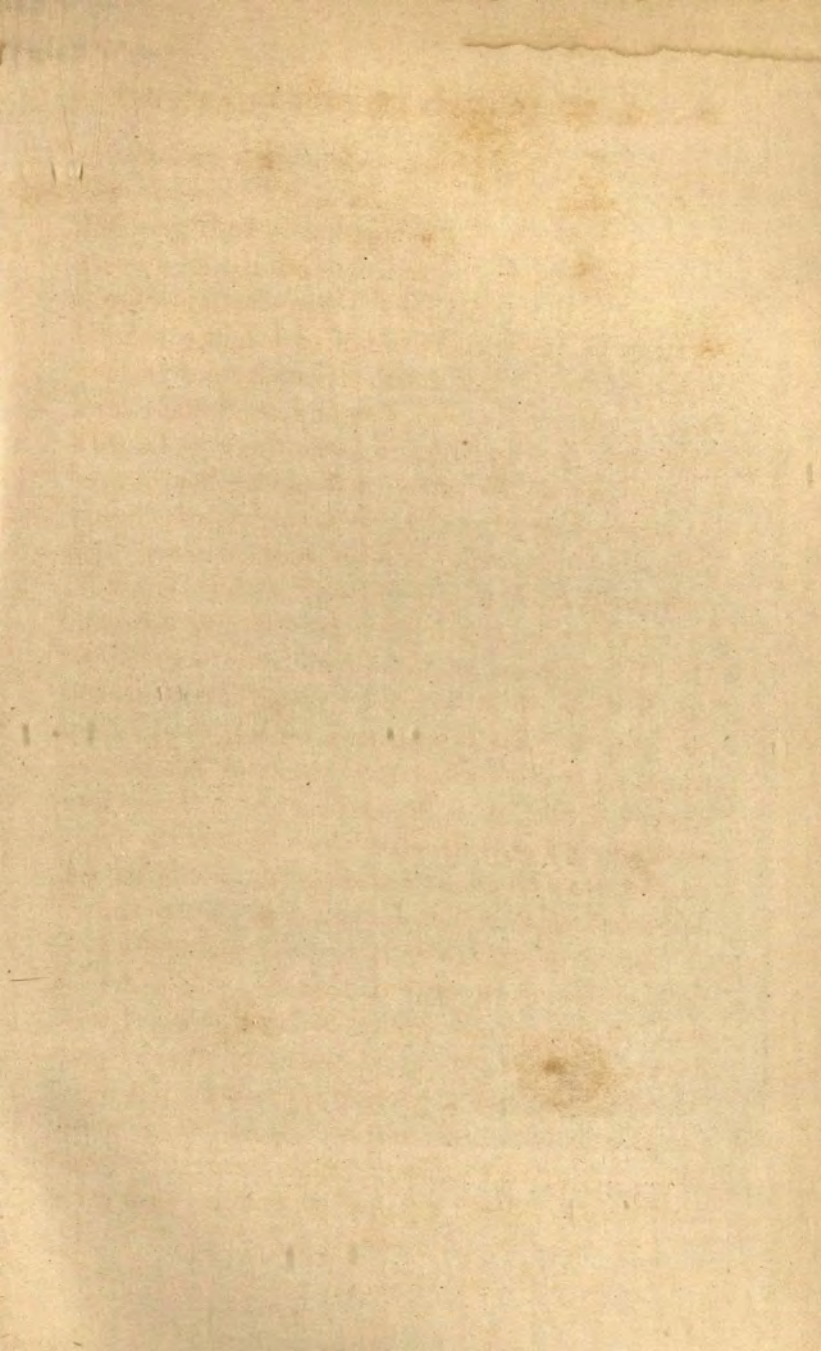
PETRARCH AND LAURA

and Diana, and Buddha, and all the other great ones of antiquity—a laurel myth, a Daphne, fleeting, illusive, though her perfume fills all the valley, just as the memory of the Daphne of old filled the sacred gorge of Delphi. I wonder if Petrarch thought of the ancient story when he ordered her symbol, the laurel, to be brought from Italy and planted in his garden at Vaucluse. It was here he worshipped the ideal Laura, which his imagination had evolved from the woman he met in the Church of Sainte-Claire. From the first he had seen in her a suitable idea from which to develop his ideal, and when he had endowed her with all the qualities this ideal should possess, he reversed the process, and ascribed these qualities to the actual woman, to the end, never doubting but that the girl he had met in Avignon possessed them. Such is the way with poets! And so here he lived and dreamed about her, till her presence became so real that he thought he saw her, spoke to her. And we also, we know Laura—the Laura of Petrarch. As we said, while we were climbing the path to the grotto that autumn morning: “It is just because Laura is not real that she is so real. After all, it is only the ideal which is true.” Yes, the historical Madame de Sade of Avignon has vanished; it is the Laura of Petrarch’s fancy, the Daphne of Vaucluse, who is immortal. Even Death could not rob him of her. The lady of his fancy was not bound by space

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

and time. It was no more difficult to picture his Laura in heaven than in the Vallis Clausa. She merely "made her ascension, living and beautiful, and from on high continued to reign and govern all my thoughts." Indeed, in heaven Laura seems to have belonged to Petrarch even more than at Vacluse, for he adds with a quiet contentment, to which earlier he was a stranger: "There now is Laura! There she waits for us, perhaps lamenting that we are so tardy in rejoining her." And it was not long after, that, wearying of her solitary blessedness, she came to visit him, inspiring him with that perfect vision of love which is the grand "Amen" to all his writings, the Triumph of Death! How the perfume of this love-dream hangs about the valley! In all his wanderings, and it must be remembered that Petrarch was one of the greatest travellers of his time, the thought of his Daphne always drew him back to Vacluse. "Vacluse, with all its charms, is ever present to my thought," and we may be sure that one of those charms was the laurel bush which to the poet typified Laura.

You may ask why then he still sighed for Laura—for even at Vacluse he did sigh; we can tell that by his sonnets written there. Well, lovers have always sighed since the world began. Besides, he was a poet, and a poet is never satisfied—he would not be a poet if he were! And then sorrow is always so much more picturesque than joy, is it not? And what





THE CASTLE OF THE BISHOPS OF CAVAILLON, VAUCLUSE.

PETRARCH AND LAURA

sighs they were! Who ever wrote such verses? I expect he used to go and read them to his friend Philippe de Cabassole, who lived in the Castle of the Bishops of Cavaillon. See! the ruins are still up there on the height. We can hear him, if we listen: "A lady appeared to me beneath a green laurel bush; whiter she was and colder than snow which for years has lain untouched by the sun. And her speech, her face, her hair charmed me so, that I have her, and shall have her, before my eyes, in whatever place I may be."

Stop! Is this the laurel tree where he used to meet her? No, it was lower down in the garden, now covered, alas! together with the true site of the poet's house, by a hideous paper factory.

We have climbed the steep path to the grotto—Véran's path. Above towers the rock, and beneath its base is a vast black hollow, at the bottom of which lies a pool of clear green water. It is the summer fountain of Vaucluse. In spring the water rises till it fills the cavern, and overflows the rocks on which we are standing, rushing impetuously down into the valley. But to-day it is still and low, though even now the stream is escaping by an underground channel into the sunshine. An old woman had set up her stall at the foot of the huge obelisk of rock which rises before the fountain. As Petrarch said of his

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

servant: "She seemed so unconscious of her ugliness, that it almost became her to be ugly." Poor old thing! I have no doubt that she also "had a soul as white as her face was dark."

"Well, and how are the nymphs?" I inquired, as I paid for my post-cards.

"Nymphs, madame?"

"Ah, I forgot! I suppose they have all moved away since the coming of the paper mills."

The woman smiled pityingly at my ignorance, and shook her head.

"Madame amuses herself," said she; "no one moved away when the paper mills came. On the contrary."

"Then perhaps you have seen them—the nymphs. I have heard that when the water is high, they sing and dance round the fountain."

"Ah, now I understand," cried the woman. "Madame has been told of the festival at La Fontaine de Loulle. It is higher up in the mountains, in the neighbourhood of La Baume de l'Aven. But the girls do not go there any more. They are too busy down at Les Usines à Papier. Formerly, it was a charming sight. I remember very well when I was a girl. You may not believe it, but I was considered a pretty girl. I had not this skin of a toad. It was there I met my husband Laurent. Such a place it was for the boys and girls! But now they

THE FOUNTAIN OF VAUCLUSE

all work in Les Usines, for it is profitable, look you!"

"Why then do you not work there?"

"I? Oh, I was too old to begin. And I had grown accustomed to the fountain."

The last of the nymphs! Oh Petrarch! Oh divine lover! What would you say to this solitary survivor of the Oriades?

As we descended once more toward the village, I took note of these same paper mills, huddled confusedly beneath the castle hill. I thought of the poor nymphs, the real nymphs, who used to rush out of the grotto above and overwhelm the poet's garden. Think of the fair creatures, finding themselves trapped, conducted in long conduits beneath sombre arches, and made to turn heavy clumsy wheels of wood and iron. What a contrast! Instead of the cool limpid freshness of the gorge, perfumed by flowers and freckled with the glint of the sunshine, and a silence broken only by the singing of the stream and the chirping of birds: a deafening confusion of mills, knives, and whirling cylinders, the scent of stagnant water, of rotten straw and dirty rags, and an atmosphere like that of washing-day in some witch's inferno! Poor, poor nymphs, no wonder they emerge later, under the bridge in the Place de la Colonne, quite tamed and pensive.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

It was as we were about to leave Vaucluse that we noticed, beyond the bridge, the entrance to an immense tunnel, excavated in the rock. An old man, whom we found carefully studying the automobile, said that it was called the "Ouide des Sarrasins."

"Was it the Saracens who made it?" I asked.

"No, no," replied the old fellow, shaking his head, "it was the Romans. Has no one told you the story of the aqueduct?"

I replied that they had not.

"Oh well, if you can spare a few moments you shall hear."

There was at hand the little restaurant where we had lunched earlier in the day. So we seated ourselves at one of the round green tables; and, when we had each been served with a Cognac, he began.

He told us of the fair maid of Arles, the beautiful Ponsirade, and how she was beloved by the Roman Emperor. It was the same old story which Mistral has given us in his "Lis isclo d'or." As the old man warmed to his work, the legend grew more and more vivid. The girl's disdain, the despair of the Emperor, his rash promise to do anything she asked of him. Bring the waters of Vaucluse to Arles? Certainly, it was nothing; the work was as good as finished; and the Emperor, thinking the lovely Ponsirade already his, hastened away to give orders for

THE STORY OF THE AQUEDUCT

the mighty task to be begun. Night and day, for seven years, they laboured, the hundred thousand workmen; hewing, carrying, burrowing, building, cutting through the hills, bridging over the valleys; till one day, oh joy and wonder, behold the Sorgue, flowing in the very midst of the town of Arles.

“I suppose the water had been bad before then?” I hazarded.

“Possibly,” replied the man, “the song says nothing about that. For myself, I do not drink water,” and, his own glass being empty, he accidentally took up mine, drained it, and continued his story.

The Emperor, full of triumph, goes to the lady. “Behold the water of Vaucluse!” he cries, in his theatrical Italian fashion. But it is no ordinary Provençal maiden he has to deal with. The Arlésiennes apparently find it impossible ever to forget their divine origin. Their beauty is only equalled by their pride. So Ponsirade replied:—

“Thanks, great Emperor!

You are too good!

But, after all, your great aqueduct is useless.

Each day a young water-carrier has brought me fresh pure water!

I could not disappoint the poor boy. . . .

Farewell, my lord!”

“Well I think she behaved disgracefully,” said I, indignantly.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

"Oh, I don't know," answered the old man, looking thoughtfully at the empty glasses. "After all, he was a foreigner. For my part, I think she did quite right. Why should strangers come running after our girls?"

"At all events he didn't lose much," said my husband. "She must have been getting rather *passée* by the time the aqueduct was finished."

The man smiled, and shook his head. "No," he replied. "She was not *passée*. The Arlésiennes never grow old. They only ripen like the good wine."

"You speak from experience?"

"I am from Arles. I am merely staying here with my daughter. Ma foi! She is an Arlésienne if you will! I should like to see a foreigner make his court to her!"

"She is married?"

For answer the old man called a little black-bloused, spiky-headed urchin who was playing round the car.

"Dis donc, pichot, combien de poussins dans la nichée?"

"Ten," answered the boy stolidly, as he licked out the empty liqueur-glasses.

"It is true," said the old man, with a chuckle. "They arrive so frequently that I lose my reckoning. Ah, the good Migette, there is no danger of my race dying out."

We loitered so long gossiping, that the sun

SUNSET ON THE DURANCE

was setting as we came in sight of the Durance. In a moment we seemed to have been transported thousands of miles eastward. That sky, flaming behind blue gossamer mist, burning itself out above in rose and daffodil; those long clouds like the wings of vast flamingoes; the trees of black lace laid against the sky; the distant hills, purple and solid. Surely we are running up some western branch of the Nile. It is Egyptian—this landscape—both in colouring and form. Instinctively one searches the horizon for the Pyramids or the Sphinx. As we are gazing, out of the glowing furnace in the west a stream of blood comes pouring, dyeing the river crimson, carrying our thoughts back to the days of Moses and the ill-fated Pharaoh. For a few moments the glory continues. Then, as though the doors of the furnace had been suddenly closed, the light vanishes, the flames die out, the curtain of mist falls thicker, the flamingo clouds fade, and the hills become grey and ghostly. It is Provence. We are running homeward beside the leaden waters of the river, and over us are the stars.

CHAPTER X

Tarascon—Saint Martha and the Tarasque—King René and the
Fêtes of the Tarasque—The Tomb of Saint Martha—Beaucaire
—The story of the Drac.

WE were sitting over our coffee and maps on Saturday morning, when the Prior was announced.

“I have come to take you to Tarascon,” said he. “I find I have the morning to myself, and I should like to show you the tomb of Saint Martha.”

What luck! Round with the car, and off we go! Of course the sun was shining, *ça va sans dire*. Was it not Provence? And of course the road was white, and the sky blue, and the grapes purple, and the olive trees grey, and the cypresses black. All along the road the tall bamboos bowed and nodded in their graceful fashion, as though they were bidding us good day; and I wanted to shout for the mere joy of being alive on such a morning.

“Look, there is Château Renard,” said my companion, presently pointing away to the left. “I wanted to show it to you before you met

TARASCON

Mistral. You are so fond of 'Nerte' that you ought to see where she lived."

Who does not remember the fair "Nerte," sold by her father to the devil, and of her struggles to free herself from his diabolical clutches? So that was her home—that ancient ruin with

". . . . ses tours
Comme deux cornes, au front d'un mamelon."

How old it made her seem! I had always pictured "Nerte" a golden-haired girl of seventeen, and here was her birthplace already a heap of stones. How time passes, to be sure!

"And there is Maillane, where we are going to-morrow," continued our friend, when we had thrashed out the subject of "Nerte" in all its bearings.

Yes, that is Maillane. I can see the church spire pointing upward from the group of trees and houses which lie like an island on the vast green ocean.

But Tarascon! Where shall I begin? Well, I suppose with the famous Tarasque. Do you see that hole in the rock beneath the Castle of King René? It is there that the Tarasque dwelt. She was of an aristocratic family, her father being a leviathan of the river Jordan—perhaps that very leviathan spoken of by Job, as being so inordinately proud of his scales. As for her mother, she rejoiced in the name of

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

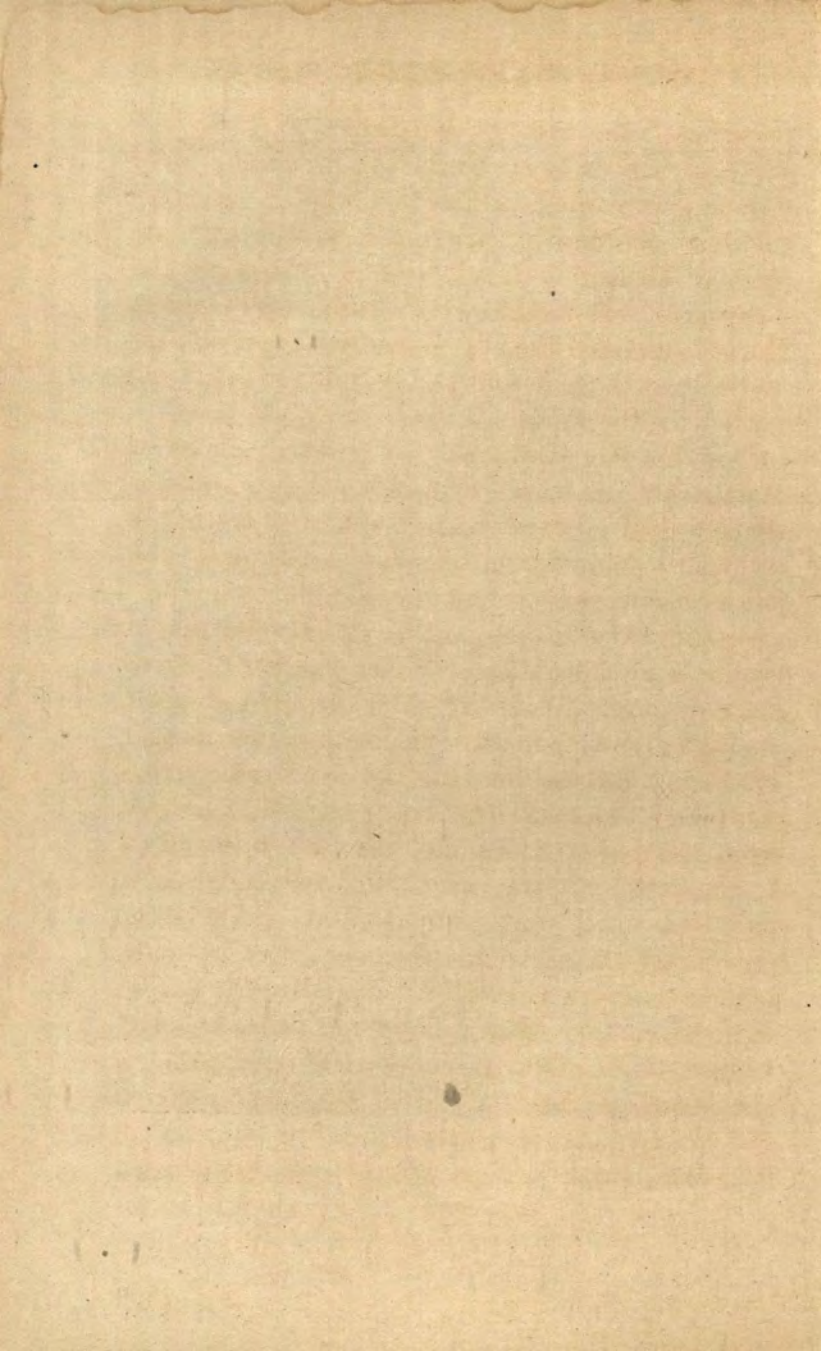
Bonassus, and belonged to a terrestrial race inhabiting the deserts of Galathie. The Tarasque herself is said to have resembled both parents, and is thus described by Amédée Pichot: "She was of the stoutness of a bull, having the head of a lion and the mane of a horse." Her teeth she must have inherited from her father, for they were "like swords," and as for her "viper-coloured back," it was "sharp as a scythe, covered with scales like a tortoise"; and she walked on six feet, and was so hideous that she was called "Tarasque," which means the "terrifier." Oh the trouble the people of Provence had with that monster! Her mother being of the earth earthy, and her father lord of the waters, she was naturally amphibious, equally at home in either element, so that there was no getting away from her. The Rhone in those days flowed through a vast forest called Nerlac, or the Black Wood, which became the happy hunting-ground of the Tarasque, who rushed about on her six feet, "devouring cattle, and even men and women." When she was tired of the land she would take to the river, the great highway of the country, where she wrecked the boats making their way up stream to Lyon and Valence. The people of the Bouche-du-Rhone were in despair. No one dared to travel by land, still less by water. Trade was already at a standstill, when, one day, news was brought of a wonderful



Photo]

LA TARASQUE.

[M. Delor.



SAINT MARTHA AND THE TARASQUE

personage who had arrived from the East, and was staying in the town of Avignon. Her miracles were already the talk of the countryside—by all means they must apply to Saint Martha for help. Only too happy to carry the message of the Gospel to a fresh centre, Saint Martha answered the appeal, and with her servant Marcella, who had followed her from Palestine, set out for the Forest Nerlac.

One has no idea of the importance of Saint Martha till one visits Provence. I must confess that I had always regarded her as rather a secondary character in the sacred narrative, and it was a surprise to find her so mighty a saint, occupying a position quite equal to that of her sister Mary Magdalene, or her brother Lazarus of Marseilles. We have all read of the home at Bethany, where, after the death of her mother Eucharis, Martha brought up her young step-sister and brother. This house she had inherited from her father Théophile, the first husband of Eucharis, and it was here, after her conversion, that she entertained our Saviour. After the crucifixion, the persecutions against the Christians became so fierce that Martha and Mary, together with Mary the mother of James, Mary Salome, Lazarus, and several others, were obliged to leave the country. The only boat they could obtain had neither oars nor sails. Yet, in spite of all difficulties, they passed the sea in safety, and

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

landed on the flat southern shore of Provence, near a place called ever since, "Les Saintes-Maries." Thence Martha found her way to Avignon, just as her brother Lazarus went to Marseilles; while Mary Magdalene, in that passion of remorse which characterised her conversion, established herself in the wild desolate region of La Sainte-Baume.

We have seen what Martha did for Avignon. And now she was on her way to Tarascon. As we run along the white road in our automobile, we picture the good woman trudging from village to village; the people, wherever she stopped, turning out to listen to her. At Saint-Remy, Maillane, and Saint-Gabriel she made many converts, who no doubt followed her, so that by the time she reached Tarascon she found herself at the head of quite a little company.

I have said that the Tarasque dwelt in a cave beneath the rock on which now stands the Castle of King René. In the days of Martha there was already a citadel there, with a temple called JOVIS ARX IN AQUA. Now I don't know what may be the underlying meaning of the legend of the Tarasque, but I fancy that this cave beneath the citadel must have been the centre of some cruel and barbarous religion. The name "Tarasque" is by some people derived from "taurus," a bull; the early coins of the district were stamped with the figure of a bull—

SAINT MARTHA AND THE TARASQUE

bull fights are still popular in this part of France. Is it possible that this cave was a place sacred to the worship of the god Mithra, himself the slayer of the bull; and that, in the depredations committed by the Tarasque, we have merely a highly coloured account of all the horrors that were practised before the conversion of the district by Saint Martha? I only throw this out as a suggestion. What the legend tells us is as follows:—

On her arrival, Martha went straight to the dragon hole. Standing on the shingly bank of the river, and raising the little cross which you may still see in the treasury of the Church of Tarascon, she called upon the monster to come forth. As one stands on the suspension bridge, one can almost see the cringing form of the beast, as she drags herself, fawning, toward the feet of the Saint. Then who so bold as the people of Tarascon! Each wishes to be first to thrust his blade into the poor trembling dragon. And when it is done, and the Tarasque lies hacked in a thousand pieces, Martha is the heroine of the country. And the heroine she has remained ever since.

Every one has heard of the great festival of Tarascon, when the scaly monster, or rather her highly painted effigy, was borne through the town, led by a little girl in blue and white, who represented the Hostess of Bethany. It was the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

good René, Duke of Anjou, King of Sicily and Jerusalem, and Count of Provence, who instituted this great festival, and the other and far more amusing fête which used to be held at Whitsuntide. René, the charming, artistic, and altogether impossible ruler of Provence, having almost died of grief at the loss of his first wife Isabella of Lorraine, had married, within the year, a fascinating young daughter of the house of Laval, named Jeanne. The King, who was fond of Provence, had rebuilt the old ruined Castle of Tarascon, and he and his young wife spent their time either at Aix, or in the old fortress over the dragon cave. To-day it is a prison, dark and forbidding. Even in the fifteenth century it could not have been a very cheerful abode, and it is said that Jeanne pined and sulked, and that it was to provide distraction for her that the King designed the fêtes of the Tarasque. He was great at all kinds of shows, and knew much more about pageants, and music, and painting, and lyric-writing, than he did about statesmanship. So much so indeed, that before he died he had lost nearly all the vast possessions he had inherited from his father, Louis II. of Anjou, as well as his kingdom of Sicily which came to him from the renowned Queen Jeanne, who, by the bye, is not to be confounded with Jeanne his wife. But little did René care, as long as he had his painting and his music. He would sit in meadows

THE FÊTES OF THE TARASQUE

with his young wife, playing at being a shepherd ; or would hob-nob with the peasants, sharing their meals and listening to their stories and songs. And above all, he would design and stage-manage great fêtes like that of the Tarasque.

There is an old song of his formerly sung at Tarascon at the time of the festival :—

“Lagadigadéou,
La Tarasco !
Lagadigadéou,
La Tarasco
De Castéou.
Leissa la passa,
La viello masco,
Leissa la passa,
Que vai dansa !”

And if you did not “let it pass, when it went to dance,” it would knock you down, and perhaps break your leg—“La Tarasco de Castéou,” for the procession took no account of obstacles, and marched straight on over whatever came in its way. Rough fun it was indeed, but what a splendid sight! Before the great monster, with its red spiky back and green belly, marched the clergy, preceded by the various trade companies : the vine-dressers ; the gardeners, with enormous bunches of flowers ; the shepherds, bearing a barrel of putrid oil, for squirting into the faces of the passers-by ; the porters ; the boatmen, with a boat full of dirty bilge water, for flinging up into the balconies, to the dismay of the gaily

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

dressed girls. And all pretended to be drunk meanwhile, if indeed it was pretence. And the bakers flung flour into the people's faces, and the porters offered glasses of wine which it was an insult to refuse. So that it is not to be wondered at that the procession arrived at the Church of Saint Martha in a somewhat noisy and hilarious condition. There, after Mass, the Tarasque was solemnly blessed; after which she made three ungainly leaps before the altar, while the assembly retired to spend the rest of the day and night in feasting and revelry.

The Fête of the Tarasque has, however, been discontinued, and if you wish to see her to-day, you must visit her in the dusky barn where the poor beast drags out her declining years in dull monotony.

The Church of Saint Martha was very dark, even on that sunny autumn morning. But its darkness was as nothing to that of the crypt below. In vain we lighted matches. For a moment we could see the vague outline of the altar, and behind the altar something white and ghostly, like a bier; then the tiny flame would go out, and we were left to grope as blindly as ever among the tombs and benches. Presently one of us discovered a candle end left by some pilgrim, and when the light had had time to penetrate the thick shadows, we found ourselves

THE TOMB OF SAINT MARTHA

in a low vaulted chapel, hung round with votive tablets and faded garlands. No wonder it was dark, the walls were of black marble; and behind the altar we could still see gleaming that ghostly bier draped with a snowy winding-sheet.

“Come,” says the Prior, in a low voice. And next moment we are looking on what is apparently the dead body of Saint Martha. So realistic is this tomb, that I, who have a natural shrinking from the presence of death, drew back shuddering. But the calm beautiful face of the effigy soon reassured me, and we stood gazing down, while the Prior told us the story of the Saint’s death and burial.

After the killing of the Tarasque, Martha had settled at Tarascon, gathering around her a company of women, all, like herself, vowed to the Celestial Husband. It was the first convent in Christendom; and here Martha passed her days, healing the sick, relieving the poor, and teaching the new religion to any who would listen. Now and then one of the other Saints, who had travelled with her from the East, would visit her. Once Saint Front and Saint Georges, who had often accompanied the Master to the home at Bethany, being now on their way to the scene of their future labours, looked in upon her; and we can picture the three friends supping together, talking over the wonderful old times, and the Death and Resurrection of which they had been witnesses.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

On the morrow, when they were about to depart, said Martha to Front: "Before the end of next year, I shall be leaving this world. Will you come and bury me, dear friend?" And Front made answer: "Ay, I will come, O Hostess, if God leaves me so long upon the earth."

For Martha had grown very old. The days of her service were nearly over. The time came when she lay on her bed, sick of a fever, and there was no Divine Healer at hand to bid it depart. Once, when the sunset was flooding her cell, she saw, or fancied she saw, her sister, the Magdalene, already in glory; and at the very end she came again, and with her brought the Saviour Himself.

"Fear not, Hostess," said He, "It is I. Come, I have prepared a place for you, and would receive you into My home, even as you, in time past, so often welcomed Me in yours."

So Martha died; and the weeping nuns washed her, and laid her on the ground on a hair cloth; and every one came from leagues around to assist at the burial of her who had rid the country of the Tarasque.

"O tender mother," they cried, "who will now tell us of that Saviour whom your very eyes have seen: who repeat the truths your ears once heard in the far-away home in Bethany?"

Now her friend Front had become Bishop of Perigueux; and on that Friday, the 29th of July,

BURIAL OF SAINT MARTHA

was sitting in the Cathedral, listening while a priest chanted the Office. Suddenly the good Bishop's head fell forward, and he slept. Was it a dream? Who shall say? To Front it seemed that One with a shining face came forward and touched him on the shoulder; and, as Front turned, he saw that the hand was pierced, and that from the wound streamed rays of light, like those which start from a diamond touched by the sun.

"Come," said the Saviour, "you must keep your promise to Martha, my Hostess. I am on My way to her burial, and will bear you with Me."

"Then up into the air they rose like two clouds, and swifter than the wind, swifter than the lightning, they flew over the mountains of Auvergne, till they found themselves hovering in the sapphire sky of Provence above the town of Tarascon." The solemn moment had arrived for laying the Saint in the tomb. There was a moment's pause. Two strangers approached. One, dressed as a bishop, went to the feet of the body, while the other, at the sight of Whom a great hush fell over the vast assembly, raised the shoulders so that the head lay upon His breast. And it was thus that Martha was borne to her tomb in the cave, which to-day is the crypt of the Church of Tarascon.

When all was over, and the mysterious bearers

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

were leaving the Church, one of the clergy followed them, begging for their names. And He who had walked at the head turned and looked at the priest; then, without a word, gave him a book on every page of which was written :—

“The memory of Martha the Hostess of Jesus shall be eternal, and she shall have nothing to fear from evil tongues.”

But, in the Cathedral of Perigueux, the Bishop still slept on. At length a young priest woke him, saying in a low voice that the people were tired of waiting.

“Alas,” said Front, “you should not have been so hasty. I was with Our Lord at Tarascon, where we have just buried the Hostess Martha. Owing to your impatience, I have left my gloves and ring behind me.”

And sure enough, when the amazed and incredulous clergy sent messengers to Provence, they found that the Bishop had spoken truly; and the ring and one glove were for many years preserved in the treasury of Perigueux, while the other remained in the Church of Saint Martha at Tarascon.

Oh, this Tarascon, with its shady streets and grim old fortress; and the swift broad river flowing in the midst of its boulder-strewn channel!

As we came out into the sunlit streets, crowded

KING RENÉ

with handsome men ("Les beaux garçons de Tarascon" correspond with "Les belles filles d'Arles"), it seemed like the artificial scene of a theatre. The real story of the place lay in the crypt I had just left.

"I had forgotten it was the twentieth century," said I to the Prior. "You have made the story so real to me, that the present day seems the dream."

So we went out on to the bridge; and as we looked back at the Castle our friend told us less ancient stories, to wean us gradually from the past. He spoke of *le bon René*, and his daughter Marguerite of Anjou, who was sent away to England to be married to poor feeble-minded Henry VI. A sad parting it appears to have been, neither René nor his daughter able at the last to speak a word to one another by way of farewell. I have somewhere read the following quaint account of the scene:—

"Son père et elle si plorèrent,
Quand se vint à l'embrassement;
Et à peine ung seul mot parlèrent,
Tant sentoit leur cœur grant tourment."

And then together we pictured the great tourney which was held at Tarascon, when Louis de Beauvau and Philippe de Lenoncourt held the field against all comers. There, on a great platform, sat René and Jeanne his wife, surrounded by their glittering Court. And at the far end of

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

the field, in a theatrical cottage, decorated with flowers, was the Queen of Love, disguised as a shepherdess in grey taffeta and pink roses. Even the valiant knights themselves were, beneath their armour, dressed as shepherds; and all around, property sheep were feeding. The champions fought for three days, and many a good rider was unhorsed. And in the end, Louis de Beauvau and Philippe de Lenoncourt were declared the victors, and received a prize—a golden rod on the top of which was a bouquet, and a kiss from the fair shepherdess given in presence of the whole assembly.

As we stand on the bridge, looking from one side of the river to the other, we see the Castle of Beaucaire glaring across at the fortress of King René. This Castle of Beaucaire saw the feasts held by Henry II. of England, when he tried to make peace between Raymond V. of Toulouse and the King of Aragon. It has looked down on Simon de Montfort, the leader of the Catholics, come to besiege the Huguenots sheltered within its walls. In the month of April 1543 it saw the Protestant Antoine Sabathier burned to death in the *place*; and his companions Matthieu Castanier and Jacques Caladon, who had recanted, beaten till the blood ran, and condemned for life to the galleys. But there continued for many years to be discords between the Catholics of Tarascon and the Huguenots of Beaucaire. Charles IX.,

BEAUCAIRE

on his journey through the south, no doubt remembered these feuds. On his way to dine at the Castle of Beaucaire, he pulled off the cap of the Huguenot Henry of Navarre, and flung it into the Church of Notre Dame de Pommiers.

"It is like that, fair prince," he cried, "that you will go back to Our Lady."

"Not yet!" said Henry, dryly, as he sent a page to fetch the cap.

But above all, it is the fair, held from the 23rd to the 28th of July, for which Beaucaire is noted. Then the traders come from all parts of the south, grouping themselves according to their trades. In the Rue des Tanneurs are the leather workers; the linen and cotton sellers lodge in La Placette; the drapers set forth their wares in Rue Haute; the ironmongers in Rue Beauregard; and the grocers in Rue Taupin. It is one of the greatest fairs in the world.

And all the while, far down in the swirling depths of the Rhone, lies the "Drac," the mysterious monster who still dwells in his "crystal palace, with bed of silver and curtains of azure blue." Leaning there, upon the railing, we laugh over the old story, and the Prior repeats Mistral's legend of the young washerwoman of Beaucaire, who, bewitched by the fascinating river beast, was taken for seven years to his palace beneath the Rhone, to nurse his terrible Dracling.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

“I learned the Poem of the Rhone during the first year of my exile in England,” he tells us simply, “to console me for the loss of my country. It brought back some of the sunshine.”

Then in his rich southern voice he begins the song of the Drac—

“It is said that one day
On the quay of Beaucaire, a young woman
Was washing her linen in the Rhone.
And while beating the clothes, suddenly
She saw in the current of the river,
The Drac, fresh and gallant as a bridegroom,
Who, through the clear water, made her a sign.
'Come, then,' murmured a soft voice,
'Come, and I will show thee, oh beautiful girl,
The palace of crystal where I dwell,
With the bed of silver where I lie,
And the curtains of azure blue which cover it.
Come then, and I will show thee, heaped beneath the waves,
The riches left by merchants who have suffered shipwreck ;
The riches which I have gathered in my caverns.
Come, I have a newborn son,
Who awaits thy care, oh beautiful mortal,
To grow in cunning and wisdom.'
Meanwhile the young washerwoman, half sleeping,
Let fall from her soap-frothed hand
Her racquet, and, in order to recover it,
Gathered up her skirt quickly,
First to the knee, then still higher,
Till she lost her footing. The river
Wrapped her round with its violent flow,
Bewildered her, till, gasping and blinded,
It dragged her to the rude depths
Which bubble down there below the earth.
They might search as they would with the boat-hook,
She was not to be found—lost, quite lost!
Days, even years passed. At Beaucaire,

THE STORY OF THE DRAC

No one, alas! thought any more about her ;
When one morning, at the end of seven years,
She was seen quite quietly entering her house,
Her linen on her head, as though she had come
As usual from the lavoir ; only she was a little pale.
Every one at once recognised her,
And each one cried : 'But whence come you ?'
And she, passing her hand over her brow,
Made answer : 'Indeed, it seems to me like a dream . . .
But whether you believe it or not,
I come out of the Rhone. While washing my linen
My racquet fell from my hand, and, trying to reach it,
I slipped into the terrible depth . . .
And felt myself held under the water
By a phantom, a spectre who took me
As a young man who steals a maiden . . .
Then my heart ceased beating, and when I came to myself
I was in a vast grotto, full of freshness,
Lighted with a watery light
Alone with the Drac !
He has a son, born of a young girl half drowned,
And as nurse to his little Drac, has he kept me seven years.'"

"I think the Drac must have been a cousin of the Tarasque," said I ; "their habits seem to have been much the same. Only one was amphibious, and the other a water beast."

"He is not always confined to the water," said our friend, smiling. "There is another legend which tells how the woman one day met the Drac, searching for prey, in the *place*. She recognised him at once, and asked for news of his wife and son. The Drac was much surprised, as, by nature, he is invisible. But the woman had learned the secret during the seven years she spent at the bottom of the river."

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

I looked into the shining depths below. Yes, one would learn many things if one could live long enough at the bottom of the Rhone. It would sing its great song above us, and what has not the old river to sing about, for, as our friend truly said, "le Rhone, c'est l'humanité qui passe."

CHAPTER XI

A visit to Mistral—Saint-Rémy—Les Baux—The Troubadours
and Courts of Love.

SUNDAY had arrived. It was lunch-time; in another hour the automobile would be round, and we on our way to Maillane.

"Are you going to take a wreath?" asked my husband. "I've heard it's the correct thing to do when one goes to see a French poet."

"But he is not dead," said I. "If we take anything it must be a bouquet. Can you get me a bouquet?" I asked, turning to the landlady. "We are going to see Mistral." Oh, the magic of the name!

"A gerbe, madame, a gerbe! Adolph! Adolph! Madame requires a gerbe. She is going to visit Mistral. Dépêche-toi, mon ami. Qu'est-ce-que tu fais donc? Vite! Vite! Chez la fleuriste! Des roses, madame? Des tubéreuses, des glaïeuls? Oui, oui, c'est ça!" and off she hustled her unfortunate husband, who had just settled himself down to his meal.

All through lunch I saw her gliding about among the little tables beneath the plane trees;

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

and eyes were turned upon me, so that I fancied she must be whispering the news that Madame had commanded a "gerbe," for she was on her way to visit the poet Mistral. As I came downstairs after putting on my cloak, she eyed me critically with her head on one side, venturing to tie my veil in a more becoming bow, that I might "être en beauté" before the popular hero. In the side street beside the hotel, from which the automobile always started, quite a little crowd had gathered, who watched with breathless interest while I took my seat beside the Prior, and the landlady placed the enormous "gerbe" in my outstretched arms.

"Eh bien!" she exclaimed, giving the tuberose a final sniff of approval, "Eh bien, si Mistral lui-même n'est pas satisfait . . ."

We must have made a grotesque-looking party. In front my husband and the chauffeur, rigidly and uncompromisingly British; while behind sat I, holding on my large sunhat with one hand, while with the other I did my best to shelter from the wind the preposterous "gerbe," with its "Hommage au Poète de Provence" on a little card in the centre.

I am horribly nervous when I go to see people for the first time. But the Prior talked so interestingly, and told me so many stories about his old friend, that I soon forgot my fears. Thus, crossing the great viaduct over the Durance, he reminded

A VISIT TO MISTRAL

me of that time of which Mistral speaks in his Memoirs, when, the bridge having been swept away by a storm, the river had to be crossed by ferry, and there were as many as a hundred teams of oxen waiting their turn on the bank. You remember how the boy was on his way to a new school at Avignon. I had again been steeping myself in the Memoirs, and had found them delightful. Mistral is a second Midas, only whatever he touches turns into beauty rather than gold. The little commonplace events of daily life become the most exquisite idylls. For instance, read the account of the first meeting of his father and mother:—

“One year Master François was in the midst of his corn, which a troop of reapers were cutting with the sickle. Gleaners followed the men, and as he watched them, Master François, my father, noticed a beautiful girl, who hung back as though half ashamed of being seen with the others.

“‘What is your name, and whence come you, little one?’ he asked, approaching her.

“‘I am the daughter of Etienne Poulinet, Mayor of Maillane. My name is Délaïde.’

“‘What!’ exclaimed my father, ‘the daughter of the Mayor gleaning?’

“‘Master,’ said she, ‘we are a large family—six girls and two boys. Our father, though as you know he has sufficient, says to us when we ask for money, “My daughters, if you wish for

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

new clothes, go and earn them." That is the reason I am gleaning.'"

And we talked of Christmas, the old Christmas when the children were sent out to meet the Magi; of the feasting and rejoicing which took place, and of other delightful episodes mentioned in the "Mémoires." In fact, it was a charming drive. Our companion had Mistral's works at his finger-ends, and to know Mistral is to find oneself transported into a Paradise of warmth and beauty, such as it is difficult for the dweller in Northern lands to imagine. I remember when I was going to Greece some years ago, I asked the advice of a great Greek scholar as to what I should read by way of preparation. "Æschylus, Euripides, and Homer," he answered promptly. And in like manner, if we want to know Provence, we must read Mistral. Is it the great Rhone with its legends, its history, and the towns and villages upon its banks? Read the "Poème du Rhône," and you will actually see the landscape and hear the water rushing. You will find your way to old royal castles,—around which, alas, we have no time to ramble in this volume,—and hear such stories as none but a native-born troubadour can tell. Are you curious about Avignon, Arles, Les Aliscamps, Château Renard? Study "Nerte." In the wanderings of the heroine you learn all about these places as they were in the times of the Popes of Avignon; you see the streets

A VISIT TO MISTRAL

crowded with pilgrims and cardinals ; you wander through the halls and corridors of the Palace ; you find your way into the old Convent of Saint-Cesaire at Arles, and look on while Nerte takes the Veil. And there is the scene in Les Aliscamps. I know Les Aliscamps myself ; I am going to take you there presently. But if I am able to make you see it, it will be because I show it to you through the eyes of Mistral. And so with the Chapel of Saint-Gabriel near Maillane. It is there that Nerte meets the hermit. Picture the vision of the great archangel :—

“His two white wings
Which, in pure depths of space
Lost themselves, mingling with the blue,
And quivering, like two veils . . .”

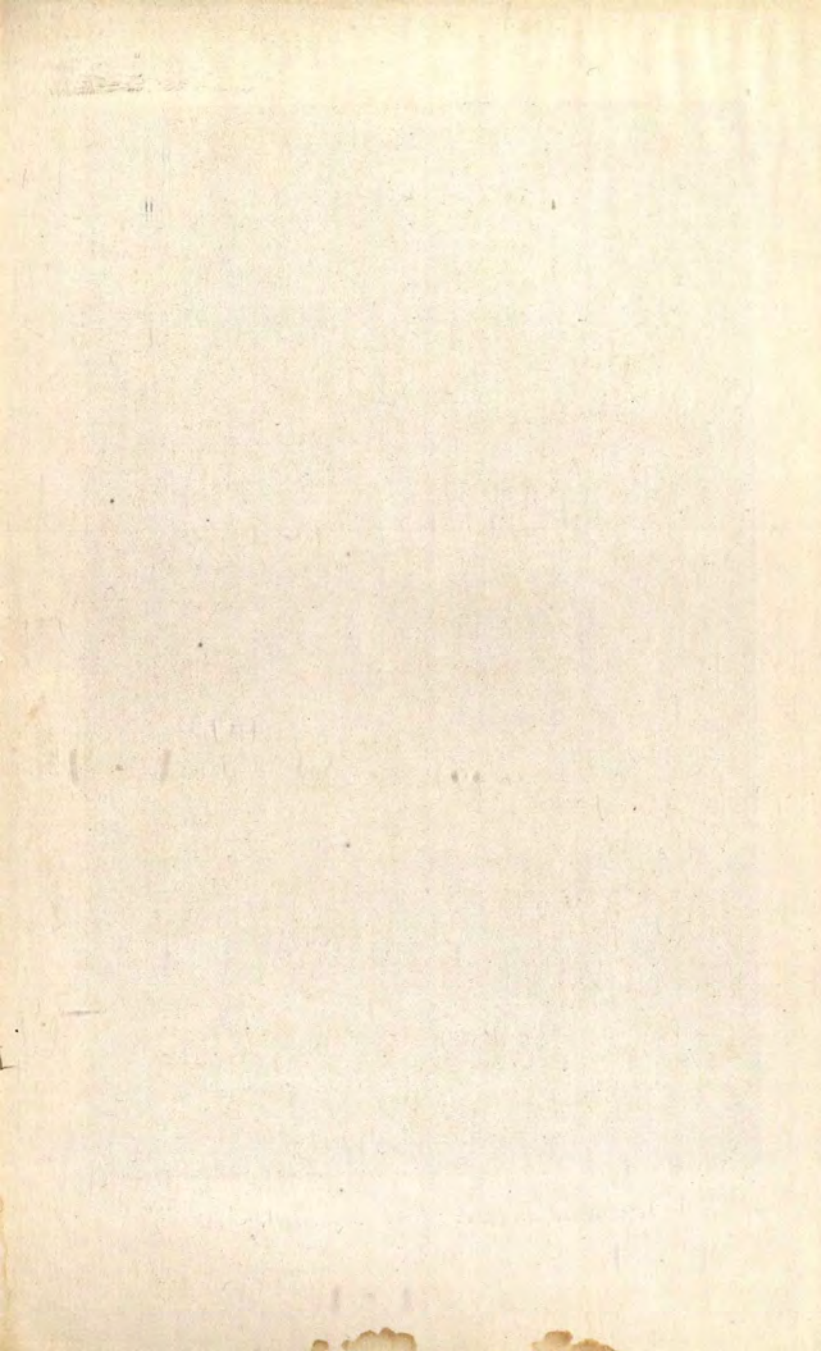
But it is in “Mireille” that we find most clearly expressed the extraordinary genius of Mistral. Lamartine, on first reading the poem, cried, “He is a Homer!” But do not take Lamartine’s word, read it for yourself. If you have the same humble devotion to the works of the old Greeks as I have, nothing you have read since the days when you first realised the glories of Homer and Æschylus will have impressed you to the same degree. It is but natural. These Provençaux are Greek in origin, retaining, as I have already said, a vast number of Greek characteristics. And of all French authors, Mistral has perhaps best preserved the old Greek tradition. How he

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

worships the beautiful! No line, no expression, ever offends. Good and evil are as opposed as light and darkness. He is pure as Homer, and, like Homer, it is to his native country that he has consecrated his genius.

But we are forgetting "Mireille." She is the daughter of a farmer of Provence, and loves Vincent, a boy of the people. They are little more than children; the story of their love resembles that of a pair of angels, so pure is it, so innocent. But their affection is crossed by the girl's parents, who wish her to marry one of the three wealthy suitors who offer themselves. So Mireille runs away, and where does she go? To her lover? No, it is a poet who is telling the story. She finds her way to the Chapel of Les Saintes Maries, on the coast of the Mediterranean. And there she dies, a martyr to pure love. The story is full of symbolism, but, after all, the story is not Mireille. In this little volume the poet shows us his country, its legends, its traditions, its customs, its everyday life, its very heart and soul, till we know it as we know the Ithaca of Ulysses. This is the true glory of Mistral—his patriotism. He is the genius of Provence, and it is in his own language—that exquisite musical language which is the blending of all that is most beautiful in the Latin and the Greek—that he has written his masterpieces.

But it is not of the works of Mistral that





FRÉDÉRIC MISTRAL. 24TH SEPTEMBER, 1910.

A VISIT TO MISTRAL

I intended to speak. Every tourist in Provence knows of Mistral the poet. How can one help it? The libraries in Avignon are piled with his books; the post-cards are covered with quotations from "Mireille" and "Les Iles d'Or." During the slack season, the Provence newspapers publish his odd poems, and report interviews with the great man. We hear all about his infant days, his school days, his college days. People tell of his loves and friendships, his sayings and his doings. All the little trifling things, which ought long ago to have been forgotten, are raked together and made public. We see his portraits at all ages, terra-cotta busts of him stand in rows in the shop windows, and his great bronze statue dominates the public square at Arles. So there is very little for any one to tell of Mistral the poet.

But at Maillane we found a dear old man, tall and beautiful like one of the Greek gods his ancestors, with long silvery hair, and a face on which no trouble has ever set its wrinkles. And this old man impressed me more than all I had ever heard of either the poetry or the language of Provence, for he is the very soul of that Land of Troubadours.

You know Maillane, perhaps, with its ancient church and narrow winding streets? I was watching the beautiful women standing about in their Sunday costumes, and our friend was repeating the old romance of Pèire de Prouvènço

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

and La Bello Magalouno,—the bird had already flown away with the three rings, and Pèire had just found a boat to start in pursuit of the thief,—when we drew up at an iron gate, behind which I caught sight of a curly black dog.

“It is Tous-les-Jours!” exclaimed the Prior. “He is waiting to announce us.”

So out we got, and followed the barking frisking Tous-les-Jours to the back of the house, which is really the front, where is the old well, and, beneath some fir trees, a shady seat where I am sure the poet often sits in the evening. There we found another black dog, whose name I did not catch, who, like his companion, welcomed us with such effusion that Mistral heard and came himself to the door.

“Put the wretched thing down,” whispered my husband, as I stood, laden with my idiotic “gerbe,” watching helplessly, while the Prior and the Poet greeted each other. But already Mistral had turned and fixed his eyes upon me—those kindly eyes which look one through and through, only to find out what is best in one.

“For me?” he cried, taking the flowers as though they were the first he had ever seen. “But how kind! I so love flowers. And tuberoses, too; ah, the good perfume,” and I found myself relieved of my flowers and embarrassment together, and followed the tall old man to his shadowy study.

A VISIT TO MISTRAL

I do not know what they talked about. Save for the short call I have mentioned, the friends had not met for years, and it was too much to expect them to speak French. Every now and then, remembering my presence, Mistral would turn and ask me some commonplace question, and I would stammer out an answer. Once the Prior tried to draw me on the subject of "Nerte," and, to my infinite confusion, told the author how I had compared the description of the great archangel to a certain passage of Milton. But most of the time I sat blissfully watching, listening to the rise and fall of the soft Provençal voices. I don't think I once took my eyes off the wonderful old man, and yet I seem to remember every detail of the homely room. There, beside the window, is the table, the neat workmanlike table where he wrote "Mireille" and "Calandel." One wall is covered with books; on the mantelpiece is a statuette of the poet himself, a copy of that at Arles. And everywhere are photographs, pictures, busts of his friends—Gounod, Alphonse Daudet, Aubanel, Lamartine. . . .

The sun shone in through the half-closed shutters, and the air was full of the buzzing of bees, and the scent of my tuberose which lay drooping across the poet's table. Perhaps it was the perfume of the flowers, or the song of the bees, but as I sat there I began dreaming of the troubadours of the thirteenth century—of

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

Bertrand d'Allamanon and the fair Phanette de Cantolone. Poor Bertrand, how worried he was about his money affairs. "How can I sing," says he, "when I am incessantly occupied with law-suits and advocates. . . ." And there is Pierre Cardinal, the Swinburne of the period, who, for all his talent, was for a short time obliged to earn his bread by teaching the children of Tarascon; and Arnaud Daniel of Beaucaire, Geoffrey Rudel, and that mad creature Pierre Vidal, whom we shall find again at Les Baux. "Lou soulèv me fai canta," says Mistral. Ah, yes, "Lou Soulèv" has always made them want to sing,—it even makes us chirp sometimes,—but he who has sung most gloriously is the old white-haired man who sits talking there in the shadowed glint of the sunshine.

Madame Mistral had gone to the fête which was being held at Saint-Rémy, and I was glad. Had she been at home, we should have talked, and I should not have carried away so perfect a remembrance of the poet, in his cool southern home, with Tous-les-Jours asleep at his feet, and beside him the white bust of Lamartine crowned with its garland of laurels.

Presently we went out into the garden, where we sat playing with the dogs. He put Tous-les-Jours through his tricks, and I told him of my little fox-terrier Trimmer, far off in England, whose ways were very much the same, in spite

SAINT-RÉMY

of his difference of race. And after these dumb friends of ours had drawn us together, as no amount of literary talk could have done, we went laughing into the white-walled kitchen, where hangs the curious carved bread-cupboard. There, surrounded by a wealth of copper and brass, we drank one another's health in some sweet thick aromatic liqueur.

"Thank you so much for letting me come," said I, as we shook hands at parting.

"Nay," said Mistral courteously, but with all the dignity of a god to a mortal, "it is I who thank you, madame. I am very much touched by your coming so far to see me."

And so we parted, and I began to think of all the clever things I had meant to say to him, of all the important questions I had meant to ask him, and I had said nothing, nothing; had remembered nothing, save that this was the man who had written "Nerte" and "Mireille," the man who had revived the language of the troubadours. And so we went on our way up the road to Saint-Rémy.

How hot the air was in the low square avenue of plane trees! We kept overtaking carts going to the fête, and everywhere young couples were talking and courting. There were strings of girls dressed *en grande chapelle*, as the Sunday costume is called in Provence; each with her hair crimped and parted, and a little cap of

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

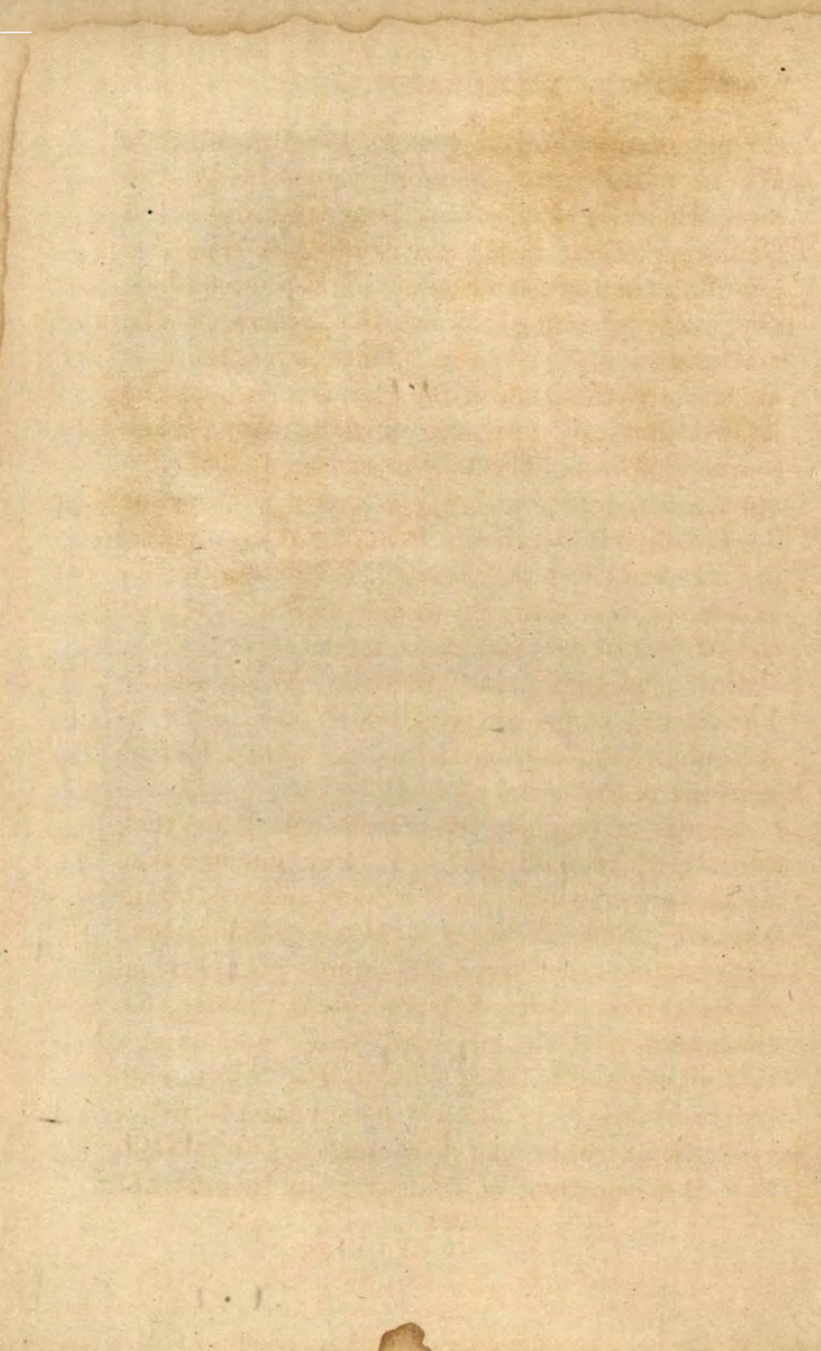
black ribbon, with its touch of white lace, set demurely on the top of her shapely head. What shawls, what delicate white sleeves and chemisettes! The road seemed strewn with lilies and roses. And they were so tall, so graceful and dignified; I could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw them getting into the swaying boats of the merry-go-round, which was making life hideous at Saint-Rémy.

Oh, the crowd in the *place*! What a pandemonium! It seemed as though the automobile never could penetrate the solid human mass. We hooted and hooted, but the roundabouts made such a din that no one heard. At last, with infinite care, much consternation on the part of anxious mothers, and joking among the young men and maidens, we made our way to the other side of the town. Then little by little the tumult subsided, the raucous strains of the merry-go-rounds became mellowed by distance, and we found ourselves nearing those fairy hills which the people of Provence call Les Alpines.

There we came across the remains of the ancient Roman city of Glanum, the little Forum with its beautiful Arc de Triomphe, and the monument of the two Jules. The afternoon light was falling upon them, lighting up the battle scenes with all the glory of past achievement, and touching once again the heads of the forgotten heroes with light. And behind were



ARC DE TRIOMPHE, SAINT-RÉMY.



LES BAUX

the mountains, the Leonardo da Vinci mountains. We were back two thousand years, before the days when the Barbarians came and destroyed Glanum. There is the great Rock of the Lion guarding the town, and overhead is the cloudless sky, already filling toward the west with the amber dust of the sunset. Once more there is no trace of the Maison de Plaisance, where the later Counts of Provence used to stop, when journeying from Aix to Tarascon. It has disappeared, together with the woods where Jeanne de Laval, wife of King René, used to disport herself, hunting the stag. But the Roman antiquities remain, lying in the sunshine against the purple background of the mountains.

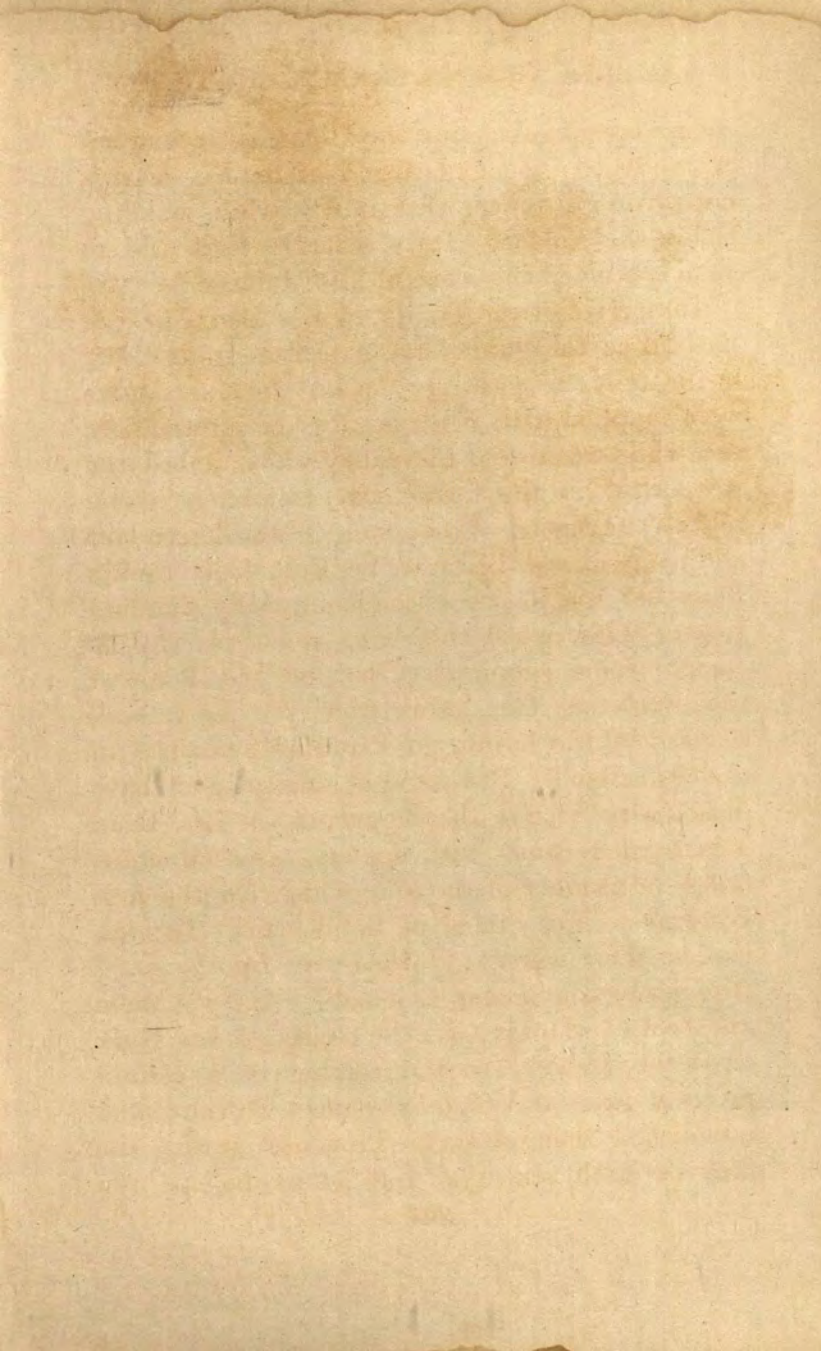
But come, jump into the car. We must see Les Baux before making our way back to Avignon. Truly there is no more rest for the motorist than for the wicked!

Groves of bamboo, avenues of black cypress, and the white road winding its way among rocks, which grow wilder and wilder as we mount upward. Now we enter a weird valley, where only thyme and lavender, mint, juniper, and dwarf fir trees flourish. And still, through the fresh perfumed air, the road climbs and climbs, till, passing a gateway cut in the white cliff, before us lies . . . chaos! I suppose the whole valley is in reality one vast quarry, but it looks like the cemetery of some race of giants, the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

square openings to the excavations, the cyclopean entrances to some underworld of tombs. One is not surprised to hear that it was while standing before the Valoun d'Infer that Dante is said to have conceived the scene of his "Inferno."

The origin of the family of Les Baux, or Les Bathes, as the guide-book expresses it, is "lost in the mists of past ages." But fortunately we were supplied with other sources of information, and while we crossed the valley and climbed the steep road to the Castle, our omniscient guide told us the legend of the coming of the descendant and namesake of Baltazar, Le Roi Mage, to Les Baux—or the Rocks, as the name really signifies. I don't know when this King came, or why he came. Some people say that he had followed the Emperor Theodosius from the East, and, seduced by the beauty of Provence, remained in that Circe land. But come he surely must have done; why should the Seigneurs of Les Baux have borne a comet with six rays as their crest, unless in memory of the star which led the first Baltazar to the Stable of Bethlehem? Besides, look at their warcry: "*Aù hazar Baùthazar!*" Absolutely convincing, is it not? And yet there are sceptics who say that the family of Les Baux owed its existence to the coming of a certain princely race of Visigoths, named Balthes, who established themselves in Provence during the fifth or sixth century. But let us believe the





LE CHÂTEAU DES BAUX.

LES BAUX

legend of Le Bon Baltazar—it is so much less prosaic.

I can fancy his arriving with his wife and children—the legend especially mentions his bringing them with him. They had been wandering about a long time, and no doubt the poor wife was tired and homesick for the East. Now, even to-day, there is something Galilean about the landscape of Les Baux. As the strange white rocks of the hidden valley suddenly revealed themselves to her, I can hear her saying to her husband: “It reminds me of home! Let us remain here, O Baltazar!” And so, on the culminating rock, Baltazar built his tower, which later grew into the great and marvellous fortress of Les Baux.

Dreams and fancies? Of course, what else does one expect from a Rambler in Provence! I always make it a point to believe what I want to believe; at all events for the time being. The naked Truth is so ugly, we must find a few rags of fancy, a garment or two of legend, in which to clothe her. And what garments are there not laid away among the ruins of Les Baux?

Even as we enter the fortifications, the Prior finds one forgotten fragment, in which he hides the prosaic reality of a certain siege by the Saracens. I wish I could tell it in his own words.

Les Baux was straightly shut up. Not a

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

mouthful of food could she obtain from without, and her provisions were exhausted. "We shall have to capitulate," said the Seigneur des Baux, sadly, "and then God have mercy upon us, for these pagans will show none." But, even as he was speaking, a man was brought to him in whose cellar had been found a pig, which he had been keeping as a last meal for himself and his family. It was still in good condition, and as he looked at it an idea came into the mind of the Seigneur des Baux. "There are still a few handfuls of corn," said he; "bring them here." It is done. Poor piggy has paid the penalty of his fatness. Into his bleeding mouth has been thrust the last corn of the garrison. "Throw him over the wall," cries the chief, eagerly; and the wondering soldiers obey. Ah, but not for nothing is that Seigneur descended from the magicians of India. "Pig!" cry the besiegers, who themselves are by this time in a bad way. "A pig! And so stuffed with corn that he actually couldn't swallow the last mouthful? By Allah, if they can afford to waste good food like this, what is the use of our waiting?" And off they went.

And there is the tale of Bérengère des Baux, first love of poor Guillaume Cabestaing, who later died in such a tragic manner. All good Provençal children have been told of the handsome troubadour, and how the lady of Les Baux, wishing to keep him all to herself, consulted one

THE TROUBADOURS

of the old witches who used to haunt the Grotte des Fées, from whom she obtained a love potion. It must have contained some poison, for Cabestaing, after drinking it, went raving mad, and when he recovered was so frightened of the Lady Bérengère that he fled from Les Baux in terror. So flying he came to Roussillon, and entered the service of the lovely Lady Triline. Then commences a long and romantic story. The troubadour sang love-songs to the lady, and the lady smiled upon the troubadour, till one day her old husband became jealous, and taxed the young man with making love to his wife.

“No indeed!” cried Cabestaing. “You are quite mistaken. Why, it is her sister Agnès of Tarascon whom I love.”

The old lord may have believed him, or on the other hand he may not. At all events, he proposed a visit to Tarascon, and the three went off together. But when she found Cabestaing writing love-songs for her sister, Triline became jealous, and her husband found that he had been deceived. The vengeance he took was horrible, even for those times. Inviting Cabestaing to go hunting one day, he fell upon and killed him, cut off his head, and tore out his heart. The former he kept in his hunting-bag; the latter he had cooked and served to his wife for supper.

“How do you like that meat, my lady?” he inquired. And when she said that she had never

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

tasted anything so delicious, out he took the bloody head, and set it before her, explaining that it was her lover's heart she had just been eating.

For a moment Tricline turned sick and faint. Then starting up, she cried desperately, "And good it was! So good that nothing more shall pass my lips as long as I live!" and running to the window she sprang out, and so perished.

And there are the eccentricities of Pierre Vidal. A regular Don Juan was he, according to his own account, but as mad as a March hare in reality. And though all the ladies flattered him, for the sake of the songs he knew so well how to sing, they laughed at him behind his back. We find him here at Les Baux making violent love to Adelaide, wife of Lord Barrel des Baux, even venturing to creep into her room to kiss her as she lay asleep. This Adelaide des Baux was also loved by the troubadour Foulquet, who afterwards entered the Church, and became Bishop of Toulouse and one of the great persecutors of the Albigenses.

And then do you remember Geoffrey Rudel, who fell in love with Mélisande, daughter of the Count of Tripoli, only from hearing the reports of her beauty? No doubt he made his *début* at the celebrated Court of Love held at Les Baux.

"I love an object whom I have never seen," he cries, in one of his songs, "one to whom I have

THE TROUBADOURS

never been able to reveal my feelings, or ask for an explanation of hers. But I know that among all the beauties, Saracen, Jew or Christian, there is not one who can compare with my lady." That is the true troubadour spirit.

Afterwards he goes sailing away, dressed as a pilgrim, to seek his lady-love. "The fair one I adore shall see me with a staff, dressed as a pilgrim in my gown of cloth. Ah, if, for the love of God, she would but grant me hospitality in her palace! But no, it will be happiness enough for me if I am made prisoner by the Saracens, and lodged in the same town which owns her."

Geoffrey had a friend, Bertrand d'Allamanon, who went with him to the East. On the voyage the poor troubadour fell very ill, and, as he grew worse, his one fear was that he should die without meeting his lady *Mélisande*. So as soon as they were within sight of land Bertrand hastened ashore, and went and implored the Countess to come and see this unknown lover who had travelled so far to meet her. And come she did, and Rudel died with her hand in his, feeling her kiss upon his brow. And never did *Mélisande* love another man; but, dressed like a widow, retired to a convent, where she spent the remainder of her life, praying for his soul, and weeping over the verses he had written in praise of her yet unknown charms.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

But we cannot speak of all the gay ladies of Les Baux — Raimbaude, beloved of Sordel and Blacas; Clairette and Alasie, celebrated by Pierre d'Auvergne. Above all, the lovely Passe Rose, that Queen of Love and Beauty, concerning whom all poets of her time sang.

It is difficult to-day to picture the gay court of Les Baux. The Castle and even the little town are in ruins. The *place* is the only spot unencumbered with débris, and that is only large enough to hold a table, two or three chairs, and the village omnibus. There, where once the haughty princes lived and ruled, the landlord of the Hôtel Monte Carlo and his friends sit discussing the affairs of the nation, while a handful of squalid peasants clamour for halfpence.

The Church is old and quaint, with a crypt in which were buried the lords and ladies of Les Baux. Here, a few years ago, they found the skeleton of a young girl with golden hair. Who was she? No one knew, till at last some scholar suggested that it must be the body of the Lady Stella, an Italian Princess, who, having come to Les Baux some centuries since to marry the young Seigneur, died on the eve of her wedding.

And here beside the Church is the Maison des Porcellets.

“You remember Guillaume de Porcellet?” said our friend, as we were looking at the old hearth of what was once the salon. “He was the

THE MAISON DES PORCELLETS

companion and brother-in-arms of your Richard Cœur-de-Lion, who, by the bye, was also a troubadour. They went together to the Crusade." And he told me of a day when this Guillaume and the King of England, being out hunting among the hills of Palestine, found themselves surrounded by a company of Saracens. Already the two or three lords who were with them had fallen,—for they were completely outnumbered,—and Richard was fighting with his back against a rock. Then Guillaume de Porcellet, knowing that the King was the prize they coveted, cried out in Saracen, "Let my squire go! Do you not see that I am the King!" Instantly they closed round him, thus giving Richard time to make off. No sooner was he in a place of safety, than he sent to offer a ransom for his gallant friend, and six of the greatest Saracen lords, whom he held as prisoners, he had to give before Guillaume de Porcellet was set at liberty.

The guide who had taken us round had listened with great attention to the story, nodding his head condescendingly here and there, though I don't believe he had ever heard a word of it before.

"It is true!" said he. "There are many such stories, for they were a great race—Les Porcellets. Madame knows how the family came by that name?" I shook my head.

"Ah, *that* is a story worth remembering,"

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

with a sidelong glance at our companion. "It was in the great days of Les Baux, when the Courts of Love were held, and beneath every window a troubadour sighed in the moonlight, waiting till his love dropped him the flower, or the word which gave him the permission to depart. The lady—I forget her name, but no matter, she was the mother of all the Porcellets who warmed themselves at this great hearth—was walking down the road to the valley, when she met an old woman who asked her for alms. But the lady was in no mood to be stopped. These great folk had not then discovered that they were of the same flesh and blood as the people they ruled. So she passed on haughtily. 'A widow's curse upon you!' screamed the old woman, and, a sow passing at that moment, she added, 'May you have as many sons at a birth as that beast.'"

"What a terrible wish!" exclaimed my husband. "And how many was it?"

"Nine, monsieur. If the legend speaks true, there were nine Seigneurs de Porcellet born a few weeks later, for such they were named in memory of the event I have related."

There is a spot which perhaps above all others recalls the palmy days of Les Baux. Do you see, down in the valley, a little octagonal summer-house still standing at one angle of an enclosed field? It is called by the farmer's wife who shows

THE COURTS OF LOVE

it to us "Le Pavillon de la Reine Jeanne," though, to be sure, poor Jeanne and her four husbands had been in the other world nearly a couple of hundred years when this gem of sixteenth-century architecture was raised. In reality it is the Pavillon d'Amour, the only vestige left of the famous gardens of Les Baux, where once were held the Courts of Love. This hidden valley was always, as I have shown, renowned as one of the chief centres of *le gai Sçavoir*. Troubadours from early times found their way to the Castle of the Rocks. No doubt this enclosure was dedicated to that strange sentimental cult of women which grew up in the thirteenth century. Here poet lovers met their ladies, and sighed with them beneath the moon. Here were celebrated those strange mystical marriages which consoled the poor girls of feudal times for the loveless, and often repulsive, alliances they were forced to contract. Here assembled at stated intervals the various officers of the High Privileges of Love, the Provosts of the Hawthorn, the Seneschal of the Eglantine, the Judges of Mourning, the Bailiffs of Delight, to discuss questions of gallantry, and pass judgment on all lovers who had offended their ladies in any way. And what a number of ways there were! All day long you must be at her beck and call, observing a thousand little formalities, the omission of any of which might draw down upon you her displeasure, and the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

chastisement of the officers of the High Privileges of Love.

But *le gâi Sçavoir* had almost ceased by the beginning of the sixteenth century. It had served its purpose; woman was no longer the mere chattel she had been, and the world was richer by a whole literature of love-songs and ballads which had arisen in her honour. Still, the cult had gone out of fashion.

But in the days of King René "courtesy" revived. Then, once more, were seen the curious rites of which I have spoken; love-songs again came into vogue, poets and painters found themselves no longer neglected, the Court of Love at Les Baux was restored, and at each corner arose an exquisite little temple, of which the example we still see is the only survival. What gay scenes has it not witnessed, this little "Pavillon"! What lovely ladies have not sat within it! What vows and songs has it not heard!

I was listening vaguely to the woman's talk, and thinking, perhaps somewhat regretfully, of those romantic days of long ago, when a chance word caught my ear.

"Yes, I see the tower. What of it?" I answered vaguely.

"It was the pigeon-house. In those days the pigeons fed on the people's corn, and the lords and ladies fed on the pigeons."

"Good old times!"

LES BAUX

“For the nobles and troubadours,” rejoined the woman, “but for the peasants! Mon Dieu!”

We have lingered long at Les Baux, but I wish we could stay still longer. For, in spite of that disquieting pigeon-house, a strange fragrant atmosphere lingers about every stone of the valley. And, as we climb our way out through the great white pylons which guard the entrance, we turn to see the summits of Les Alpines gilded, like the memories of the days when the troubadours ruled the land; and we too find ourselves saying: “Farewell, sweet ladies, God give you a good night!”

CHAPTER XII

A visit to Châteauneuf-du-Pape—The Castle of Roquemaure—
Death of Pope Clement v.—Avignon by night—The bridge
of Bénézet.

THE Prior had departed for some festival at which he was to preach, and had given us over into the charge of his friend the Chaplain. The worst of a book like this is, that one has no time to talk about oneself and one's friends. The Chaplain, for instance—how can I introduce you to this kindly soul? "Monsieur l'Abbé," I say. You bow, and see before you a tall elderly priest, with close-cropped hair and kind dark eyes which seem to be always looking for something beyond the present. So much I can show you. But how are you to guess what a wealth of charity lies hidden away beneath that simple cassock? You must go and talk to the sick people at the hospital, to the poor old men and women whom no one else cares for, before you discover the worth of the Chaplain. As I grew to know him better, it seemed to me that all the southern sunshine, which had shone upon him for fifty summers, had been warming and ripening his

A VISIT TO CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE

soul. Not that he talks much, and even when he does he is rather difficult to understand. But he breathes out an atmosphere of simple benevolence, so that merely to sit in the same room with him is better than many a sermon. And it was to this good man's home we were going that September morning—for, with true Provençal hospitality, he had arranged a little luncheon party at Châteauneuf-du-Pape, where he owns a house and vineyard; though, as I have said, he spends most of his life in Avignon.

I have the vaguest remembrance of the route, for the glory of the sunshine blinded me, so that I seemed flying through a mist of gold. Golden was the sky; a golden river flowed by, on the left; the trees were turning gold; golden leaves kept fluttering into my lap; it was so like Paradise that more than once I put up my hand to feel whether I had not on a golden crown in place of my motor cap! And we talked of the colours of the sunrise,—the Chaplain and I,—and of ideal beauty, and of all manner of wonderful mystical things, which no one but a Provençal saint would ever think of discussing.

It was in this mood that we presently reached Châteauneuf, the little old town where the Avignon Popes had their country castle, and grew such wines that the fame of them has come down to the present day, and "Châteauneuf-du-Pape" is said to be the finest wine in France. And

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

there, on the slope of the low hill which is still crowned by the ruins of the Castle, we found the Chaplain's house. You never saw such a house unless you have been in Provence. It is of ancient grey stones, roughly mortared together. Along the front is a trellis verandah, over which clamber the vines, making a pleasant green shade, haunted by bees and all manner of fairy-winged things. Opposite the door is the old stone well, with its bucket and rope, and the cool clear water lying in its depths; while overhead is a fig tree, laden with the small, sweet, sun-warmed figs of Provence; and everywhere, as far as the eye can reach, are the vineyards.

Being sure by this time that I really was in Paradise, I was making free with the figs, when I heard the Chaplain's voice, and found that he was introducing me to quite a family of relations. There were cousins of various ages, from a black-haired missionary in a long white gown, who had spent twenty-five years in Colombo, to a young girl called Louise, who, having been to school in Paris, was reported to speak English. Above all, there was the Chaplain's younger married sister, with whom I became great friends at once, for "were we not of the same age," and "had we not been married about the same time, and neither of us to have any children! Really it was remarkable!" Then followed the discovery that each of our respective husbands was the best man in the

A VISIT TO CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE

world—"except perhaps my brother," concluded Madame, and I smiled acquiescence, for it was no disparagement to either man to come second to a saint. Then, thoroughly at home, we entered the house and climbed the old staircase.

The lower part of the building was occupied by the caretaker and his wife. It was on the first floor that we found the big shadowy room, with its closed jalousies, which our friends had prepared for our entertainment. It had been a hot ride, and the cool dusk was delightful. But even more delightful was the sight of the centre table, literally piled with fruit. Great amber-fleshed melons, luscious pears, figs, pomegranates, and, above all, grapes! grapes! grapes! Never before had I realised what meals in the Garden of Eden must have been like. But there they had no "Château-neuf-du-Pape"—that bottled sunshine with which our friends stimulated our already buoyant spirits. And what fun we had! These Provençaux are such superb company. There was no effort to entertain us. Everything seemed to lead naturally to some interesting subject of conversation. Presently, however, the Chaplain started up—

"But your chauffeur?" he exclaimed. "God forgive me, I had forgotten the poor man."

"He has gone to the inn," said my husband. "He'll be all right."

But this was not according to the ideas of our host.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

"Shall Louise go and fetch him?" suggested the mother of the young girl from Paris.

"To be sure! The very thing! And Madeleine had better go with her."

"But what shall I say?" cried the reluctant Louise, startled by this sudden demand upon her English.

"Tell him to come and have some fruit," said her father. "They've surely taught you as much English as that!"

"Say 'Come with us,'" observed the missionary cousin, gently.

"Come with us," repeated Louise doubtfully, picking up her hat.

Once, on their way to the road, they returned for the magic words to be repeated; and the good father hung half out of the window calling "Come with us! Come with us!" until they were out of sight.

"He won't come," said I, "he'll never leave the automobile." And he didn't. The girls returned presently, Louise greatly crestfallen.

"We said it," she protested, with much gesticulation, "many many times we said it. We even tried to lead him by the arm, but he would NOT come."

My husband's face was a study.

"I expect he thought it was the temptation of Saint Anthony," I heard him murmur dryly to the sister's husband.

Later, as we were starting off for a walk

A VISIT TO CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE

through the vineyards, Madeleine and Louise came sidling up to me.

"Madame," said the elder girl, smiling, "what is the meaning of 'Kom vee das'?"

"I am afraid I don't understand Provençal," I answered.

"Oh, but it is English!" exclaimed Louise. "Kom vee das! It is what my cousin told us to say to your chauffeur."

"I couldn't think what they was at!" said poor Jones, when a little later he joined us with the missionary cousin, who had been to fetch him. "They stands there screechin' to me like a couple of young sparrers! 'Kom vee das!' they says. 'What?' says I. 'Kom vee das,' says they, and then one of 'em points down the road, and the other tries to pull me by the sleeve. 'Here, look out, mamsel,' says I, 'I ain't that sort, yer know!' Oh no, you bet I shouldn't never have come if it hadn't been for him in the smock!"

After we had wandered through the vineyards, and watched the great purple clusters being piled into waggons by stout red-faced worshippers of Bacchus, we found our way up to the little town, and thence to the Castle. It took some time, for every one wanted a word with Monsieur l'Abbé, who had not been to Châteauneuf for several weeks.

"How glad they are to see him," I said to

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

his sister; who replied simply that it was her brother's home, the home of his father and mother, and that there was not a man or woman whom he had not known from childhood.

On the way we passed a ruined chapel of the Knights Templars, and just above it came out on the summit of the rock, upon which still stands a square tower and the tottering fragment of an outer wall. I listened while they told me of a gipsy man who had been accidentally burned to death there one winter's night. He had taken shelter, and locked himself in with his mule, among the hay with which the tower was packed. Seeing smoke, the people ran and tried to open the door; and when at last they battered it down, out rushed the mule from the blazing furnace. And all the time they could hear the man crying, "Light! Bring a light!"

"Ah, it was horrible!" cried the sister, shuddering. "He must have gone mad with fear, and when they found him he was as lifeless and black as a cinder."

And there was the story of the somnambulist who climbed the great wall, and woke up just as he reached the narrowest part, and had to remain there for hours till they brought ladders and fetched him down. . . .

Our respective husbands and the girls had climbed the tower for the sake of the view, and Madame la sœur and I sat there among the thyme

A VISIT TO CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE

and wild lavender, watching the lizards dart in and out among the fallen stones. And around us the sunshine was full of bees, and locusts, and all the dear summer creatures who taught the troubadours how to sing. As for Monsieur l'Abbé—he had retired to a spur of the rock, and was dexterously throwing stones into the top of what had once been the kitchen chimney, laughing with the delight of a child as he saw them emerge below.

“It is not the first time you have done that,” I remarked, as I watched his portly black-gowned form silhouetted against the glowing sky.

“No,” said he, turning away with a little laugh. “We used to come here when we were children, to throw stones down the Pope’s chimney. Did we not, Thérèse?”

But the lunch! For you must not think that fruit was the only entertainment provided. In the little square of the town is an inn, an ancient place with a huge kitchen, and at the back a great dark panelled room, opening on to a broad terrace, where a couple of dark-eyed swarthy young vine-dressers were playing bowls, while two or three older men sat on a wall smoking as they watched them. There we lunched on many things, including a chicken, which I am convinced, by its leathery texture, we had seen strutting about as we passed the door on our way to the Castle. And after we had finished, we too

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

sat out on the terrace watching the bowls, even playing a match ourselves, some of us, and ate jujubes off a jujube tree. And then, as the sapphire sky was turning amber, and the broad valley began to take on that wonderful transparent amethyst tint which is the precursor of the Provençal sunset, Madame and I embraced each other like sisters anticipating a long separation; and, with many a handshake and "au revoir," we turned our faces towards home.

Far away to the left we saw the old Castle of Montfaucon, then crossed the Rhone, and shortly afterwards came upon Roquemaure. The sun was just setting, and the ruined Castle glowed as with a sudden flame. I don't know what my companions were thinking of, but into my mind flashed the remembrance of that wretched Pope Clement v., who on 20th April 1314 died in this old ruin. Every schoolgirl remembers the story of Clement, then simple Archbishop of Bordeaux, and his mysterious meeting with Philippe le Bel in the wood. Philippe had long been casting covetous eyes on the rich treasures of the Knights Templars, and, knowing the ambition of the Archbishop, offered to make him Pope if he would help him to exterminate the Order. And Pope he became,—Pope Clement v.,—and the story which follows is one of the blackest in all history. We remember how the

DEATH OF POPE CLEMENT V.

Templars died, tortured, killed by inches. When the long agony seemed over, and Paris had grown tired of all the shrieks and groans and burnings, the Grand Master Jacques de Molai and Geoffroi de Charnai the preceptor of Normandy were themselves brought out to die. And as the flames crept up around them, the old white-haired chief raised his hands, and in solemn and awful tones cursed his murderer.

“Clement,” he cried, “iniquitous and cruel judge, I summon thee within forty days to meet me before the throne of the Most High.”

It was to Carpentras, over there, on the other side of the Rhone, that Clement retired after the execution. A sickness had seized upon him, and as the allotted time wore itself away, the wretched Pope grew more and more terrified. In his restless misery, perhaps thinking that his native air might revive him, but more likely to escape from that fiery memory which was ever before his eyes, he determined to set out for Bordeaux. But it was a dying man who crossed the Rhone, and at Roquemaure came the end. And what an end! Who shall tell of the dreams, the visions, the awful remorse of this feeble and wicked soul as it passed away into the night?

The breath was scarcely out of his body, when, flinging an old sheet over him, and lighting four candles around the bed, his nephew and the servants made off with whatever was worth

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

taking. And there he lay, the man who had sold his soul to the Devil and the King. And the wind blew up from the river, and the tall candles rocked and fell over, so that the sheet and the bed took fire, and when they found him next day his body was as black and unrecognisable as that of his victim du Molai had been.

“See,” said Monsieur l’Abbé, as the glow of the sunset burned fiercer, “one would say that there was a fire in the old Castle of Roquemaure.” So he saw it too!

It was night—our last night in Avignon. Dinner is over; I have given the last veal cutlet to my special friend the pointer—save the mark!—and have divided the biscuits and sugar between the so-called fox terrier and Rosalie of the slobbering mouth. Come, let us stroll once more up the Cours de la République, stopping now and then outside a café to listen to the music, or watch a cinematograph. I love Avignon in the evening. It is easy then to slip back into the past. Seen in the dusk, these crowds differ but little from the throng of pilgrims, priests, and students of former days. Presently we reach one of the river gates, and make our way on to the old bridge of Bénézet. It is moonlight, and for the first time I, like Mademoiselle de Montpensier in 1660, see Avignon “au clair de la



THE BRIDGE OF BÉNÉZET, AVIGNON.

THE BRIDGE OF BÉNÉZET

lune." "The Rhone is very rapid and very broad," says she, "the bridge high, and in bad condition. I was very frightened."

As we stood there by Bénézet's chapel, I could fancy La Grande Mademoiselle crying out with vexation as she saw the torches gathered on the quay, and heard the drums and trumpets of Avignon. And there is the Pope's Legate coming to meet her, even forcing his way into the house at entrance to the bridge, where she had taken refuge; "with a strength proportionate to his size," says she, "giving a blow with his fist on the door, and breaking it open. He made me a thousand compliments, and of course I ought to have recognised the authority of the Pope. But I was so vexed, I only answered uncivilly, 'I wish to be unrecognised!'"

Poor Mademoiselle! How ridiculous she sometimes made herself, and yet how charming she is to read about. Ah, well, she has passed away, like the fair Flamenca and her lover Guillaume de Nevers, who, it is said, gave so much toward the erection of this same viaduct. And all the grandfathers and grandmothers of Avignon, who used to pass backwards and forwards to market; they have gone too, and the bridge of Bénézet is broken and deserted. But on moonlight nights, if you stand there long enough, they will come back. And the young girls will flit by, each with a flower in her bosom, and the boys will take

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

them by the hand and dance the Farandole. As the old song says :—

“Sur le pont d’Avignon, l’on y danse, l’on y danse,
Sur le pont d’Avignon, l’on y danse, tous en rond.”

And all the while up there on the height, like the lining of a cloud, glimmers the Palace. What a vision is this to live in one’s memory! The fires of earlier days quenched, the sins and passions purged away, the great walls, so symbolical of the cruelty and oppression of those who built them, fairy-like and unsubstantial. For the great Virgin of the Sky has cast her robe over the old Palace of the Popes and turned it all to silver.

CHAPTER XIII

Arles—Les Aliscamps—Herakles at Arles—Les Arènes—Saint Trophimus—The Cathedral—The Abbey of Mont-Majour—Saint-Gilles—Nîmes.

FOR the first time since we arrived in Provence the sun is not shining. So this dear Avignon is sorry to lose us, even as we are sad at bidding her farewell. We came as strangers, and go away like old friends. All along the road the bamboos bend forward whispering to us to stop, and the cypress trees point sorrowfully upward, as though warning us of the grey sky to which we are returning; and we feel cold and lonely, like Adam and Eve as they turned their backs on Paradise.

But at Arles things looked brighter. Even as we drew up before the hotel, in what was once the Roman forum, I saw the familiar statue of Mistral; and the kind face of the master gave us a sense of homeliness and welcome.

And what a town it is! The whole place would lie under a handkerchief—the theatre, the Arena, the Palace of Constantine, the Cathedral of Saint Trophime with its glorious

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

cloisters and sculptured portal, and, just outside the encircling fortifications, the Aliscamps, that incomparable Champs Elysées where the dead Arlesians, pagan and Christian, lie amicably side by side, in their stone coffins, awaiting the Resurrection. Even the hotel itself is built over ancient catacombs, and it is an uncanny sensation to wake in the night and think, that if one went down the staircase and opened the door to the left, one would find oneself without more ado in a ghostly labyrinth, among the phantoms of goodness knows what horrors of the past.

I was immensely impressed with Arles, far too impressed to sleep. The whole place is haunted. It was too hot to close the window, and ghosts flitted in and out, pale shades of beautiful Arlesiennes, who, long ago, fell victims to infidel conquerors when the Saracens took the city. Around me hovered the little ghosts of those children of still older days, offered as sacrifices four at a time on the great altar from which the town is said, by some, to take its name—"Arelata," the Broad Altar.

From time to time weird wailings sounded in the street below—mournful wailings, as though the mothers of these martyred little ones, who they say rejoiced and smiled as they offered their babes, had crept out under cover of the darkness to lament with one another. The sounds were so blood-curdling that I lay for

ARLES

awhile unable to move. Then at last, as a piercing shriek arose, I sprang up and peered out from the window. The moon was shining through a cloud. In the shadow of the tall house opposite I saw a stealthy form creeping . . . another . . . and yet another. Poor mothers of Arles! It was on no stately altar their little ones had been offered, but in the homely, yet none less fatal, water butt. Strangely low and plaintive are the voices of these cats of Arles, with a ring of melancholy passion, that makes one wonder whether the spirits of the ancient priests, who used the blood of the murdered children to sprinkle the multitude, are condemned for their sins to haunt the streets of this inscrutable town. At last a dog, who had been calling on a friend, returned, and had such work to rouse the old lady who kept his house, that he frightened the cats away, and silence reigned.

Ah, the morning! Where will you go first? Shall it be out by the city gate to this old cemetery, which, even before Arles was Arles, was the great burial-place of the Rhone valley? No one knows how ancient it is. Perhaps even when Herakles came wandering here with the white oxen of Geryon, he found graves beside the river. Perhaps Galathea, the lovely daughter of the chief of the country, took him there to show him the tombs of her ancestors. I know nothing of the burial customs of those early

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

Gauls. They may have had none, though, as we shall see later in the valley of the Vézère, long before the days of Herakles, the chief was buried with all the state which the exigencies of the time allowed. But "Herakles?" you say. "Surely it is a long step from Herakles to Arles?" Do not believe it. In Arles time has ceased to exist. Herakles, Constantine, Trophimus the Ephesian, Charles ix., Mistral, what does it matter? it is all one. The town is so old, so infinitely old, that mere centuries do not count. So let us for a moment, as we stroll down the narrow streets and through the public gardens, talk of the old legend of how Herakles in his wanderings came to Provence; for that, I take it, tells, in the poetic symbolical manner of the time, of the foundation of this city of Arles.

It happened, as I say, after the hero had overthrown the three-bodied giant, and brought his white oxen across the Pyrenees. He found old Father Rhone rushing about all over the valley, and a terrible work he had to cross the river with his cattle. The poets speak of this passage as the conquest of an enormous many-headed monster. No sooner had the hero cut off one head than another appeared, which means no doubt that as soon as he had crossed one branch of the stream he had to ford another. Here, too, he found the wild savage people, the Ligurians, who tried to bar his progress; and so

HERAKLES AT ARLES

terrible was his fight with them, that he had already flown for refuge to a cave, when Zeus, seeing the plight of this beloved son, sent down a great shower of stones which destroyed these presumptuous giants. And there the stones remain. It is the legend of the Crau—that strange, desolate region, which lies like an ugly scar in the heart of this fertile Provence. Of course geologists will tell you it represents the débris deposited by the Durance in former ages. But you and I know better. “It is the vast stony Crau, the ancient Crau, where, if legend be true, the proud giants of old lie buried beneath the overwhelming deluge of rock.”

And so Herakles was delivered, and found his way to the district which is now Arles, but which he named Théléné, or the Nurse, because of the splendid pasture it provided for his oxen. There he met the lovely Galathea, daughter of the chief of the country, and they fed their herds together. It is one of the the earliest love-songs of the world, full of youth and happiness, and the golden sunshine of the South.

But after a time Herakles began to remember all the ills which were still unrighted in the world, while he, the heaven-ordained righter of wrongs, was dallying here. So one night, leaving his Galathea sleeping beneath the moon, he took his white oxen and journeyed away to

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

Greece, where, after offering the cattle in sacrifice to the offended Hera, he recommenced his labours. But he and Galathea never forgot one another ; and though she married a neighbouring chief, and became the mother of all the women of Arles, it is said you can always see in their eyes, which are the most beautiful eyes in the whole world, the sad wistful longing of poor forsaken Galathea.

That is the story of Herakles in Provence ; the story of how Greek civilisation came to this far western province. And if you ask about Herakles himself, well, don't you think he may have been some great Greek missionary, always at work trying to put down evil, and establish the best religion he knew, the worship of Zeus and Hera ; which at all events was certainly better than the horrible devil-worship he found prevailing in most parts of Europe ?

But see, we are passing les Arènes. The great amphitheatre reminds us of the Roman Emperor Constantine, who built it. He had his palace here too ; down by the river gate we shall find all that is left of it—the great Tower de la Trouille. It is said that the Emperor so loved this city that he seriously debated the question of making it the capital of the Roman Empire. And even though he did not go this length, what a glorious city he made of it ! Even the ruins left by the Saracens show us this. The theatre, for instance, must have been a perfect

LES ARÈNES

gem. In the centre still rise the two graceful columns called Les Fourches de Roland, from which, as a modern writer suggests, the Paladin, who freed the city from these infidels, possibly hanged his prisoners. The ugly square towers above the entrances of the amphitheatre date from those days. The wretched inhabitants at the coming of the enemy found themselves obliged to abandon the town, and retired to this great Arena, which they barricaded and defended as though it were a gigantic citadel.

But hush, the entrance to Les Aliscamps! And here is an old guardian so withered and bent that he only needs a scythe to convince us he is Death, the everlasting god of this place of tombs! I ask him as to the origin of the cemetery.

"No one knows," says he mysteriously, as though he could have told more if he would.

"Trophimus?" I hazard.

"Oh ay, Trophimus," says he vaguely. "I think I have heard of him. But I forget these things. So many people come to Les Aliscamps. At my age one cannot remember every one."

A boy had joined us and relieved me of my camera.

"Madame means Saint Trophime," said he. "You remember Saint Trophime? Why, he built the Chapel of Saint-Honorat."

"Ay, ay!" said the old man, his eyes brightening. "To be sure, so he did!"

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

He had started off down the central avenue which runs through this vast necropolis. On either side a high straight wall of yellowing trees shut us off from the world, and the path was bounded by tombs, ancient stone coffins, nameless, desecrated, forgotten. Through the tree trunks I could see other graves, and yet others, stretching away like death itself into infinity. At the end of the narrowing golden line was the chapel, and half-way down we passed another, with a ruined arch beside it, once probably the grand entrance to the cemetery. I cannot describe the emotions which assailed me as I walked through this City of the Dead,

“Mysterious, full of legends,
Full of chapels and tombs,
Hummocked with graves!”

As he hobbled along the old man stopped now and again to tap one of the coffins familiarly, as he told me some legend concerning it: that it was the sarcophagus of Constantine, the burial-place of les Porcelets, the story of whose astounding birth he repeated with variations. I heard of Charlemagne coming to Arles and enlarging and beautifying the cemetery. There were thirty chapels in it at one time, and it was here that the Emperor Constantine first saw that miraculous standard the Labarum, on which was represented the cross and initials of Our Lord. We went



THE CHAPEL OF ST. HONORAT, LES ALISCAMPS.

SAINT TROPHIMUS

and visited the skeleton of a young girl still lying in the remains of her coffin; and finally found ourselves at the door of the Chapel of Saint-Honorat, or the Chapel of the Virgin as it really is—having been dedicated to the Mother of God, who was, according to legend, still living at the time of its consecration. Its consecration! That is the great story of Les Aliscamps. It was in the crypt below the altar that the old man told it. It is a strange damp place, like a small swimming-bath, into which you descend by steps. Here it was that Trophimus used to baptize his converts. Not feeling tempted to drink the water the boy offered me, we sat down on the steps, and listened to the legend.

The day for the consecration had arrived, but the Bishops who had been invited did not appear, and Trophimus himself was too humble to perform the Office. Falling upon his knees, he appealed to Heaven for help. And it was his Master Himself who answered the prayer, and, descending visibly, hallowed this graveyard. And you know that the story is true, for on the spot where he knelt there may still be seen the imprint of his knees.

So Les Aliscamps became Christian, and every one was eager to be buried there. The manner of conveying bodies from higher up the river was simple. They are said to have been placed in casks, with the burial fees laid at their feet,

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

and committed to the stream. The current flowed straight to the cemetery; but if, by chance, they stopped short, it was the sacred duty of any one finding them to set them off once more on their funeral progress. According to the amount of the fee enclosed, the monks of Saint-Victor, who were in charge of Les Aliscamps, buried them nearer to, or farther from, the sacred chapel.

A short distance out of Arles are the magnificent ruins of the Monastery of Mont-Majour. This Palace of the Monks, as it was called, grew up over the tiny cell where Trophimus lived and taught. I wish you could see it as I did that afternoon,—the little cave hollowed out of the rock, with the rude outline of a chair, and the hole in the wall, through which it is said the disciples made their confession. The buildings which now close it in hang like martins' nests, plastered on to the side of the low cliff; and you descend by a flight of clambering steps, till you find yourself at the entrance to a tiny chapel of the seventh or eighth century. Behind the altar opens the cell of which I have spoken. And if ever a place is filled with memories this tiny cavern is, memories of the good Bishop who founded the Church of Arles. I ought to know, for I sat there some time all by myself, and thought of him as I looked out of his window over the glowing valley. I had



THE ORATORY OF SAINT TROPHIMUS, MONT-MAJOUR.

THE ABBEY OF MONT-MAJOUR

heard a sceptical theory that the Saint of Arles was a later Trophimus of the third century. But there, in the little cell where he so often taught the gospel to the poor people of Arles, who at risk of their lives came to hear him, I learned the truth.

He was Trophimus the Ephesian, the disciple of Saint Paul himself—never doubt it. When he recovered from that illness of his at Miletus, he came with a little band of Greek converts, and settled here, in this cell, beside the Rhone. And though the Cathedral of Arles is magnificent, though the cloisters drive one wild with their beauty, though the Roman antiquities and the great Provençal Museum of Mistral, and all the other wonders, dazzle and delight you, it is this little grotto which is the heart of Arles, just as the Rocher des Doms is the centre of Avignon, and the crypt of Saint Martha the cradle of Tarascon.

We left Arles next day, to my great regret. Indeed, I felt almost as much sorrow in quitting Provence as Herakles when he left Galathea sleeping in the moonlight.

After crossing the Rhone, we entered for awhile upon La Tête de la Camargue—a strange sandy waste, sparsely planted with patches of reddening vines. The road was still bordered with bamboos, but they were low-growing, and among them dragonflies flashed and sparkled

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

in the sun. I never saw so many dragonflies. They zigzagged the air like tiny streaks of lightning. . . . Now and then we passed a solitary white-walled cottage, fenced with the inevitable bamboo. But for the most part it is a grey-green desert, fading into a grey-purple horizon, roofed by a grey-blue dome of sky, where vast grey clouds hang like a heavy canopy.

This Camargue is the place where one can best study the life-work of the Rhone. Here we find the indefatigable river still labouring on, trying to extend the borders of his country out into the Gulf of Lyons. As flat as a lake is the land, and marshy here and there, with great brown pools of water, stagnant among the feathery grasses.

After a few miles we reach the little town of Saint-Gilles lying on a slight elevation. Here we stopped to visit the magnificent church, almost a rival of the Cathedral of Arles, and found a new Greek hero awaiting us—one Gilles, who for the love of God, and with that intense craving for solitude which characterised many of the early Christians, had abandoned his rich estates, and found his way over sea to Marseilles. Thence, like his far-away ancestors, he ascended the Rhone to Arles. Saint Césaire, who was then Bishop of Arles, had welcomed him with effusion; but his miracles made such a sensation that the

SAINT-GILLES—NÎMES

young man found himself altogether too popular, and escaped into the desert. Even here his fame pursued him, and it was not till he reached this remote hillock, lying in the midst of the wild marshy region I have just described, that he found that perfect solitude for which his soul craved. Here, in a cave, he lived upon cresses, and the milk of a doe with which a timely Providence supplied him. And here he was found by a certain King of Montpellier, while out hunting in the Camargue. So presently an abbey arose on the hill, of which Gilles was the first abbot. And when he died, a great and magnificent church rose over his tomb, of which the present building is the direct successor.

Nîmes, we have reached Nîmes, and I am wondering what I am to say about it. In my notebook I find: "Nîmes, a handsome modern town, built round half a dozen Roman antiquities, which would be extremely fine were they not so evidently regarded as decoys for visitors." But that is not fair. In looking back, I feel sure the mosquitoes must have given me a touch of malaria or I should never have spoken so disrespectfully of one of the most renowned and admired cities of France. The antiquities, in truth, are magnificent, though the Arena always makes me shudder, because of the horrible bull-fights which are held there. The Maison-Carrée,

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

the old Roman temple which stands in what was once the Forum, is alone worth coming all the way from Paris to see.

But I think the baths are the most fascinating of all the Roman remains. You will find them in the Jardin de la Fontaine, the little stone chambers lying round a deep sunk pool. The water still laps the stones in front of the empty doorways, and in the midst of the lake rises an island where, no doubt, the Roman ladies lay under silken coverlets sunning themselves after their bath. Close by is the temple of Nemausus, which was probably neither more nor less than the Casino. And around are the gardens, no doubt much as they were nineteen hundred years ago. As we stood looking down into the pool, we could fancy we saw the fair creatures disporting themselves in the water; could hear their voices laughing and chattering. The Casino once more buzzed with life, and La Tour Magne, the old mausoleum on the height above, looked down upon it as it has done for so many centuries since. It was all so romantic, so wonderful, that I almost forgave Nîmes its straight, regular streets of handsome shops, its electric trams and palatial hotels.

I have heard, I do not know with what truth, that Nîmes remained pagan till the year 912 A.D. Two saints—Saint Honest and Saint Baudile—had been martyred here before that date, but

NÎMES

their mission seems to have produced little or no effect. As far as my information goes, it was not until the tenth century that Christianity really obtained a footing in the city. And even to-day, there is a pagan atmosphere about the old town of "Nemausus." The Cathedral seemed, I thought, to have a melancholy, forsaken air. It is dedicated to a saint named Castor, but no one could tell me anything about him, and for some time I could not even find his statue. Indeed, I should think Christianity still has a hard battle to fight in Nîmes. The real worshipping-place seems to be, not the Cathedral of Saint Castor, but the Arena, and the hour of service three o'clock on Sunday afternoon.

A handsome city? Yes, wonderfully handsome, but it is the beauty of brute force, rather than the delicate and spiritual charm one finds at Arles or Tarascon. I brought away no stories from Nîmes, no legends of saints, scarcely any memories, save of mosquitoes and bull-fights. These people have not their Martha, their Trophimus, their Gilles. They did not even begin like Arles with a love-story. They had no Herakles and Galathea. For some reason the hero, when making his way into Provence, avoided Nîmes, just as most of the missionaries of later times seem to have avoided it. Pagan it was, and pagan it remained—"Nemausus, an important town of Gallia Narbonensis, the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

capital of the Arecomici and a Roman colony, situated west of the Rhone, on the high road from Italy to Spain," as Dr. Smith says in his *Smaller Classical Dictionary*. It is true that somewhere in the shadowy past hovers the pale phantom of the Greek Nemausus. But when you come to study him, he is not even the hero of a legend or a song. Ah, that is what one misses at Nîmes—the legends and the songs! However, go and see it for yourself. It is a splendid town, with its Maison-Carrée, its baths, its temple, its Pont-du-Gard. And as for the Arena—well, you may not be there on a Sunday!

CHAPTER XIV

Montpellier—Béziers—Persecution of the Albigenses—Carcassonne
— Story of Roger Trencavel and the siege of Carcassonne.

A WET morning! The trees in the Place de la Couronne opposite, green and dripping with moisture, and poor Alphonse Daudet, as he sits looking mournfully down into the little moss-grown fountain, has a crystal drop at the end of his bronze nose.

“If it continues to rain, Madame will not start?” says the landlord complacently.

“But certainly, Madame is not made of sugar.” At which he smiles a sickly smile, and off we go.

Miles upon miles of wet vineyards, and, toiling their way along, waggons loaded with great casks, the handsome teams of mules harnessed with great horned collars, and long scarlet tassels swinging at their sides. We had been running for some time, when, suddenly, for no apparent reason, we stopped. The rain was pouring, no village was in sight, but beside the road a couple of low thatched hovels. The sight of a motor in distress is always attractive to the peasant, and we were soon the centre of a tiny crowd.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

"What is it now?" I cried impatiently; for it was cold sitting there in the rain, watching the two men staring blankly at each other.

"We've run out of petrol. It's the first time," apologetically.

It was just as awkward as if it had been the hundredth. What were we to do?

"How far are we from Lunel?" I asked of a man who was looking on.

"About ten kilometres."

Good Heavens! But the man had grasped the situation.

"She wants a drink?" he demanded, with a laugh, pointing to the automobile. I nodded eagerly.

"Monsieur at the Château will assuredly let you have some," said he. "They have plenty, for I saw it go past yesterday."

It was a wet walk up to the Château, but we got our petrol.

"Your patron is a regular Good Samaritan," said I to the bailiff. He had actually refused to let us pay for the essence.

"The same trouble may overtake us any day," he answered carelessly. "We motorists help one another, is it not so?"

It was true, and yet I felt very grateful as I saw the life-giving fluid poured into the funnel, and felt the car glide off once more in the direction of Montpellier.

MONTPELLIER

The old town was not looking its best. The streets were muddy and wet, the sky heavy and lowering, and the hotel, at which we stopped for lunch, was certainly not of the first order. But I am glad we went to Montpellier. It is a place of many memories. There are the two sisters who owned the estate when, as yet, Montpellier was but two poor villages separated by a woody dell called Le Val Fère, because of the wild beasts which infested it. That was very long ago. And there is the romantic story of the Seigneur Guilhem of Montpellier, who married the daughter of the Emperor of Constantinople. She had been promised to the King of Aragon, but was so long making up her mind to start for Spain that her fiancé grew tired of waiting; and when she arrived, driven by storm on to the shore near Montpellier, she learned that the King had already taken another wife. It was an embarrassing situation for the fair Eudoxie, and Guilhem, the lord of Montpellier, being a bachelor, she condescended to marry him, on condition that their first child should inherit Montpellier. Much to Guilhem's disgust, it was a girl, and shortly afterwards he repudiated Eudoxie for a beautiful Spaniard named Agnès. She proved the typical stepmother of the fairy tales, and poor little Marie, the daughter of Eudoxie, had a hard time. At twelve, she was married to the elderly Count of Marseilles; and on

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

his death, to a frightful old Bluebeard, Bernard de Comminges. Finally she herself wedded a King of Aragón, but whether it was the son of her mother's faithless lover, I do not know. At her father's death, she and her husband took possession of Montpellier, and their descendants ruled the city until it was united to France.

From the earliest times, Montpellier was noted for the mildness and excellence of its laws. While the people of other towns were being flayed alive, or broken on the wheel, for certain crimes, the citizens of this favoured town were merely whipped through the streets or deprived of their goods. So the inhabitants multiplied exceedingly, for every one wished to live under so benevolent a rule. Many Jews were there, and Easterns of all kinds. A great university arose at an early date, where it was fashionable to study; and connected with it was one of the most famous medical schools of the Middle Ages. I believe it still flourishes. At all events, in the eighteenth century it was celebrated, for we find Jean Jacques Rousseau coming to consult the renowned Dr. Fizes.

It was to Montpellier, too, that poor Young the traveller brought his daughter Narcissus. But even the sun of the South could not save her; and such was the animosity of the Roman Church against Protestants, that her heart-broken father was obliged himself to dig her grave, at night, in the corner of one of the public gardens.

BEZIERS

Perhaps, however, Montpellier is best remembered for the commotion excited by Les Enfants de Dieu, a Protestant sect which arose in 1559. Persecutions only aroused the zeal of these people, and they continued to flourish and increase, till, in the reign of Louis XIV., those horrible executions took place which soiled the last years of the King.

Our journey from Montpellier to Béziers is but a vague memory of rain and mud. Once, on crossing a little hill (if anything can be called a hill in that flat region), I remember seeing a broad sheet of salt water, which must have been the Etang de Thau, on the farther side of which lies Cette. I had often wondered what this coast, at the bend of France and Spain, must be like. Well, it is vineyards, all vineyards, intersected by the most appalling roads, which, just then, what with the rain and heavy vintage waggons, were at their worst. Nothing but a traction engine could have passed them in safety. We floundered, bumped, and splashed on, however, till a tyre went with a bang, and there we sat among the puddles while the Stepney was fitted. Fortunately at Béziers we found an English-speaking mechanic, so that Jones was able to relieve his mind on the subject of the roads, otherwise I think he too would have burst—with indignation!

We found several other things at Béziers,

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

notably an excellent hotel, lying quietly at the end of a pleasant open space called the Place de la Citadelle, where, I suppose, the Castle once stood. By the time we had had tea, the rain had ceased, and we went for a walk round the town, stopping at the Cathedral of Saint Nazaire, and an old church of which I have forgotten the name, where was a curious representation of the landing of the Saints at Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. Outside the door an old woman had a little stall, and while I looked over her poor stock of books and post-cards, she told me about the Procession of the Camel, which used to be held at Béziers on the Day of Ascension. It commemorated the coming of the first Christian missionary, who was reported to have arrived riding on a camel.

On the way home we found a bookshop, where I came across a very dramatic account of the celebrated Raymond Roger Trencavel, Vicomte de Béziers. I sat up reading it till far into the night, and when at last I fell asleep in my high bed, kept waking, fancying I heard sounds of fighting in the *place* below. And it would have been no wonder to have found the place haunted. These towns of Languedoc were, in the thirteenth century, the special centres of the Albigenses. Béziers was full of them, and the Vicomte Trencavel, if not a Protestant himself, at all events was not disposed to hand over the

PERSECUTION OF THE ALBIGENSES

thousands of innocent men and women and children who had committed themselves to his protection. That arch-hypocrite Simon de Montfort, father, by the way, of the Simon de Montfort of English fame, had been appointed leader of a crusade against them, with the understanding that all lands taken during the war should be his. It was on the 22nd of July that the great host appeared before Béziers.

“I implore you to yield!” cried the Bishop, Reginald de Montperoux. “You can never stand against the full force of the Church. Give up these heretics who have forced themselves upon you.”

“Every man of us will perish before doing such a deed,” cried the consuls. “Are they not Christians even as we are, these Albigenses?”

But alas for Béziers! They were brave, these citizens, but they were also rash. A sortie, a mad heroic charge right up to the lines of the enemy, and they were routed, the town taken.

“Kill them all!” cries the savage Armand de Cîteaux, “and leave God to recognise His own!”

Simon de Montfort was nothing loth. Encouraged by Dominic of Castille, better known as Saint Dominic, the founder of the Inquisition, he ordered the wholesale slaughter of the inhabitants. No one knows to this day how many perished. Some say 20,000, others 10,000; the number was probably not less than 40,000, and of these the greater part were helpless women,

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

children, and old people. They were cut down without mercy, slaughtered at a foot of the very altars where they had taken refuge, seven thousand being murdered in one church alone—that of Sainte Madeleine.

That is our first chapter of the story of the Albigenes. We shall come to the second when we reach Carcassonne, where the hero Trencavel and his wife were staying at the time.

It was among the clouds and darkness of those frightful days that I had fallen asleep; I woke in the midst of a radiant morning, the sky as blue as a cornflower, and the trees round the fountain below, glittering with fairy diamonds. Our road that day still led us through vineyards, where gay bands of peasants were at work.

“Can you sell me some grapes?” I asked, after photographing one of these groups.

“No, they were all sold long ago,” replied one of the men, thinking, I suppose, we were the agents of a winemaker. “But you can eat some if you like,” he added.

“Give me a franc’s worth,” and next moment the laughing girls were loading the car with great purple clusters.

“Stop! Stop!” cried my husband. “I don’t want to buy the vineyard!”

“Why, that’s nothing,” the man cried; “they’re not worth two sous.”

CARCASSONNE

However, they were worth more than that to us, that hot afternoon, and for some miles our passage could have been traced by the track of skins and stalks we left behind us.

Oh, but the roads! I suppose if we had been better acquainted with the district we should not have passed through Homps. As it was, we nearly stuck there for the rest of our lives. It was like driving through a very soft farmyard which, below the slush and mire, is paved with broken tombstones. Words simply failed our chauffeur, poor man. Then we lost ourselves, and where we should have landed I know not, save for a kindly French gentleman, who insisted on sending his own chauffeur two or three miles to set us on the right road.

An hour later, on crossing a band of low hills, we saw before us a broad valley, and rising from the valley, "a City of Enchanters, built by Fairy Kings!" Purple it was just then, and I found later that these walls and turrets are as variable as the sky itself. Indeed, one of the greatest charms of Carcassonne is its extraordinary diversity of colour. I never tired of studying it. Sometimes in the morning it would gleam pale as an opal against the turquoise sky. An hour later, climbing the hill toward it, the fortifications would flash down as though they were cast in bronze. And in the evening—ah! in the evening, when the last dahlia tints are dying in the west,

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

and all the glow of the sunset seems to have gathered in this old citadel of the Visigoths, then indeed it is like the Holy City itself, with its jewelled foundations.

We stopped in the lower town, which has replaced the ancient faubourg, at the Hôtel Bonnet, a charming inn, with baths of every description, and delightful bedrooms with little tiled dressing-rooms, and great dark cupboards where we changed our camera plates. Jones, whose one anxiety on arriving at a new hotel, is to ascertain whether he shall find an "'ose," was here quite happy, for there was not only an unlimited supply of water, but a woman to help him clean the automobile. As I sat at dinner, I could hear the swishing.

Monsieur Bonnet, or he who passed as such—for no doubt the original Bonnet has long since made his fortune and retired, was a young man with a pale face and a black beard. Nothing could exceed the politeness of "Monsieur Bonnet"; he was never tired of bowing to me. If I came in a dozen times in the morning there he was, ready with his little reverences, which he kept up till I passed out of sight at the bend of the staircase. "Madame Bonnet," too! How she enjoyed doing up my blouse. It was so "chic." My scarf, my brooch, my hair—all were "ravissants" to "Madame Bonnet." I think there must have been a little Bonnet somewhere, but I never saw



LA PETITE CÔTE DE LA CITÉ, CARCASSONNE.

THE STORY OF ROGER TRENCAVEL

it. I heard a suggestive squeal once or twice, but it was instantly and discreetly hushed.

After all, we did not see much of the Hôtel Bonnet. All our time we spent trying to fix in our memory the elusive marvels of La Cité. Across the bridge and up the hill we would go and lose ourselves among the labyrinths of walls and towers, till we found ourselves in front of the old Castle, on the spot where once grew the great elm tree, beneath which the Seigneurs of old used to hold their councils. The fortress itself is now used as a barrack ; one cannot enter and see the rooms where the hero Roger Trencavel, Vicomte de Béziers, lived with his young wife, Agnès of Montpellier. From these high towers he looked down on the gathering host of the Crusaders, brought against him by Dominic and Simon de Montfort. Over the hills he could see them coming, the long line of soldiers, all dressed like pilgrims in gown and staff, with a cross on the breast as a sign of the holy mission on which they were engaged. Still mad with the blood they had tasted at Béziers, they crowded like wolves round the doomed city ; and within, the brave Viscount watched and waited, fearing what the end must be, for water was running short. Yet, even after his uncle and suzerain, the Count of Toulouse, and his brother-in-law, the King of Aragon, had joined the Crusaders, he still fought on. As we walked round those mighty walls

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

which guard the town, we could almost see the scene ourselves. The great camp of the Crusaders lying out in the valley, where, in the centre, are the pavilions of the Pope's Legates, Raoul and Pierre de Castelnau. Here, stalking close under the wall, is the gigantic form of Simon de Montfort, High Baron of the North, who, it is well known, will become Lord of Carcassonne, when once its lawful master is dispossessed. Everywhere are the soldiers of the Duke of Burgundy, the Count of Nevers, and the other lords, who, frightened by the threats of Pope Innocent III., have joined this crusade for the extermination of the Albigenes.

La Cité itself is full of these innocent heretics. From behind the walls they listen with terrified faces to the noise of the catapults, the cries of the besiegers as the boiling oil and stones fall upon them, the shouts of the archers in the great towers, when, through the loopholes, they see that their arrows have struck down some specially obnoxious captain. And all the while Roger Trencavel, lord of the city, hastens from post to post, commanding, directing, encouraging, entreating, never daring to take a moment's rest, never thinking of himself, but of the thousands of helpless souls, who, as he said, "God had confided to his charge when He made him suzerain of these countries." Once to the gate, preceded by a white flag, comes his wife's brother, Peter of Aragon, bearing a

THE SIEGE OF CARCASSONNE

message from the Legates, an offer to raise the siege. Roger listens with growing fury as the insulting proposition is made by his reluctant relative.

“ You may tell these priests,” he bursts forth at last, “ that I will let them tear the hair from my chin and my head, the nails from my feet and hands, the teeth from my mouth, my eyes from their sockets, that I will be skinned alive or burned at the stake, before I will deliver up to these butchers one of my people, be he serf, heretic, or felon !” For the offer was, safe conduct for himself and twelve of his men, the rest of the town to be given over to the tender mercies of the Inquisition. And Roger had just learned the fate of Béziers !

A French author, Frederic Soulié, has given an account of the scene, which, whether historical or not in detail, is true enough in outline and colour.

“ Speaking thus furiously, he crossed the courtyard of the Castle and the drawbridge, and arrived at the Place of the Elm Tree, where all the inhabitants who were not guarding the walls, had gathered.

“ ‘ Do you know,’ cried Roger, ‘ what the Legates of that demon Innocent III. have dared to offer me, your sovereign and defender ? That I should leave the city, I, the thirteenth, and give the rest of you over to their mercy.’

“ ‘ Never, never !’ cried the knights and most of the townsmen.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

“ ‘And what would this mercy be?’ asked a few serfs and women.

“ ‘The mercy our brothers of Béziers have obtained,’ cried Roger, pale and trembling with rage, so that he could scarcely find breath to utter the words, ‘the butchery of all the men to the last, of all the women to the last, of the old people, the children, Catholics, Protestants, laymen and clerics. For at Béziers, our city of Béziers, in Béziers the rich, the noble sister of Carcassonne, not a foot is left above the soil to come and bring us the news, not a hand remains to sound the alarm. Dead! Dead! to the very last! That is the mercy of the Legates!’ ”

So Carcassonne held out a few days longer. It is said that a subterranean passage led from the foot of one of the towers to the river Aude, and that by this means a little water was brought to the thirsty inhabitants. Then one day another message was brought to Roger. Would he come out and discuss terms with the Legates? They gave him their word of honour he should be safe; they even sent the Count of Nevers to fetch him. So, thinking no evil, the young hero delivered himself over to this pack of wolves. Loaded with chains, he was cast into the darkest of one of his own towers, and there mysteriously perished, some say of dysentery brought on by neglect, others that he was poisoned. But he had saved his people. When the enemy



A QUIET CORNER—LA CITÉ, CARCASSONNE.

CARCASSONNE

entered the town they found it still and empty. Not a soul was to be seen. Catholics and Protestants had vanished as by magic, escaping by that subterranean passage the Seigneur himself had told them to use as a last resource.

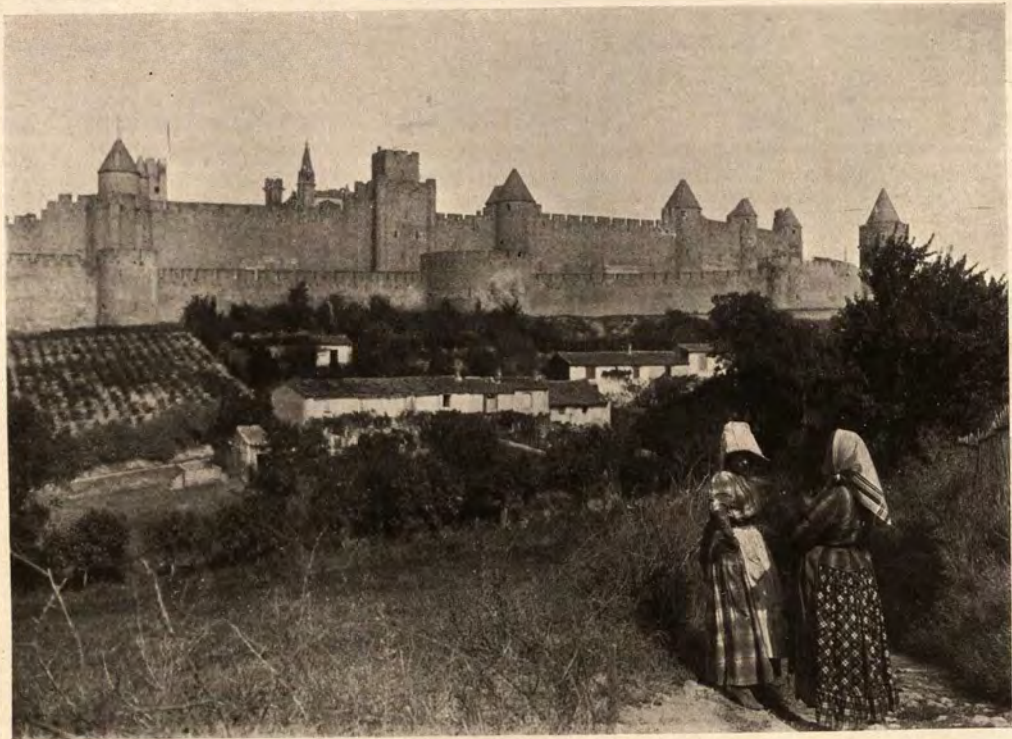
That is the story of Carcassonne, the story we dream about as we study its fortifications, either Visigoth, Frank, or Viollet-le-Duc. The guardian, as he shows us round, will tell us of the first Count Oliba, and of Raymond who married Garsinde Vicomtesse de Béziers, thus bringing the town under one lordship. He will point to one of the great towers, and tell us how, in Saracen days, when Charlemagne was besieging the city, and finding himself powerless against those great walls, God Himself showed His might, causing this tower to bow before the Christian King, so that he was able to enter by the breach and dispossess the Infidels. You will be shown the bust of that fabulous lady, Dame Carcas, after whom, according to the people of Carcassonne, the city is named. You will notice how the towers of the great entrance, the Porte Narbonnaise, the *chef-d'œuvre* of the military architecture of the Middle Ages, are not round, but like the prow of a ship, thus rendering them almost invulnerable from the attack of the war-engines of the period. You will wander through the picturesque streets, and stand looking down the ancient well. Then you will visit the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

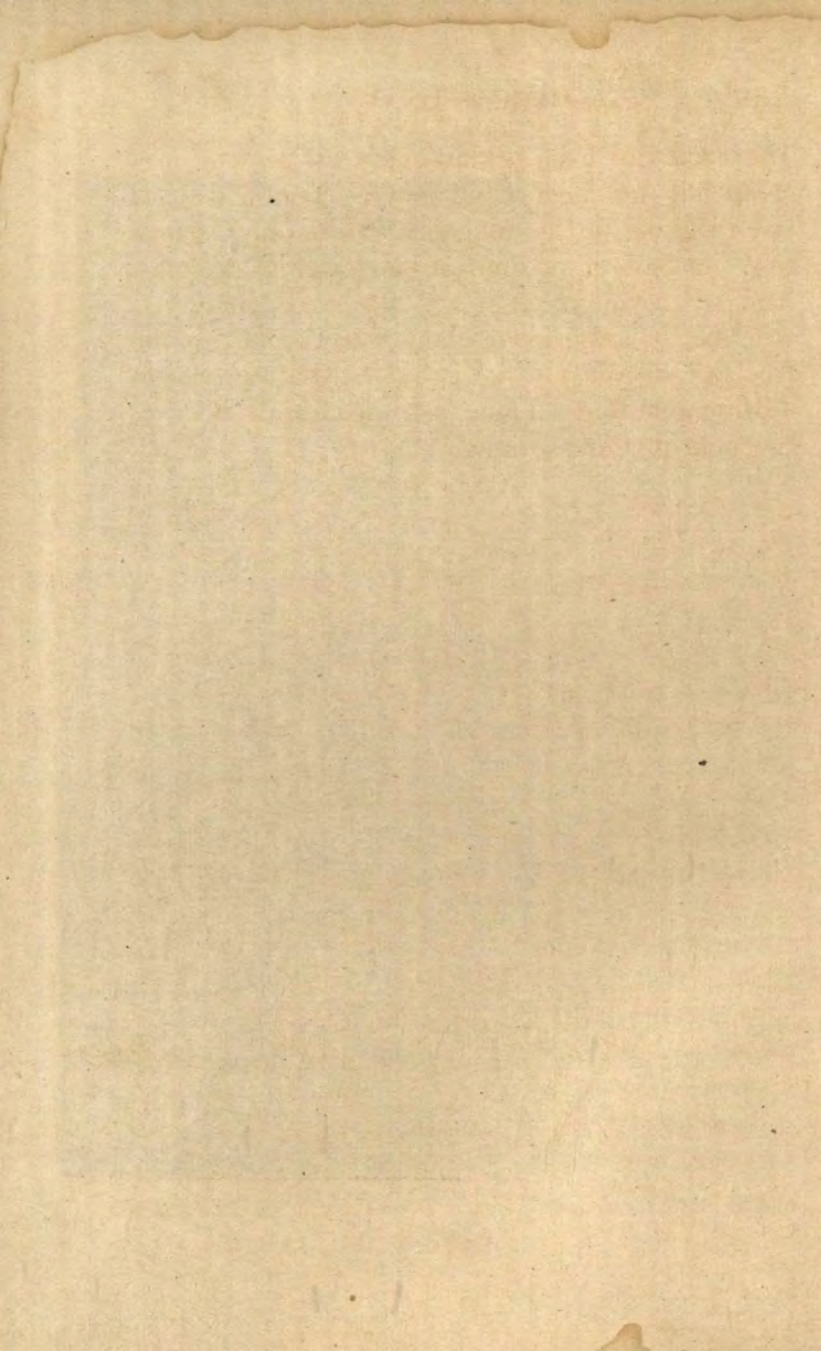
wonderful Church of Saint Nazaire—"le joyau de la Cité" as it is justly called, and in a side chapel be shown the Pierre du Siège, supposed by Viollet-le-Duc to be the original tomb of Simon de Montfort, who was brought here, by his son, in 1218 to be buried.

But all the time you will be thinking about Roger Trencavel, and of what happened to his young wife Agnès of Montpellier and his little son. Probably the guide will not know. He has been filled up to the brim with architectural details, which come pouring out as soon as your franc turns the tap. But in one of the old houses you may find, as I did, some white-capped grandmother, whose brown, wrinkled face betrays the gipsy origin of many of these inhabitants of Carcassonne. As she knits, or combs the hair of her youngest grandchild, she will tell you of the long lingering death of the family of Trencavel, and how Agnès, terrified at her helpless solitude, sold the estates of her son to the King of France, Louis VIII., after which Carcassonne sank more or less into oblivion, till it was discovered in modern times by the architect and the antiquarian.

I have come to the end of my chapter, and I feel I have told you nothing. How can one speak of this marvel in a few pages? Go and see it! Wander round the walls at night when the moon comes peeping round the Tower of the Inquisition. You will see ghosts enough, I warrant you.



LA CITÉ, CARCASSONNE.



CARCASSONNE

They will rise from behind every battlement, and creep out from every doorway. You will hear them sighing in the dungeons of the old Visigoth tower of Sauson, or the leaning tower of Vieulas. And when you reach the Castle itself, there you will see, looking down upon you, the fair brave face and steadfast eyes of that hero of the South—Raymond Roger Trencavel, Vicomte de Béziers, Seigneur de Carcassonne.

CHAPTER XV

Alet—Quillan—The story of the making of the road up the Gorge of Pierre-Lys—The Castle of Foix—Gaston Phœbus.

AN autumn morning, the first we have noticed in this southern land, in spite of its being the 7th of October. The vineyards are sparkling with dew, and the river, though glittering in the sunshine, is thoughtful in the shade. The sky is blue, pale blue, *délavé*; and the mountains, which bound the valley to the south, of lessening shades of purple, their summits shrouded in soft woolly clouds, so that it is difficult to say where earth ends and heaven begins.

A long, long avenue of trees, down which moves a never-ending procession of vintage waggons, drawn by slow-pacing oxen, "their eyes still full of the visions of the night." And here is Limoux, with memories of Simon de Montfort again. I don't know whether the people of Limoux thought we had sinister designs when we inquired the road to Quillan; they certainly did their best to send us out of our way. But we persisted in taking our course straight up the valley, and what a charming road it was! It led into the heart of

steep and rocky mountains, covered for the most part with oak, ilex, and olive. Here and there were patches of vineyard, the leaves of such varied shades that, among the rocks and trees, they looked like gorgeous flower-beds. At our side flowed the faithful Aude, younger and more playful as we neared the mountains. Following its banks, we presently came upon Alet, most exquisite of little towns, for I would not for the world insult such an ancient place by calling it a village. I find that the old books even describe it as a city, the city of Alectum, or, as one should say, Electus, the chosen. From very early times there was a Benedictine abbey here; its ruins may still be seen. The Romans, too, had a bathing establishment at Alet; the waters are still in great repute. But the chief interest centres round the old Cathedral of Saint Pierre.

I am ashamed to say we knew nothing whatever of Alet or its Cathedral; and were passing through on our road to Quillan, when the sight of a ruined apse on our right stopped us.

"How wonderful!" I exclaimed, noticing the Roman capitals and arches. "What can it be?"

A pleasant-faced priest was passing at the moment. "May I show it you?" said he, "our old Cathedral is still worth a visit."

So we followed him, past the more modern church, into the ancient graveyard, where we found ourselves face to face with all that is left

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

of the Cathedral of Alet. And while we wandered about, admiring the wonders of the sculpture, the priest told us how the ruined apse had formed part of a Roman temple to Diana, to whom the thick forests which covered the district were once dedicated: though, to be sure, that was not the first building on this spot, for the Druids had a sanctuary here, and a college for priests. There are still evidences of them in the names of some of the villages around, such as Veraza, and Redde, which means the "Serpent Runner," a Celtic divinity, *Æreda*. An altar dedicated to this god was found near the village of Siradan. Then, too, there is the great Menhir at Saint-Salvaire. So it is not surprising that some archæologists think that Saint-Pierre or its *emplacement* goes back to Gaulish times.

As we were leaving, the priest asked where we were bound, and on hearing that we intended to lunch at Quillan, told us to be sure and visit the Gorge of La Pierre-Lys.

"And ask some one at Quillan to tell you the story of the making of the road," he cried after us, as the automobile moved away.

The valley had widened out a little by the time we reached Quillan, yet the mountains stood around it like sentinels, ready to block the way of any trying to find a passage from the south. There is a delightful homely inn at Quillan, called, I think, the "Verdier," where we lunched together



THE GORGE OF PIERRE LYS.

with an old lady, who was much perturbed by "un courant d'air" of which no one could find the source. I asked her about the road of Pierre-Lys, but she only remembered that, whether you were going up, or whether you were going down, there was a dreadful draught, and I was to be sure and put up the hood and the wind-screen, or I should catch bronchitis.

It was Monsieur le Maire, who was filling in the intervals of business with a friendly game of dominoes with the landlord, who finally told me the story of Félix Armand, the Priest Roadmaker of Quillan. As we made our way afterwards up the magnificent defile of La Pierre-Lys, I thought of the bell-ringer's son, how he used to come and sit for long hours, gazing up the gorge, wondering how he should find the means of making that road, which was to bring health and prosperity into the wretched village of Saint-Martin-en-Lys, lying hidden in its depths. His Bishop finally drove him to it by naming him Curé of the inaccessible and forsaken parish.

"Well, my dear Curé," he said one day, when Armand had come to Alet on the occasion of an ecclesiastical conference, "and how are your new parishioners getting on?"

"Very badly, Monseigneur, and you know it. Saint-Martin is the most miserable parish in your diocese."

"Ah well, and what can one do to help them?"

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

“Give them a road, Monseigneur, a good road.”

“But, my dear Curé, I understand that such a road would be impracticable. In any case the cost would be enormous.”

“I will manage it, if any one will give me a few thousand francs,” cried the young priest, eagerly; “at all events I will begin it, and then others will finish.”

So from his pocket the Bishop took his purse. “I should like to help you in such a work,” he said; “come, hold out your hand.” A louis d’or, a second, a third, a fourth! “Well,” said the Bishop, “is that enough for the present?”

“Go on, Monseigneur, as you have begun,” and the gold kept dropping out.

Others helped the good Curé, for wherever he went he made his wants known—at Quillan, Axat, Limoux, at the doors of castles and monasteries he knocked, and wherever he asked, his zeal gained friends for his poor people of Saint-Martin. Even those who could not help with money he pressed into the service, and so, by little and little, the road grew. It was Monsieur le Curé himself who marked it out, hanging like a spider from the end of a rope over the awful precipices of the Pierre-Lys. After five years’ incessant toil the workmen reached the huge mass of rock which blocks the gorge near Belvianes. Alas and alas for the road! But even here the heroic priest was not discouraged. “It is just at the

THE PRIEST-ROADMAKER OF QUILLAN

time of difficulty that God helps us best!" he cried, and calling together all the population of Saint-Martin, young and old, he led them singing, the cross at their head, to Le Roc Maudet, called ever since, "Le Trou du Curé." In stirring words, he explained how the very life of themselves and their children depended on this road being finished, then, himself seizing a pick, set vigorously to work. After that it was not long before the rock was conquered, and "the May sunshine of 1781 streamed through into a gorge which had remained closed to it since the foundation of the world."

But it was still many years before the road was finished. In 1793 the good priest was driven from his home by the Revolution, and followed his Bishop to Spain. But his exile was a pain and grief to him; and when, a year or so later, one of his favourite workmen brought a letter, covered with signatures and the humble crosses of those who could not write, begging him to return, he set off gladly and thankfully to take up his interrupted labour. All through the days of the Directoire he remained at Saint-Martin. Even the Revolutionary authorities were in league with his flock, giving them timely notice when they were obliged to pay one of their inquisitorial visits; so that the proscribed but beloved outcast had plenty of time to escape to a grotto, high among the rocks opposite the old monastery.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

There we may be sure he was well looked after, and on Sunday his parishioners would steal forth in little groups of two and three, and find their way to the ruined chapel of Saint-Michel, which lay close by his hiding-place. And here on an altar built out of fallen stones, the Curé would say Mass, and administer the Sacrament, after the manner of the early Fathers of the Christian Church.

When the Terror was over, he came out of his hiding-place, and quietly set to work once more at his road. There are many stories told of his bravery. For instance, one day a mine had been laid to blow up a great rock which impeded the passage. Just as the explosion was expected, a muleteer came riding round the corner. The workmen's shouts only startled him, and he sat motionless, wondering what was the matter. There was a moment's horrified pause, when out sprang the priest, and next moment the slow match, just at its last inch, was extinguished beneath his iron heel.

And when all was nearly complete, Bonaparte heard of the affair. Nothing could have touched the heart of the great Maker of Roads like the work of this humble priest. "A pity the man should be a priest," he exclaimed. "I would have made him a General of my Army."

So the good Curé found himself famous, and with means enough to complete his gigantic task.

THE STORY OF THE ROAD

And when it was done, when the Bishop of Carcassonne pressed him to take his place as one of the Canons of his Cathedral, for all his reward, the priest, no longer young, begged to be left to die in the midst of his flock. "For indeed, Monseigneur," he added, with fatherly pride, "I would not change my little parish for your great bishopric."

And there he lies in the humble graveyard of Saint-Martin-du-Lys, with the Legion of Honour on his breast. And though no statue has been raised to him, though there are very few people who have even heard of him, his story lives in the prosperity and health of the beautiful little town, for which he gave his life; and who could have a more glorious monument than the road up the gorge of La Pierre-Lys?

I fear I have told this story at some length, but the stupendous sight of the gorge overwhelmed me with admiration for a man who could achieve, almost unaided, such a colossal task. The rocks nearly meet overhead, and the road has to wind in and out among them, twisting and turning like a serpent. Now it burrows beneath the cliff, now tunnels through its very heart. And all the time the Aude murmurs and chatters at its side, for it lies in the very depths of the canyon.

From Quillan to Foix the way is quite wonder-

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

ful, but as different as can be from that of La Pierre-Lys. It climbs, climbs, climbs, till the blue mountains lie behind, and the black mountains lie in front, and one feels as though one were looking down over a great relief map of the district. So grey it is, too, even the grass parched and colourless. We are on an upland plateau, a place of pasturage and wide sweeping views. But still to the south, high and formidable as ever, rise the mountains, the outer battlements of that eternal barrier which nature has raised between France and Spain. . . . Now, even the pastures narrow down, fresh summits close us in on every side. How shall we find our way among them? But the car knows, apparently, for she flies gaily on, threading her way among the rocks, till, presently, we find ourselves face to face with high blue peaks, to whose sides the fleecy clouds are clinging, and below them is Belesta, where the road begins to fall. To me these mountain roads suggest a parable of human life. As long as they are difficult and steep, their surface is as good as good can be. But once they settle down on the level, they lose it, and become a mere squashy quagmire, like this track leading to Lavlanet.

But what a pretty sight the market is, with the sheep and the huge creamy oxen, their heads crowned with curly lamb-skins!

Tall stalwart mountain farmers walk beside

THE CASTLE OF FOIX

them, laughing and talking with dark handsome girls in short, bright-coloured skirts, with gay handkerchiefs knotted round their throats.

It must have been soon after this that we entered a long avenue, and saw, crowning a huge black rock far away on our left, the Castle of Foix.

Ever since, as a little girl, my father used to tell me stories of the Comte de Foix, I had longed to see this castle. Again and again I had pictured it, and, strangely enough, the reality differed little from my fancy. It is just the sort of castle a child would draw, with its three towers rising from the sudden rock, which dominates the town and valley like some giant's fortress. There it stands, the old cradle of the race, which played so romantic a part in the fourteenth century.

It was quite hopeless to think of sleep that night, without making some attempt to explore the fortress; so, as there was still an hour before dinner, we crossed the bridge and found our way up through the narrow streets of the town, to the foot of the Rocher de Foix. By the time we had passed the Palais de Justice—once the site of that portion of the Castle where the Counts dwelt, in their rare intervals of peace, the sun had set, and it was in the gathering twilight that we climbed the rock and entered

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

the fortifications. As we mounted the last rock-hewn steps, I knew that we were nearing the entrance, and half expected to be challenged by the guard. Instead, the gate was opened by a little girl.

"Is it too late to see the Castle?" I asked.

She looked shyly at me. "I do not know," said she. "Grandfather! Grandfather!"

At her call there came out of a cottage which had replaced the gatehouse of former days, a very old man. He was toothless as a baby, and as he moved I heard his joints creaking. Positively, he looked so old, that one almost wondered whether he were not the original porter of Gaston Phœbus, risen from his grave to do the honours of his former home.

"Come, come!" said he, hurrying us forward. "There is still light enough to see the view from the Round Tower. You will not have seen anything finer in France, I warrant you."

We followed the tottering old creature across the courtyard, where the Sire d'Albret and his two brothers used to pace up and down, waiting for the ransom which was to set them at liberty, till we reached the end of the rock from which rises the great Round Tower, where are the guard-rooms with their enormous chimneys, and in the base of which is the condemned cell.

"See," said the old man eagerly, pointing downward from the loophole, "that is where

the scaffold was raised, just where the fair is held, over there, by the Promenade de Villote. It was admirably arranged. From his cell the prisoner could watch all the preparations!" and he rubbed his hands and laughed his cackling laugh.

"What about this door?" inquired my husband; "it seems to have been burned."

"A prisoner, Monsieur, Jacques Latour. Ha! ha! He did not like the view from the window. His bed was of straw; why not burn down the door, and in the confusion try to escape? But it was useless. He might have known that prisons are not opened that way."

All the way up the narrow staircase the old fellow mumbled on about the various battles which had raged round the base of the rock. And when we reached the top I thought we should never come down again; in defiance of all evidence, every dramatic episode in the history of the Counts of Foix had, according to him, taken place in or around that castle.

"Gaston Phœbus? Ah, it was he who built this great tower. You can see the arms of his mother Eleanor de Comminges in the vaulting. Born there? To be sure, where should a Comte de Foix be born but in the midst of his people. Ah, it was a sad day for Foix when the race came to an end."

"He was very rich, I have heard."

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

“Rich, Madame? I believe you. At the time of his death he had a million gold crowns in his coffers. And he knew how to use his riches too. Even King Charles himself had not such a court as the Count held at Marzères. Why, when the King arrived to visit him, on one occasion he was met by bands of nobles disguised as drovers, bringing herds of splendid sheep, oxen, and horses, all with silver bells round their necks; a present worth having, eh, Monsieur? When the King visited Montpellier they did not treat him in such a manner!”

“And where did the Count get his money?”

“Ah, that is it, Madame. Not from his peasants. They had nothing to complain of from him. Some say he was an alchemist, and knew the secret of making gold. Certainly he knew many things, the Count of Foix. He was a great musician, *par exemple*, and a writer, even a poet. But for myself, I do not think he made the gold. No, he took it from his enemies. See what a ransom the Comte d'Armagnac and the Comte de Comminges paid him.”

“There are curious stories about him,” said I. “I have heard that he had a familiar spirit who kept him informed of things which happened at a distance.”

The old man's head nodded up and down with delight.

“Ah, they talk of that even in England, do they?” he said, glancing round mysteriously into the shadowy corners of the room we were leaving—for we had quitted the Round Tower and were in the great square donjon keep. “It still comes at night. I often hear it, but I cannot understand what it says.”

This was quite interesting, forming, as it did, a thrilling sequel to Froissart’s well-known story. But when he went on to speak of the death of young Gaston, the Count’s only son, I felt bound to stop him.

“Froissart says that happened at Orthès,” I remarked. The old man looked at me.

“Froissart?” he repeated. “And who may he be? Which is likely to know best—I who live in the Castle and know every stone of it, or a man who, as likely as not, has never seen the place?”

“He thought he had it on good authority.”

“Authority? And what’s authority?” chimed in the old fellow indignantly. “I don’t tell you the story on authority, I tell you what I know—what every man in Foix knows. The young Lord Gaston died in the Castle here, as likely as not in this very room.”

Well, and I was willing enough to believe, so, as we stood in one of the dark chambers, he repeated the old story, perhaps one of the most pitiful stories in all history. It differed little

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

from the account given to Froissart by the knight Sir Espaign du Lyon. Both dwelt on the boy's anxiety to reconcile his father and mother.

"He couldn't bear to see them apart," said the old man, "for no doubt he loved them both."

Then once more I heard the tale of Gaston's visit to his uncle, the King of Navarre, and of the mysterious black powder which was given to him, and which was to bring the Count and his wife together; of the Count's suspicions, the poisoned dog, and finally of the boy's dying of grief and starvation, possibly here, as the guardian said, in the very room in which we stood.

"If you will come up to-morrow morning," said the old man, as we said good-bye at the gate, "I will tell you about Simon de Montfort coming to besiege the Castle. Ha, he could do nothing! And there was King Philip the Bold, who began to undermine it. That was the only time it was ever taken. The garrison thought the towers would fall and bury them alive, so they gave it up. Fools, as though any one could undermine the Rocher de Foix! But come to-morrow, Madame, and come early. There are stories enough to last all day."

I told him we were starting for Toulouse on the morrow.

"A pity!" he said, "a pity! It would take you a week to know Foix. But in these days

FOIX

of automobiles no one stops to see a place thoroughly."

Then, still talking, he opened the gate, and we found ourselves outside the Castle wall. We stumbled down the rock in the dusk, and made our way through the dimly lighted streets, across which the ghostly old houses were nodding at each other, till we reached the Church of Saint Volusian, the patron and martyr of Foix. It was dark and empty, but we were glad to rest for a few minutes and think over all we had heard. And as we sat there, out of the blackness grew many scenes which had taken place in this old church itself,—among them the gorgeous service when Gaston Phœbus and the Comte d'Armagnac, then young and handsome, made their peace and embraced each other in the presence of the Bishop, and of the other lords of Foix and Béarn.

CHAPTER XVI

Toulouse—Charles VI. at Toulouse—The Church of Saint Sernin—Legend of Saint Saturnin and the bull—The Cathedral—Cahors—The siege by Henry of Navarre—The Rock Shelters of Les Eyzies—Monsieur Hauser and his prehistoric finds.

FROM Limosis, son of Japhet, to General Soult and the Duke of Wellington is a long jump, and covers a considerable period of history. And that is what we have to study if we wish to know anything of Toulouse. For this *Tolosa Tecto Sagum*, as the Romans called it, or the *Country of the People in the Long Cloaks*, claims to be the most ancient town in France, perhaps in Europe—some say older than the Eternal City itself. However, I do not think we need begin with Limosis, son of Japhet. He and the long line of Kings who followed him are so mythical, that one almost apologises for mentioning them. As to the Tecto Sages—their conquerors soon reduced them to the well-ordered uniformity of the other Roman colonies; so that they gave up the Druid religion, and adopted Jupiter and Minerva as the gods of their city.

And so we come to the days when Saint

CHARLES VI. AT TOULOUSE

Saturnin brought Christianity to Toulouse. He, too, lived very long ago; many things have happened since his time. The old city on the Garonne has been the capital of the Visigoths; Clovis has besieged and destroyed it; Saint Dominic held his *autos-da-fé* in what is now the Place de Salin; Simon de Montfort was killed while besieging the excommunicated Raymond VI.; and Raymond himself, dying soon afterwards, was cast out like a dog, and left for the birds and beasts to devour; so great in those days was the terror of the Church's curse.

Then there was Gaston Phœbus, of whom we have just been speaking. He came to pay a State visit to Charles VI., who, during his progress through Languedoc in 1390, stayed at the Castle of Toulouse. Froissart has given a fine picture of the Count arriving from Marzères: "He put up with his household at the Convent of the Friar Preachers; his other people, of whom he had brought upwards of six hundred, quartering themselves as near him as they could. It was rather late in the evening when he entered Toulouse, and he did not visit the King till the next morning. Charles VI. had gone out to meet him in the great hall of the Castle, for he was very anxious to see him, for the gallant actions he had performed, and on account of his fair reputation. The Count of Foix, who was very handsome in person and countenance, entered the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

hall bareheaded (for he never wore a cap), with his hair blown by the wind. . . .

“‘Fair cousin of Foix!’ said the King, ‘you are welcome; your visit has greatly rejoiced us.’

“‘My lord,’ replied the Count, ‘I thank you much for what you are pleased to say.’”

Then follows the description of the dinner, when the Count dined with the King, and Sir Menaut de Noailles presented him with the “Comfit Box.” Afterwards the minstrels performed, to the music-loving Count’s delight. And at four o’clock Gaston Phœbus took leave of the King, returning to his lodgings, “much pleased with the reception and entertainment the King of France had given him.”

And there is a story of Charles VI. going hunting in the Forest of Boucone, which lay a few leagues from Toulouse. Surprised by the night, he lost himself, and made a vow that if he could but escape from the peril—and in those days to be lost in a dark wood was a very real peril—he would offer the price of his horse to the Chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Bonne-Espérance in the Church of the Carmelites at Toulouse. The story goes on to say that no sooner was the vow made, than the night cleared, the moon came out, and the King was able to find his way home. The very next morning he acquitted himself of his vow, and founded a Military Order—that of Notre-Dame-d’Esperance—to commemorate the event.

THE CHURCH OF SAINT SERNIN

There used to be a picture on the wall of the cloister of the Carmelites, representing the King on horseback, bowing before the image of Notre-Dame-d'Espérance.

But the Church of the Carmelites seems to have gone ; the Castle has gone ; the Convent of the Friar Preachers on the Ile de Tounis is gone ; Gaston Phœbus and Charles VI. have gone ; and Dominic and the Pope's Legates have gone too, thank God ! though there is still a house bearing the ill-omened name of the Convent of the Inquisition.

Yet with all these changes one element of old Toulouse remains—Saturnin, patron of the city. You have scarcely passed the long squalid suburb leading from the Octroi, and reached the bridge over the Garonne, when you are reminded of the Saint. First to catch your eye is the odd-shaped façade of the Cathedral of Saint Etienne, and near it, with its tall brick tower, the Musée, once the Church of the Augustines. Then you notice the thin flattened west front of the Church of the Bull, marking the site of the Saint's martyrdom, and dominating them all, the magnificent Oriental-looking belfry of Saint Saturnin, or Saint Sernin, as it is called. The exterior of the church is impressive enough, especially in the evening light, when it flushes like a rose against the purple sky. In the early morning, too, before it has thrown off the mists of night, it lies coral-

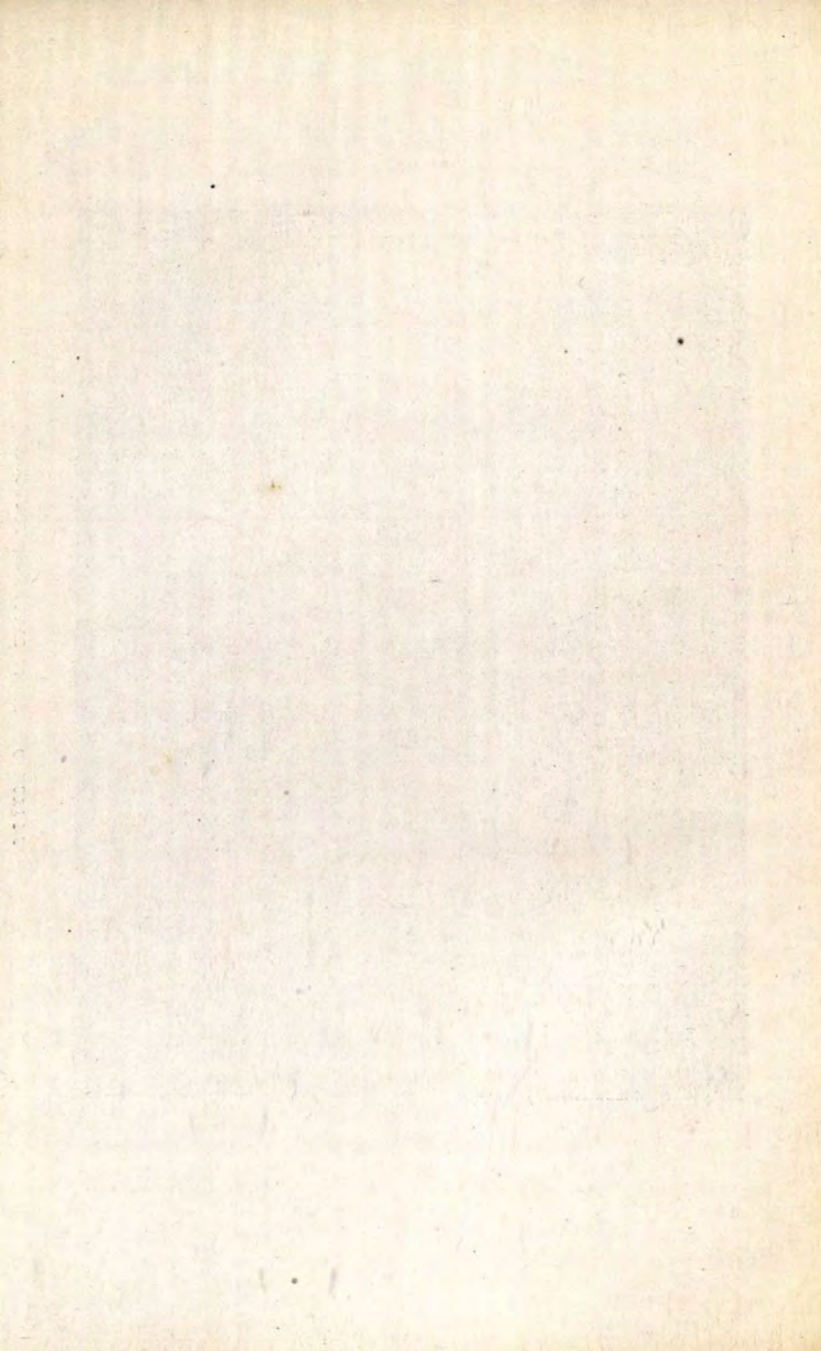
RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

pink upon the turquoise blue. But it is when one enters, and finds the vast nave stretching away and away, that one realises what may be done with bricks, given artists to use them, and centuries to mellow them.

According to the most ancient traditions, it was in the year A.D. 44 that Christianity reached Toulouse. We learned the popular legend of the founder, as we walked round the dark crypt where he was buried. He is said to have been the son of Ægeus, King of Achæa, by his wife Cassandra, who, herself, was the daughter of Ptolemy, King of the Ninevites. It is a strange old story, telling how the young Prince heard the preaching of John the Baptist, and was baptized by him. Later, however, seeing the miracles of Our Lord, he forsook his first teacher, and became one of Jesus Christ's numerous disciples. It is even said that he was present at the Last Supper, and at the Ascension. In the year 42, Saturnin accompanied Saint Peter to Rome; whence he was sent by the Apostle to carry the Gospel to Toulouse. On his arrival he had the good fortune to cure a very rich woman named Cyriac, who was covered with leprosy. This miracle made a great stir, and a little band of Christians quickly gathered. They worshipped in an oratory adjoining the Capitol, where stood a heathen temple—a most unfortunate site for Saturnin to have chosen. The oracle (I believe the temple



CHURCH OF SAINT SATURNIN, TOULOUSE.



SAINT SATURNIN AND THE BULL

was dedicated to Apollo) became sulky and refused to speak.

“What has shut the mouth of our god?” cried the priests. And it was then that some enemy of the new faith suggested the name of Saturnin. A magnificent bull had just been led up for sacrifice. At that moment Saturnin happened to pass on his way to the oratory. Immediately from the crowd of pagan worshippers arose a cry: “There he is! Behold the enemy of our gods, who closes the mouth of the oracle!”

So he was seized, and offered the choice between death and sacrificing to the false god.

“Why should I fear a god, who, even according to yourselves, trembles before me?” cried the Bishop. “I know of but one God. To Him only will I sacrifice.”

The reply infuriated the priests. Passing a cord round the loins of the bull, they tied Saturnin by the feet. The bull, pricked and maddened, rushed off, dragging the Saint at his heels; and, springing down the steps of the Capitol, the old man's head was broken, so that, to use the expression of the priest who related the legend, “his brains lay scattered on the soil, while his soul ascended to heaven.” For some time longer the dead body of Saturnin was dragged hither and thither, till presently, the cord breaking, all that was left of it was gathered up by two women, venerated ever since by the name of “Les

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

Puelles," who placed it in a tomb, above which later rose that ancient church, still called in memory of the martyrdom—Notre-Dame-du-Taur.

In the fourth century the Bishop's body was removed and buried beneath the church which had been raised to his memory by Bishop Exupère. This building was destroyed by the Saracens, and rebuilt by Charlemagne. The present glorious structure arose in the eleventh century on the site of its predecessors. And all the while, in that crypt below the altar, lay the body of the martyr; the early bishops, his immediate successors, grouped around him. It was there in the fourteenth century they found his bones.

Very dark it was in the crypt; we had much ado to see the relics though the priest carried a lamp, and did his best to show us the magnificent thirteenth-century reliquaries with which the vault is crowded. Such a collection I never saw. The place is a perfect Museum of Saints. No less than six of the Apostles are said to be represented in one way or another. One fragment interested me greatly. It was that of a saint, called, I think, Apollon, who had been martyred by having his tongue torn out. His relic, it appears, has great virtue when rubbed on the gums of babies suffering with painful teething. The priest was just showing us this object, when the sacristan came and whispered to him.

"Show her in," said the priest, and, turning to

THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINT ETIENNE

me, added, "It is a poor woman who has come on this very account. You will not mind waiting while I attend to her."

So we drew aside, and watched while he rubbed the baby's inflamed gums with the relic, and afterwards gave it to the mother to kiss. And the curious mediæval ceremony, seen in that dim and ancient place, is always before my eyes when I think of Toulouse and Saint Saturnin.

Next morning, as I looked down from my high window, I could see the fruit market going on below, but hurriedly, for it was Sunday. The sky was grey, but the clouds looked thin, and later, just as we took our seats in the Cathedral of Saint Etienne, the sun shone out, lighting up the yellowed plaster, which covers the brickwork, like ancient ivory. Indeed, the whole interior of this wonderful church is as though carved in ivory and oak; and as the rich colours of the windows fall upon the walls, they seem once more painted with the frescoes which formerly adorned them.

But colour is not the only charm of Saint Etienne. Its strange form is most captivating. I am no architect, so I cannot describe it in technical terms; but I have memories of a great central pillar, of dark hanging lace-like galleries, and high curtained recesses; of a mighty reredos, carved with the delicacy of a Chinese ivory; and of great splendid paintings, mostly recalling the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

martyrdom of Saint Stephen, to whom the church is dedicated. I love to see the Saints remembered in their churches. Is it not our highest human ambition to be remembered? And who should live in our memories if not the good Saints? So there we sat, letting it sink in—the solemnity, the age, the mediæval atmosphere;—till the music began, and the beauty of sound was added to the charms of form, colour, and the romance of history.

An old priest led the singing. As he stood, just behind the screen, with the red-robed boys and men grouped around him, he seemed as though he were interpreting those mysterious rites which were being performed at the far-distant altar. The music was divine; boys and choir organ answered by the great organ above; and the Gloria in Excelsis filling all space with its triumph of thanksgiving. There were many men present, who listened with critical delight—one old fellow, with a fine-cut face and long thin silvery hair, seeming absolutely enthralled. And indeed, what can be more impressive than such music? Should not all worship be the offering of the best beauty we have at hand, to the ideal beauty after which we yearn?

But see! Mass is over, we must not linger in the Cathedral. And we must do no more than glance in at the Capitol, which, according to tradition, stands on the site of Saint Saturnin's

THE JOURNEY TO CAHORS

martyrdom. It is a pity, for we should find many interesting things there:—a bust of our old friend the miller's son, Pope Benedict XII., whom we last met at Avignon; the axe by which the Duc de Montmorency was beheaded, his prison, the place of his execution; and perhaps most curious of all, the room where, I believe, are still held the meetings of that most ancient literary society—*La Société des Jeux Floraux*—founded by Clémence Isaure in 1333. Neither must we pause long at the Museum—perhaps the finest provincial museum in France. Its site alone, in the old Church of the Augustines, makes it worth a visit.

No, we must hurry on to Cahors, for our time is almost up, and there is still much to see.

The latter part of the journey to Cahors leads across a strange wild country—the Quercy. The very name suggests battles and skirmishes, for this part of France was specially infested by those lawless bands who devastated the land during the Hundred Years' War. As we passed over it, it still had the appearance of a great battlefield. The scanty tufts of scorched grass failed to conceal the chalky soil, which, cropping up here and there, looked like the whitened bones of a long-dead army. To add to the grim effect, the sky was lurid with storm. As we raced along over the high white road, we could see lightning flashing from cloud to cloud, while thunder

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

boomed and rolled, as though we were surrounded by vast phantom artillery. Our good little car seemed as anxious as we to reach shelter before the storm broke, and, girding up her loins, fairly flew before the wind. Faster and faster came the storm, and faster, faster we raced, till, dropping into a wooded valley, we came upon Cahors, lying beside the Lot, with its strange towered bridge.

Finding it useless to follow us, the storm had sulkily given up the chase. By the time dinner was over, a few stars were trying to come out, and we wandered down over the bridge to the ancient fountain which lies at the foot of the rocks, and which probably gave its first name to the town—Divona Caducorum. Then back we walked, up the dark Allé des Soupirs, to the dimly lighted Cathedral, where we sat in the gloom, thinking of Henry of Navarre and those terrible days when he fought his way step by step into Cahors, leaving dead and dying behind him. So fierce was the struggle, that once his Generals advised him to retire. "My retreat from this town," cried the King, "will be that of my soul from my body!" and he continued to fight on.

Cahors was the birthplace of Pope John XXII. The tower of his castle still stands in the upper town. We went there next morning just for old association's sake.

LES EYZIES

On the following day we began our northward journey in good earnest. All the morning we travelled beneath a cloudless sky, through meadows scattered with purple crocus, and little yellowing woods of beech and chestnut. Somewhere I remember geese in a donkey cart, hissing out naughty words at us as we ran past. There were many sheep, too, on the road, marked like fox terriers; and a pair of oxen yoked together, one wanting to go one way, the other the opposite, which delayed us for a time. And under the grey wall of a church was a goose-market, the birds tied round the neck with bows of various-coloured ribbons. But mostly we ran on, for we were anxious to reach Les Eyzies by nightfall. On the banks of the Dordogne we lunched on rolls and hard-boiled eggs, and the inevitable *pâté de foie gras*, which is such a feature of the country. I think it must have been at Roche Gageac, for I remember that it was while he was gazing up in wonder at the cliff village, Jones slipped into the water, and had to be spread out to dry. Not until we reached Saint-Cyprien did we leave the river, and, turning sharp to the right, began asking our way to Les Eyzies.

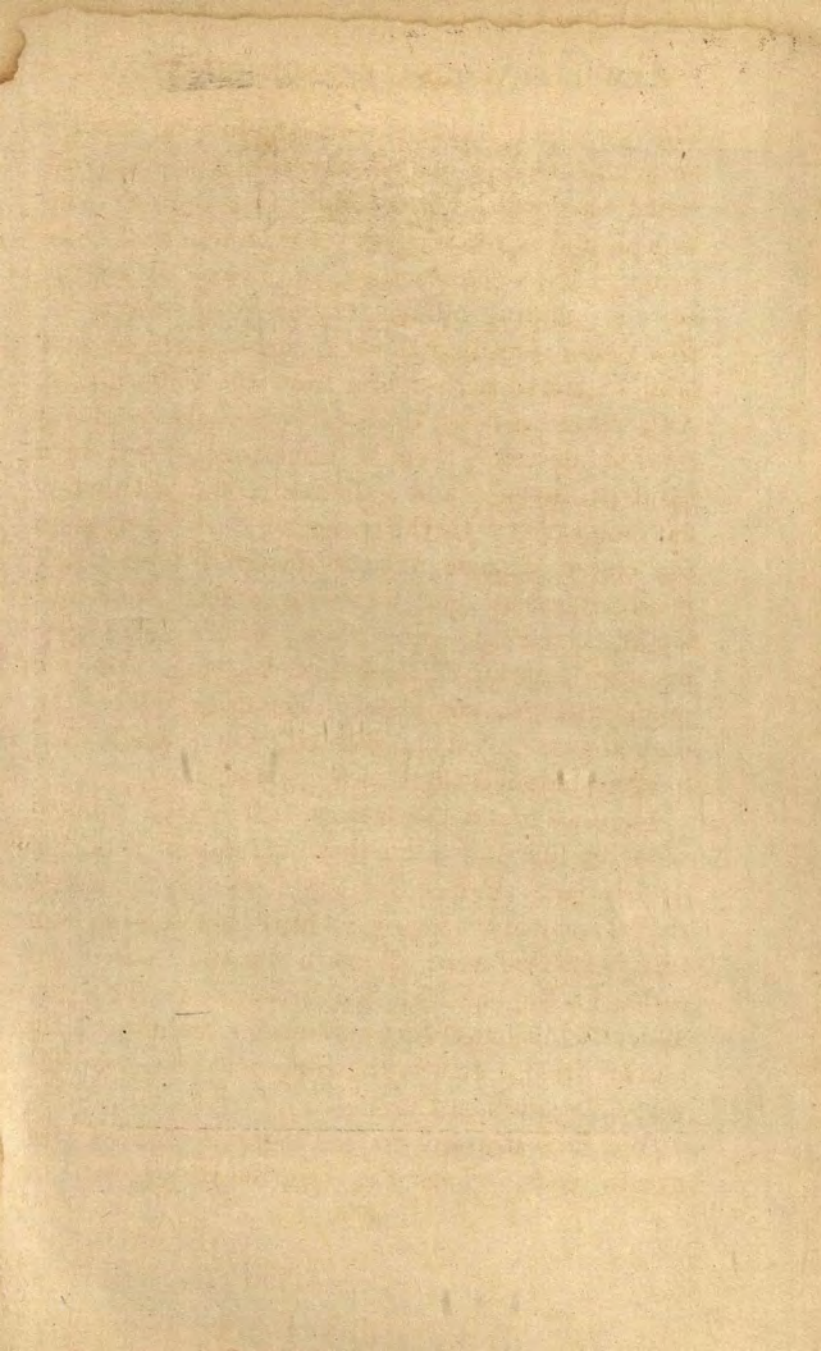
The valleys wound one into another, becoming wilder and more desolate, till at last we all fell silent; it seemed as though we were going into the presence of something unknown and barbarous,—something that filled us with a vague horror.

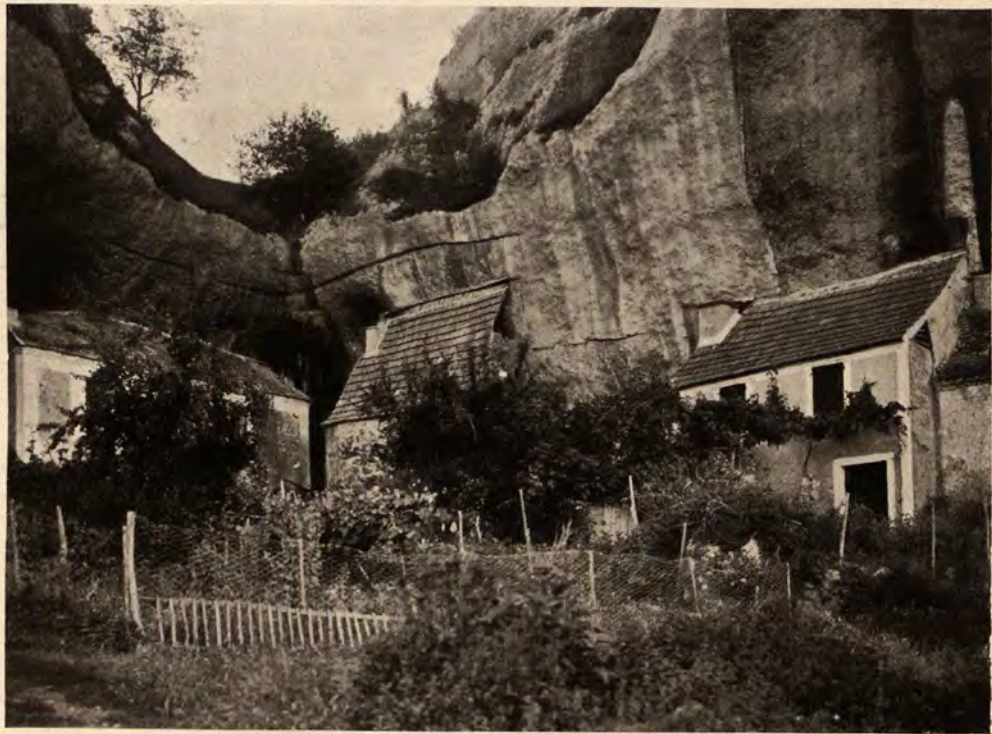
RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

The sky had become overcast, full of strange enigmatic clouds, which hid the sun and cast weird shadows. For a while this country continued, and never a village or a human soul to be seen. Then a sudden turn, and before us lay the most astounding valley. On either side the river, the Vézère has laid down a narrow strip of wild land, scattered with débris from the cliffs above. And these cliffs! How can one believe them, far less describe them? Limestone, worn into fantastic caverns and galleries roofed with overhanging eaves. In the gathering dusk it suggests the street of some ancient deserted town, with nodding gables and tottering walls. Now and again, a dark opening shows where some prehistoric householder had his dwelling. Once a mighty terrace, completely overshadowed by the rock above, hinted the possibility of a whole clan having sheltered there in bygone ages.

Here we found Les Eyzies, still a rock village, with an inn and a landlord of almost neolithic description. Indeed, his aspect was so terrifying that I scarcely stopped to hear that the inn was full, before we were off again for the little town called Le Bugue which lies further down the river, and which, though less romantic, is more sanitary and civilised. It was therefore next morning that we really saw Les Eyzies. . . .

We had stopped to photograph one of the great rocks, when the rain began to fall in





BUILT-IN ROCK SHELTERS, STILL INHABITED, HAUTE LAUGERIE.

THE ROCK SHELTERS OF LES EYZIES

torrents, and we had to make for the dry shelter of the car.

“What about lunch?” said my husband, for we had brought it with us. “It’s rather early, but it would save time to have it now.”

“Lunch, of course ; happy thought !”

So Jones, nothing loth, unpacked the provisions, and there we sat eating a very unprehistoric meal, in a quite prehistoric manner, for we boasted neither forks nor glasses. And while we devoured sardines, *pâté*, and tomato salad, our clothes dried inside the bonnet of the engine, and the phantoms of the cave men, in the form of jackdaws, watched us furtively from the cliffs above.

We had an introduction to the tutelary deity of this region, Monsieur Hauser, the renowned excavator, who had promised to show us the caves and the prehistoric remains. But it was so late when we reached his “shelter” (for I am sure he would resent it being called a house) that he had given us up, and gone off to the scene of his labour at Le Moustier.

This little village we found lying in a lonely valley some ten kilometres away—an ancient place, with a twelfth-century church. And here we came upon our friend, with three archaeological savants from Paris, to whom he was explaining and exhibiting his palæolithic finds. The trenches he had opened all over this district had yielded a great number of flint implements,

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

bone ornaments, and at least one skeleton of the very oldest race who ever lived in the valley of the Vézère. The shelter, where this hairy ancestor of ours dwelt, is filled with sand and layers of petrified mud, so that it would take an archæologist of some experience to guess the possibility of a human dwelling. Yet there it was, and there lay the skeleton, probably that of a great chief, or they would not have taken the trouble to bury him with those possessions of his around him. We gazed fascinated at the half-covered heap of bones, from which part of the skull, with the teeth still perfect and complete, protruded. The learned men were talking together, and I was glad. Here I had reached the very oldest of my castles; anything between fifty and two hundred and fifty thousand years, M. Hauser assured us, had passed since this old chief had been laid to rest. While he had been sleeping there, the whole history of the world had taken place. It made me giddy and faint. I pictured this valley, and the enormous river which once ran down it, grinding out the sides and forming the strange terraces which rose tier above tier. The water must have found out the soft places in the rock, for it had worn them into caves and galleries. Yes, it was Nature herself who built the first castle for this early Gaulish chief to live in.

These cliffs on the Vézère must have been some of the first in which man took refuge shortly

M. HAUSER AND HIS PREHISTORIC FINDS

after that spell of cold weather, which I could hear M. Hauser alluding to as the Glacial Period. Man was always a chilly mortal, and these shelters and caves faced south. They were also near the river, in which there were fish, and there were great forests at hand full of game. Thus it was here that he made one of his first settlements, for he found it an altogether desirable place to live in, easy to defend, and comfortable as comfort then went. So by degrees, as he grew more cunning than they, he turned out the bears and hyenas who had formerly lived there, and took possession of the shelters and caves. That was the inauguration of the "Castle of Le Moustier."

We can realise one of these earliest of men as we saw him represented in a striking picture, in the *Illustrated London News* some years ago. He was hairy, was he not? Short in the leg, long in the arm, walking with rounded back and bent knees, as I have seen Caliban represented on the stage by modern actors. His brows, too, overhung his fierce eyes, and he had very little chin to minimise the prominence of his teeth. He probably would not have welcomed a stranger any more cordially than his descendant of last night. But doubtless the suspicion would have been mutual. I don't think any of us would have wished to spend the evening in his shelter, watching while he gnawed the bones of his prey,

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

cracking them afterwards to suck out the marrow.

For thousands of years after this *Homo Mousteriensis Hauseri*—for we may as well give him his full title—breathed his last, the history of the “Château du Moustier” must have been much as the history of any other primitive savage village. There were quarrels and fights with other chiefs, and many times, no doubt, the shelter changed owners. They lived by trapping beasts in such traps as M. Hauser will show us, and they hunted with stones and slings, and presently began to use even bows and arrows. They had workshops for the making of these instruments, where they sat round a great rock table, chipping away at flints, while the artist of the party carved pictures on bone and sang the rude sagas of the time. But the development of even this amount of civilisation required ages; yet every gain made the next step easier, and so progress went steadily forward, faster and faster. During the next few thousand years they found out the use of dogs in hunting, the advantages of riding on horseback, and the wild boar and wolf succeeded the mammoth and the elephant. Then man discovered how to make cups and basins from clay, took to polishing and finishing his weapons, began to plant and sow. And thus these early dwellers at Le Moustier passed from palæolithic to neolithic times.

PREHISTORIC MAN

Then at last, from the south or the east, some wandering hunter brought home a wonderful knife of bronze, and the news spread in the neighbourhood of the mighty deeds he was able to perform with it. So it was admired and copied and improved upon, till stone implements came to be regarded as old-fashioned and out-of-date, and were finally abandoned, save for ceremonial purposes. And the women of Vézère left off their necklaces of shells and teeth, and took to the fashionable bronze beads which were being worn, only retaining their ancient ornaments as amulets and charms.

And the ages passed. Caves succeeded mere shelters, iron replaced bronze. But women were still courted by being knocked over the head, and run off with; old people were killed when they could no longer work; the strong lived, the weakly died; civilisation still progressed by the simple means of the survival of the fittest.

I was thinking of all this, as I looked at the ancient thing which had once been a man, when, happening to turn, I saw at the bottom of the deep hole whence they had taken him, a little green frog. He had fallen in, and was much perturbed in his tiny mind as to how he should get out again. No one took any notice of him. He was alive! If he had been dead and petrified for 50,000 years or so, like *Homo Mousteriensis*, the archæologists would have had him up in a

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

moment, and gone mad about him! But the sight of the poor little beast, struggling so eagerly for his life, interested no one but myself. . . .

On the way back from Le Moustier, we saw, high up in a cliff, the finest of all the cave dwellings. From an archæological point of view it may not be so interesting as the "Château du Moustier," for I dare say it is not more than eight or ten thousand years since it was first inhabited. But it is infinitely impressive. We clambered up the face of the rock, clinging to the bushes, brambles, tufts of grass, till we found ourselves in a deep, level gallery, running along like a veritable street. Here and there it had evidently been excavated farther back—one recess, which may once have been the chapel of some hermit, bearing the name of the Oratory of Saint Christopher. As we were walking along this extraordinary place, we suddenly came upon a young girl. I say a girl, for she was not a boy, but she had little in common with what we generally mean by the word. Indeed, there was something startling about her wild, dark, matted hair, and restless, furtive, almost animal, eyes.

"What do you call this place?" I asked, and I had to repeat the question more than once before the girl understood.

"It is the Gaulish city," she answered in a queer rough patois that seemed to correspond with the place.

HAUTE LAUGERIE

“And do you live in a cave?” I asked, smiling.

But the girl only glared suspiciously at me, and turning away into one of the darker recesses of the gallery, disappeared.

At Haute Laugerie we again met Monsieur Hauser, who took us to see the most interesting of all his excavations—a palæolithic dwelling, the shelter of which was destroyed before the caves in the cliff opposite were even formed. . . .

“And do you think these peasants of the Vézère are the actual descendants of the old dwellers in the caves and shelters?” I asked.

“Naturally,” said he, “Why not? There is probably no break in the continuity which links them to the man whose skeleton you saw at Le Moustier.”

“How horrible!” I ejaculated, involuntarily.

“Horrible? But why?”

“He was so dead, so utterly, hopelessly dead. Do you think they will ever be as dead as that?”

“Assuredly,” replied he, laughing, “if the world lasts another fifty thousand years.”

CHAPTER XVII

The Castle of Chalus—Siege by Richard Cœur-de-Lion—Limoges
—Siege by Edward the Black Prince—Loches—The Donjon
Keep—The Church of Saint Ours—Royal Castle of Loches.

WE have all, as children, thrilled over the story of Richard Cœur-de-Lion. For years he was my hero, as probably he was yours. There was such romance in his life, with its songs, and crusades, his faithful Blondel, and intermittent friendship with Philip Augustus of France. I remember a certain highly coloured picture of his death-bed, which used to hang in my nursery. It represented an open pavilion, like a cricket tent, where Richard, crowned and robed, was reclining on a lion skin, gesticulating with one arm, while a yellow-haired Berengaria of Navarre was sucking the wrist of the other. At the entrance to the tent stood Bertrand de Gourdon, bound with ropes, glaring defiance at his fallen foe; while in the background could be seen a great theatrical-looking feudal castle—walls, towers, drawbridge, all complete.

“Well,” says Richard, “and what have I done that you should kill me?”

THE CASTLE OF CHALUS

“You have slain, with your own hand, my father and my two brothers,” replies Gourdon fiercely, “and I have taken my revenge. Provided you die, I care not what torment I suffer, since I shall have rid the world of such a tyrant.”

Well, here is another picture. A wild heathery country; all the earth green and gold, painted in washes over the warm red-brown of a sandy soil. The sun is casting long shadows across the road, lighting the heather to purple, so that the country looks as though it were wrapping itself for sleep in a royal robe; and against the crimson sky, two bare black ruined towers. That is what is left of the dream of my childhood. For this is Chalus, and these are the twin Castles of Adémar, Viscount of Limoges, the rebellious vassal who refused to give up a treasure which Richard protested had been found on his land. And the pavilion, the death-bed? We shall find nothing of that here, but at Chinon. At Chalus, the Lion-hearted received his death wound, not in the wrist—the arrow struck him in the left shoulder, if we wish to be correct.

We had stopped to look up at one of the great gloomy towers, which can scarcely have been touched since the days of the siege; and I was trying to re-people the scene with the wild hordes of soldiers, who were ever at Richard's beck and call. We were just wondering where the King himself stood, when a pretty girl, who was passing,

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

stopped, and, asking if we had seen the stone of Richard, led us through a very wet meadow to where, among the grass, was a low small pyramid.

"There it is," said the girl. "That is where he stood, your English King. It is there that the arrow of Gourdon struck him—ah, the brave Gourdon!" And she went on to tell about the siege. It is not a pretty tale. Richard was not popular among his enemies. Lion-hearts seldom are.

"Sometimes when I pass the Castle at night, I can see the bodies of the poor guards hanging from the walls," continued the girl. "They seem to sway to and fro, to and fro in the breeze. One would say they were still alive."

"He had all the garrison hanged?" I faltered.

"All save Bertrand de Gourdon, who was skinned alive," said the girl cheerfully. "Though to be sure I have heard that that was not Richard's fault."

I looked round in horror. This very meadow grass, so rich and rank, was it still fed by the bodies once piled upon it? And the Castle,—surely that crimson stain is not the sunset!

"They were very cruel in those days," I observed, almost apologetically. "It was the manner of the times."

"Oh yes, Madame," she answered, "that is true. But all the same it was a happy day for

SIEGE BY RICHARD CŒUR-DE-LION

France when Richard of England was killed. Madame knows that he was buried here?"

"Really?" said I, for I had seen his tomb at Fontevrault.

"Oh oui, Madame! Assurément il est enterré au dessous."

"But there is no inscription," I objected.

"It has disappeared," replied the girl, "but undoubtedly there was one formerly."

We had plenty of opportunity of studying Chalus, for some perverse spirit seemed to have taken possession of our good automobile. First, one cylinder refused to fire. Then, most unusual occurrence, the radiator wanted water. At last, just as we were starting, a mysterious bolt fell out. However, we got off at last, and glad we were, for I doubt if any one had visited the place since the days when the wounded Richard was borne off in his litter; and the inn, notwithstanding its reassuring notice: "Rendez-vous du High Life des Cyclistes et des Touristes. Bon Logis," looked far from inviting.

It is night, too late for an automobile to be out on strange roads. Even the heavy band of crimson, which for so long after sunset lined the west, has been blotted out; and there is not a star. Presently groups of squalid houses begin to appear; a tram line; a few scattered lights. We are in the outskirts of Limoges.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

Do you recall the story of Limoges — that terrible story of the siege? It began with the Bishop, if I remember rightly. It was the summer of 1370, and the English were losing ground in Limousin. The Black Prince, the life and soul of the French campaign, was very ill — in fact, he died soon after. Limoges, the capital of the province, was still English; when on the 24th of August the Bishop and the citizens allowed the Duke of Berry and his French soldiers to enter and take possession. They only remained a single day, for news was brought that the terrible Black Prince had heard of the treason, and had “sworn by the soul of his father,” which he had never perjured, “that he would have the town back again, that he would attend to nothing till he had recaptured it, and that he would make the inhabitants pay dearly for their treachery.” The poor terrified souls sent to beg succour of their cowardly new lord, the Duke of Berry; but no word did he return, and day by day the enemy was drawing nearer. At last, from the walls, the site of which is now occupied by the public gardens, the English could be seen approaching.

I suppose that even in those days the city was quite different from what it had been in Roman times. The bridge, indeed, has always retained its old Roman piers. But the great amphitheatre, the palace of the governor, the baths, disappeared in the fourth century, wrecked by

LIMOGES AND THE BLACK PRINCE

the barbarians who overran France. To all intents and purposes it was a new town which the Prince was approaching; or rather, two towns, one of which had grown up over the grave of Saint Martial, the great apostle of Aquitaine, and was the religious town; just as the other, which was grouped round the hill (the Mons Jovis of the ancients, the hill on which had once stood the Temple of Jupiter, now replaced by the Cathedral of Saint Etienne), was the civil town. Both stood within the fortifications, and both, needless to say, had buried the hatchet, which they so often used upon each other, to unite against the common foe.

There is an account given by Froissart of this siege, which makes one's very blood run cold with horror. It ends thus:—

“You would then have seen pillagers, active to do mischief, running through the town, slaying men, women, and children, according to their orders. It was a most melancholy business; for all ranks, ages, and sexes cast themselves upon their knees before the Prince, as he lay in his litter, unable to move. ‘*Merci, gentil Sire, merci!*’ they cried; but he was so inflamed with passion and revenge that he listened to none; all were put to the sword wherever they could be found, even those who were not guilty.” And the old Chronicler adds: “There was not in the city of Limoges any heart so hardened, who did

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

not deeply bewail the events passing before their eyes ; for upwards of three thousand men, women, and children were put to death that day."

Limoges is a handsome modern city. But if you climb the hill to the Church of Saint Michel-des-Lions, you will be reminded of the past, for it stands on the site of the ancient Castle, and was built not long after the events I have been relating.

Our morning drive, after leaving Limoges, was a series of long straight roads, down which we simply flew. Once, in a forest, a shower caught us, but we shot through and found the sun shining gaily on the other side, the silver birches newly washed and glittering, and the chestnuts laden with their "thorny balls each three in one." And all the sky was piled with snowy mountainous clouds, reaching up into the bright blue, while before us, like little brown elves, the fallen leaves ran dancing.

At Le Dorat we found a very ancient church, built over a still more ancient crypt, to the memory of two very funny old saints, who I don't suppose any of my readers have ever heard of before—Saint Israel and his pupil and friend Saint Theobald. They lived in a monastery close by, which, according to tradition, was built by Clovis as a thank-offering for his great victory over the Saracens at Poitiers. The crypt was

AT LE DORAT

founded at the same time, and here the two Saints were buried in stone coffins, which, for centuries afterwards, were carried round the town in procession on the day of their joint festival. Gradually, as the sense of devotion declined, the coffins were found too heavy, and the relics were removed to the wooden reliquaries where they now repose. And if you want to see one of the most picturesque religious ceremonies in France, and one, moreover, which no one but yourself will know anything about, go to Le Dorat on Trinity Sunday, and assist at Les Ostensions of Saint Israel and Saint Theobald. Only I warn you it will be no use going till 1918, for the festival is only held once in seven years.

We lunched at the Hôtel de Bordeaux, a clean and homely inn. I had a headache, and after we had finished our meal asked if they would make some tea—good strong tea like we have in England.

“Would Madame like to make it herself?” Decidedly Madame would! So we adjourned to the becoppered kitchen, where, surrounded by the entire family, I gave a demonstration on the art of tea-making. I missed the kettle; it is awkward to ladle boiling water into a jug without scalding one’s fingers. However, the tea proved excellent, and gave great satisfaction to every one.

“But it must be very exciting!” said the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

landlord. "I should not dare to drink it made in that manner. I should not sleep for the rest of my life."

Of that afternoon I remember little, save long straight beautiful roads, and a town called La Tremouille, where we stopped for petrol. I wonder what our haughty English petrol dealer would have said to the little shop. While the two women who kept it were meekly fetching the cans of automobiline, I strolled in to buy a postcard, and found I might have been supplied with buttons, scissors, funeral wreaths, combs, soup tureens, boots, sardines, hair slides, shirts with the most gorgeous of tassels, and even such curiosities as antediluvian Swiss milk and prehistoric biscuits. But the automobiline was none the worse, and the sun was still shining as we entered Loches.

Never have I seen the old town looking so beautiful. It is always one of the loveliest places in France, and one of the most interesting, especially to an Englishman, for is it not the cradle of our Plantagenet Kings? When I begin talking about Loches I never know where to end. Its very name suggests its Celtic origin—Loches, or loch: a lake or morass; and beside the swamp, a great rocky hillock covered with thick forest. Down by the river a few wattled huts, and, honeycombed in the rock, chambers, passages, *latebræ*, such as those described by

LOCHES

Tacitus and Cæsar as belonging especially to the early Celts of Gaul.

Such was the first Loches, the acropolis of the district, to which, in time of war, the people of the plains could run and find safety. Over this human rabbit-warren, the Romans raised the Castle which afterwards, under the Dukes of Anjou, became one of the greatest of the royal prisons; while around the Castle, and down into the plain, gathered, little by little, the town, much as one sees it to-day.

We put up at a quaint old inn, the Hôtel de France, and after dinner went prowling round the streets in our usual manner. Presently, passing beneath the gateway, we reached the Church of Saint Ours, where, in the dim moonlight, strange unearthly monsters were grinning—two-bodied lions, and birds, and long strange headless figures. But it was in the sunshine of the morning that we made our way to the Castle, and visited the dungeons where Louis XI. and other royal tyrants kept their wretched victims.

I always make a point of going round the dungeons when I am at Loches; it gives me a feeling of contentment and peace with the world as I find it. The man who took us over on this particular occasion had quite a distinct gift for making one's blood curdle. There were his stories of Foulques Nerra, or the Black, builder of the

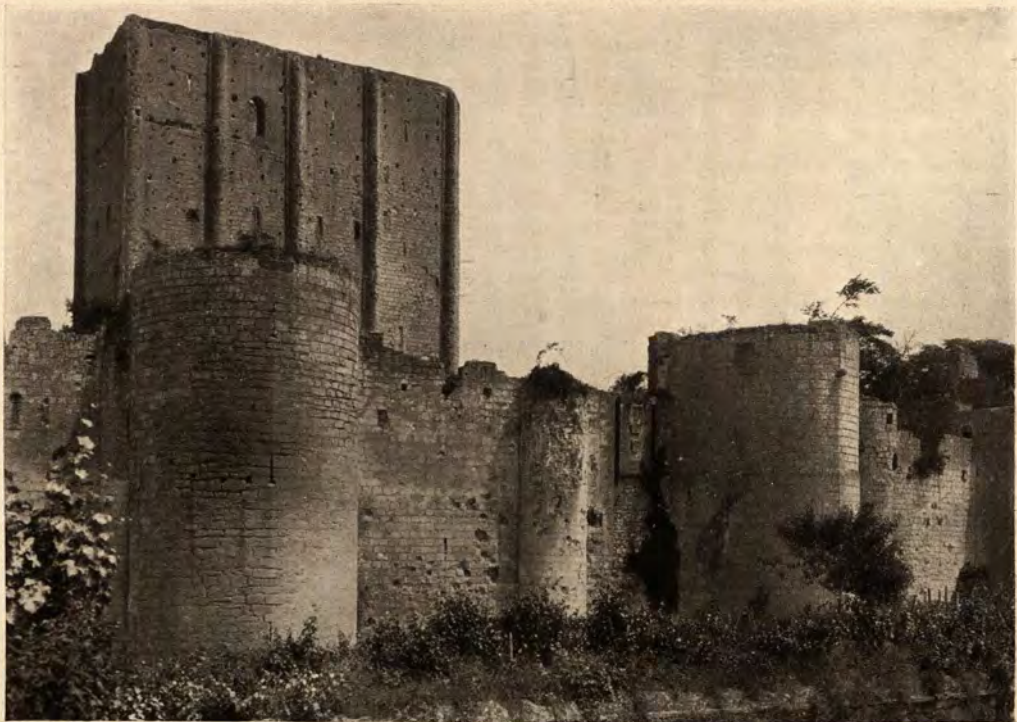
RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

great donjon keep. He it was who had his wife, Elizabeth of Vendôme, burned to death, because she gave him no sons; and then, frightened at what he had done, went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, by way of obtaining pardon.

And there was his nephew Foulques le Rechin, who, in order to reign alone, shut up his miserable brother, Geoffroy le Barbu, in one of the terrible dungeons, where he remained for thirty years. When at last his nephew, on the death of le Rechin, opened the prison doors, the poor Barbu was a gibbering old idiot. But, indeed, such stories as these lie behind every stone of Loches. It is not so many years ago that they used to exhibit to visitors the great wooden cage in which the wretched Cardinal La Balue expiated his treason to Louis XI. The Bishop of Verdun, who was the inventor of the horrible contrivance, suffered a like fate, and the people, who had but little sympathy with either of these worthies, used to sing:—

“Monsieur La Balue
A perdu la vie,
De ses eveschés;
Monsieur de Verdun
N'en a plus pas un,
Tous sont despeschés.”

I expect the poor wretches had a happy time, for Olivier le Diable, the King's barber, had been appointed governor of the Castle “pour les



THE DONJON OF LOCHES.

THE DONJON KEEP

bons, grans, louables, continuels et recommandables services qu'il nous a des longtemps fay auprès de notre personne."

We were shown the round dungeon, to the roof of which La Balue's cage was slung. For three years he remained there, unable to stand, sit, or lie. Louis XI. used to visit him occasionally, and with his favourite Olivier would stand and jeer at the prisoner through a hole in the door, while the soldiers swung him up and down, "comme un oiseau ou un morceau de viande," as the jailer, who told the story to us, remarked. Indeed, considered as a State prison of the period, the Castle of Loches was quite a model establishment. Just within the entrance was an even more terrible cage, where Philippe de Commines, the great historian of Louis XI., spent eight months, unable to turn round; but contriving, nevertheless, to write a great deal of the wonderful memoirs which have rendered him so famous.

We were examining the pathetic writings which the Duke of Milan traced on the walls of his cell during his long imprisonment, when the pretty young wife of the jailer came to tell him that a couple of men had been brought in for thieving.

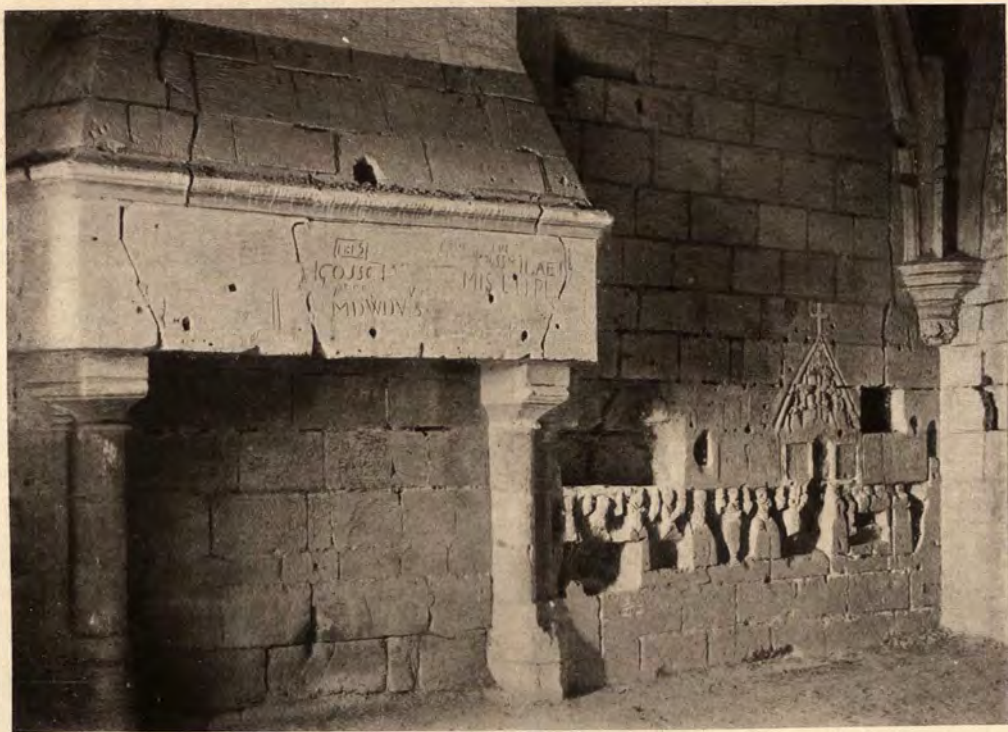
"Who is it?" he asked; "Jean and Henri? Oh well, take the keys and tell them to go to their cells; I'll see to them directly," and glancing at me with a smile he added—

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

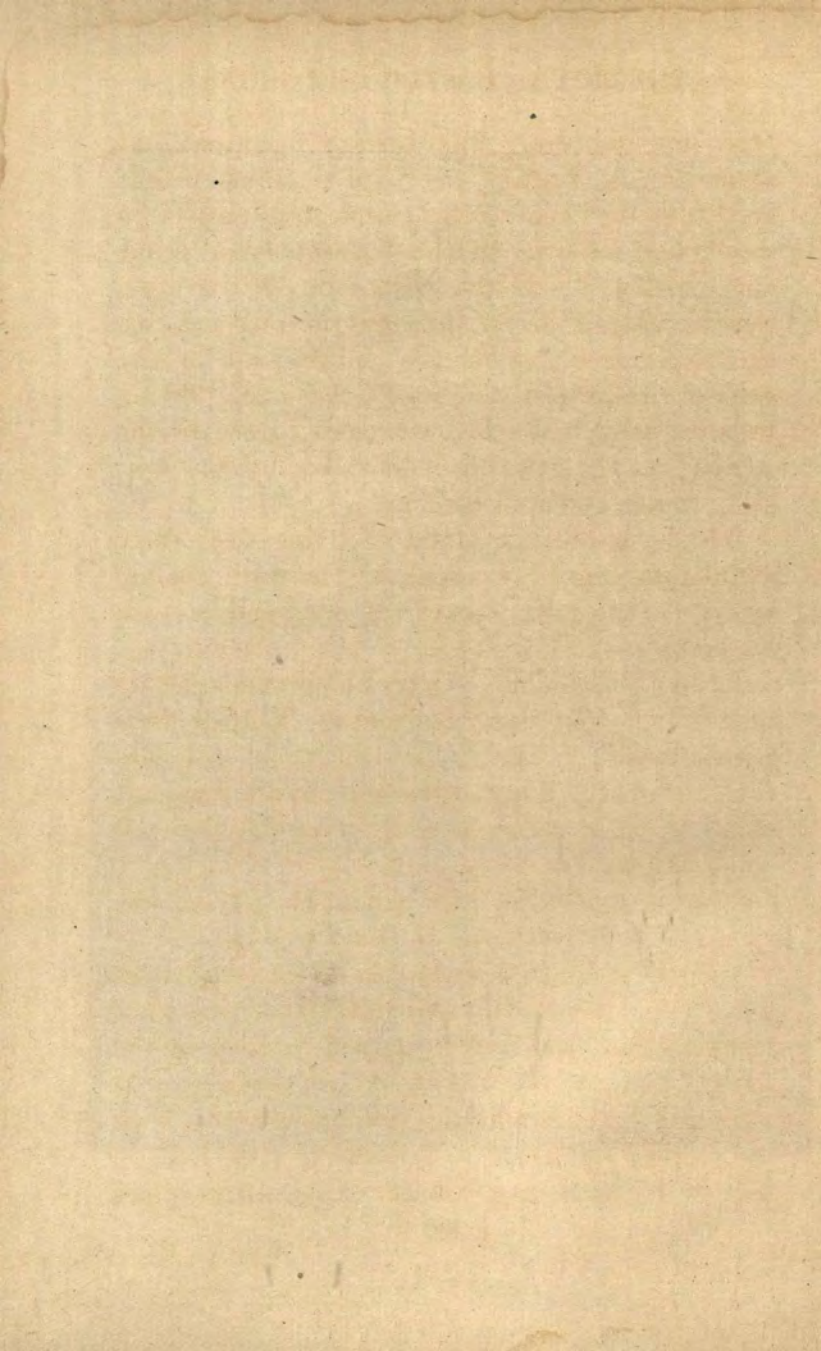
“They know the way, the rogues. They are regular clients.”

As the young woman turned, and made her way up into the sunshine, I looked back at the dungeon, and could but contrast the lot of this humble pair of criminals with that of the many noble captives who, in olden days, suffered in the ancient royal Castle of Loches. I have heard people deny that the world has changed for the better during the last few hundred years. They will talk about the good old times, and even regret that they did not live in them. I should like to take such to Loches, and show them those prisons: the Black Hole where the Count of Saint-Vallier, father of Diane de Poitiers, languished, while his daughter was living in luxury and splendour at the Court of Henri II. They should see the Torture Chamber, with its horrible iron bar, the dens and oubliettes, and, worst of all, the Forgotten Cells, like that found a few years since, with the skeleton of a man sitting gazing, with empty sockets, toward the iron door which was never more to open.

Even if we go to the Château Royal, where Agnès Sorel, the beautiful mistress of Charles VII., dwelt; her tomb in the little turret will remind us how she died by poison, at the hand of the terrible Dauphin—her only crime that of trying to protect the King from his undutiful son. They say her ghost, with that of her royal lover, still



A ROOM IN THE DONJON, SHOWING CARVINGS BY THE PRISONERS.



THE ROYAL CASTLE OF LOCHES

paces up and down the terrace on moonlight nights. Yes, I think it would do some people good to go to Loches. And after they had seen it all, and listened to the long story of crime and cruelty which the custodian has to tell, they should sit for a while on the seat beneath the apple tree, which has sprung up in the grim old courtyard, and watch the jailer playing with his baby, while his wife goes to see to the comforts of the new prisoners, who, by the bye, sleep in the Torture Chamber!

“And you are not afraid of living over these awful dungeons?” I asked, as we were coming away. The jailer looked at me, and gave a laugh:—

“Not I!” said he. “Il y a longtemps que ces messieurs là ont cassé leur pipe. If they were living now. . . . But,” he continued, his face turning grave, “my wife will never stir out alone at night. She is a Breton; they are all superstitious.”

The young wife had come up as he was speaking and overheard the last words.

“Well,” said she, with a little shiver, “it is when I see the crows. We all know what that means. Such souls are not good to meet in the dark!”

But I shall have made you feel gloomy with my stories. You will not want to visit Loches, and it is, as I say, the most beautiful place

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

imaginable. There is the great chestnut tree planted by Francis I., and the Oratory of Anne of Brittany, a love token from her husband Louis XII. And there is the glorious forest with the little circular chapel,—La Chartreuse du Liget, built by Henry II. of England for the monks of Saint Bruno. And above all, there are endless legends of the ancestors of our Plantagenet Kings.

CHAPTER XVIII

Chinon—The Castle of Chinon—Death of Henry Plantagenet and of Richard Cœur-de-Lion—Jeanned'Arc at Chinon—Castle of Azay-le-Rideau—Castle of Langeais—Castle of Cinq-Mars—Castle of Luynes—Tours.

WE have reached Chinon. How charming, even in its decay, is this old royal Castle of the Plantagenets. What must it have been in all its splendour!

Originally, like all these ancient residences, it was a mere fortress commanding the valley of the Vienne. It has seen the Romans, the Visigoths, the Franks, and, later, the English.

You will remember how Matilda, the only remaining child of Henry I., married the handsome young Count of Anjou, Geoffroy le Bel. That is how Chinon came into the possession of the English Crown. I do not think Matilda ever lived there, but her son, Henry II., made it his favourite home. After he had added to the old fortress, strengthened the ramparts, and built the splendid apartments destined for himself and his Court, it must have been a truly royal residence.

It was evening when we arrived, for we had

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

spent the morning at Loches, and loitered much on the way. In my tiny room, at the Hôtel Boule d'Or, I lay all night listening to the rushing of the Vienne, here broad and opulent, as befits a river which has known so many royal persons. How many songs it sang to me in its rich deep voice!

Next morning, as we were breakfasting beneath the flat trimmed plane trees, which roof the public footpath overlooking the great stream, my husband asked what made me so silent.

"I am thinking of Henry II. of England," said I. "I don't wonder he loved this place." For it is beautiful, exceedingly, this town of Chinon, with dim streets, of ancient grey houses, clustered at foot of the height on which the ruined Castle still stands. As the old song says:—

"Assise sur pierre ancienne ;
En haut le bois, en bas la Vienne."

As soon as we have finished breakfast, we set out for the Castle. Up and up we climb till we reach La Tour de l'Horloge, and, entering the precincts, I presently find the window-sill of what was once a great hall. There, seating myself, I look down over the roofs to the bridge, built, it is said, by Henry Plantagenet. Up in the ivy, sparrows are chattering; and swallows flash past my window, stretching their wings in preparation for their long flight southward.

CHINON AND HENRY PLANTAGENET

Down in the town a church bell is tolling mournfully, and I begin wondering vaguely whether it is for the passing of the soul of Henry, or Richard, or Jeanne d'Arc; for the centuries are all dissolving, the past is the past no longer, as I sit there in my window at Chinon.

Boom! goes the great bell. Hush, the birds are all talking about it. The swallows have brought the news of the meeting of the Kings of France and England at Colombier. It was Henry who arrived first, they say, ill as he was, bent double with pain.

"Marshal," he groaned, "good gentle sir, a cruel agony has seized me by the heels. I have never suffered as I am suffering now."

"Sire," cried the Marshal, "lie, I pray you, upon the bed and rest a little."

We all know the story of the meeting which followed; of the disgraceful terms of the treaty which Henry found himself forced to sign; of the kiss of peace he was obliged to give his traitor son Richard, and the curse he muttered as he did so.

It was to Chinon he was borne, after learning at Azay-le-Rideau that his youngest and favourite child John had also deserted him for the King of France. The news had broken his heart.

"Enough," said he, "you have said enough!" and turning to the wall he began to shiver. His

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

face became first red, then white, his pain such that he could neither hear nor see, and when he spoke, no one could understand what he said. So they brought him along by the banks of the river to Chinon—a knight holding his feet, and his illegitimate son Geoffroy, perhaps the only person who loved him, supporting his head and driving away the flies which were settling fast on his poor pinched face. Suddenly the King opened his eyes and smiled faintly.

“My son,” said he, “my very dear son, you have always been faithful to me, and grateful as sons should be to their fathers. If God is gracious enough to cure me from this illness, I will make you the greatest and most powerful among the great. And even should I die without rewarding you, I pray God to give you what you deserve.”

As I sit in the window, I fancy I can hear them moving the dying King into the Chapel of Saint Melaine. There, before the altar, he died next day; and when the few barons who had remained faithful to him arrived, they found him stripped, by his worthless servants, of his very sheets, lying there all but naked; so that a certain William Trihan had, for very shame, to fling his mantle over him. And the following day he was borne to the Abbey of Fontevrault, where he still lies, for all I know, together with his old sceptre, and round his head the bit of gold fringe



THE HOUSE OF RICHARD, CHINON.

CHINON AND RICHARD CŒUR-DE-LION

which was all they could find him by way of a crown.

It was but ten years later that another dying King was brought to Chinon. We have so lately visited Chalus that I need not remind any one of Richard's wound. It had suppurated on the long and trying journey, for he had insisted on being taken to Chinon, his favourite home. He must have suffered horribly. There was no comfortable automobile in which to travel, and the journey occupied days, even weeks. It was a dying man who was brought into the town that March evening of 1199. They had already reached the cross-roads when the King stopped them.

"I can go no farther," said he; "I am dying."

There was, close at hand, a dependence of the Castle. You may see it to-day—Le Grand Carroi, a fine old half-timbered building. They call it still "the House of Richard." There they took him; it would, at least, spare the painful jolting climb up the hill. So he died, and from one of those broad low windows his soul passed out to meet its deserts. Such was the end of the Lion-hearted.

"Will Madame not come and see the Castle?" It is the *gardienne*, disgusted with what she takes to be my want of interest.

"To be sure. Tell me, where was the chamber

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

where Jeanne d'Arc found the King." The woman brightened instantly.

"Voilà!" she cried, pointing to where a chimneypiece can still be seen, hanging high upon a tottering ivy-mantled wall. "That was the Grande Salle, and there you see the very hearth by which le Dauphin was standing." And she went on to tell me of the Maid's arrival at Chinon; how she was carefully watched for ten days to make sure she was not a witch, and finally, one evening when the hall was lighted up with torches, presented to the King, or as the woman called him, perhaps in imitation of Jeanne, "le Dauphin." The girl was brought in dressed as a man, still wearing the sword given to her by Baudricourt of Vaucouleurs, and before her walked le Comte de Vendôme. It is said that the King, in order to try the Maid's powers, had disguised himself, and commanded one of his courtiers to represent him. But she knew him at once, and, going straight to him, took him aside and spoke to him in private.

While the woman was talking, we had crossed the bridge over the moat into the third court, once the soldiers' quarters, where is the donjon, or Tour du Coudray. The great round keep, with its stone floor and groined roof, was a strange bed-chamber for a young girl. Yet it was here the Maid slept during her stay at Chinon. The little Chapel of Saint Michel,

JEANNE D'ARC AT CHINON

where she used to pray and converse with her heavenly visitors, has disappeared; only the foundations can now be seen. But the tower remains, rising from a tangle of trees and grasses, approached by a clipped yew hedge. And as you stand within the gloomy cell, the thought suddenly leaps into your mind that these very stones have listened to the Maid's voice; that this roof has looked down upon her as she slept; that from this low doorway she set out for the siege of Orléans. We can see her springing lightly on to her great black charger, and flourishing the little battle-axe she always from henceforth carried; while at her side hangs the great sword of Abderahman, which she has sent for from the Church of Saint-Catherine-de-Fierbois, where it has lain since the days of Charles Martel.

"Come my lords," she cries, stretching out her hand toward Orléans. "Let us be off. In a short time we will return to this noble Castle, bearing to the Dauphin, our master, the news of the deliverance of his good town of Orléans. After that we will take him to Rheims, where he shall be consecrated in the name of Heaven."

And then? Well then, you turn away and go down into the town with a much more vivid sense of the story than you had when you came up!

It is but a few miles from Chinon to Azay-le-

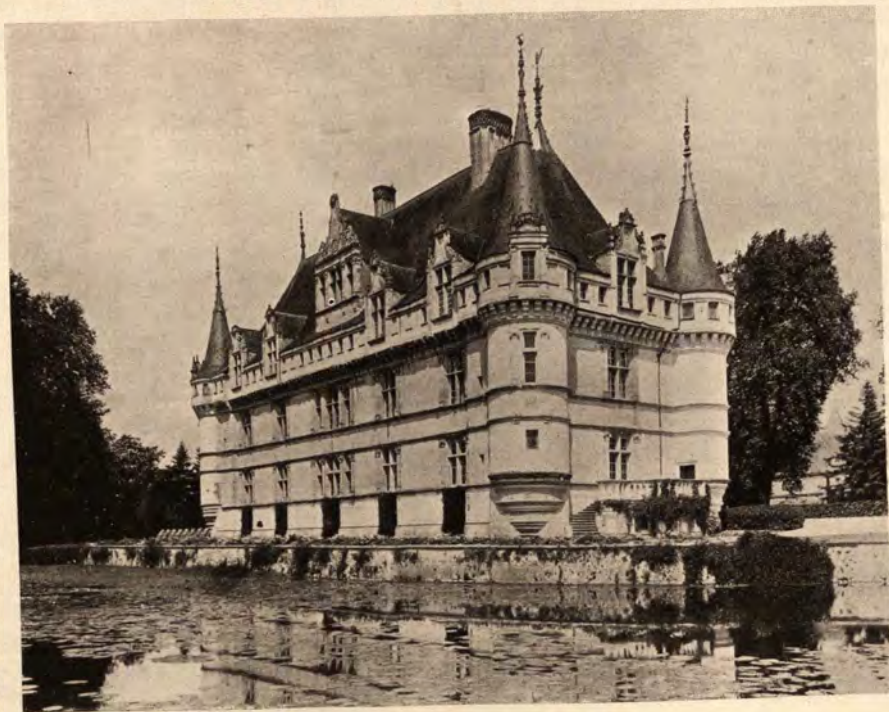
RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

Rideau, with its ancient church, and beautiful Renaissance château, built by Gilles Berthelot in the sixteenth century. This Berthelot was an interesting person, a descendant of one of those *bourgeois gentilshommes* whom Louis XI. delighted to honour. Gilles himself was a Treasurer of France under Francis I., and very rich, having an extraordinary genius for inventing new taxes. In spite of this gift, however, he fell into disgrace, and had to flee into exile, just as he was completing his magnificent castle. His possessions being confiscated, the château was taken over by Francis, who finished it, placing his "salamander" over the entrance, and below, the device "Nutrisco ex extinguo"; and from henceforth it became the King's hunting lodge. They must have had very cosy times when they visited this little Castle,—Francis and his Flying Squadron of ladies. The kitchen, with its enormous hearth, and walls still hung with fifteenth-century pots, pans, grills, and ladles, looks capable of providing for any number of hungry hunters.

A solemn and impressive individual met us at the entrance, and showed us round.

"I dare say many a good dance has been held here," I remarked, as we reached La Salle des Fêtes, with its Gobelin tapestry and shining floors.

"Doubtless, Madame," he answered gravely. "They knew how to dance—ces Rois Valois—



Photo]

THE CASTLE OF AZAY-LE-RIDEAU.

[J. Stanley Burmester.

CASTLE OF AZAY-LE-RIDEAU

if they knew nothing else." And he spoke truly, for it was the epoch when the art of dancing reached its highest perfection.

Presently we came to the sleeping chamber of the "Salamander," and pictured him, with his long nose, lying behind the blue curtains of the bed. And the rooms are not uninhabited, for, besides the phantoms who flit about them, the walls are covered with portraits of the royal persons who once dwelt there. In the library, for instance, we find Henry IV. with Queen Margot, and Gabrielle d'Estrées, who, their earthly differences finished, are hobnobbing quite peacefully together. And there is Francis himself, with his favourite Duchesse d'Etampes, and his daughter-in-law, Catherine de Médicis.

Outside, the grounds are bright with dahlias; the old balustrades mantled with pale wisteria and crimson creepers. I can see Francis at the door, calling, in his impatient voice, for his horse, while servants run hither and thither. He fed on fire, they say, and certainly his temper was warm enough to justify the supposition.

We lunched at Azay-le-Rideau at the very excellent Hôtel-du-Grand-Monarque, where they lighted a blazing fire in our honour, as it had turned cold: and afterwards we ran on to Langeais, and so doing crossed the Loire, for the two castles lie almost opposite one another, with the valley between.

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

The sight of the great river set me thinking. The last time we had seen it was in its far-away cradle in the mountains near Puy-en-Velay. It was then only a baby river, full of childish pranks, a tiresome stream, always breaking out of bounds, yet a dancing rippling Loire, already giving promise of the beauty and power of its prime. I love these rivers. I love to look down on the swift-flowing current, and fancy myself in the places past which the water has so recently been flowing. The Loire is so ancient too. Orléans, Blois, Amboise, Chaumont, Chambord, Tours, all lie upon its banks—

“Vallée de Loire,
Vallée de gloire!”

An old castle is Langeais, with dark memories of that same Foulques Nerra who rendered himself so notorious at Loches by the murder of his wife. Directly you have crossed the draw-bridge, and entered the door beneath the portcullis, you will see, beyond the garden, the ruins of his donjon. For the present Castle of Langeais, old as it is, does not stand on the site of the original fortress. It was Pierre de Broce, barber surgeon to Saint Louis, who commenced the existing building, and Louis XI. who finished it, leaving it very much as it stands to-day. Here his son, Charles VIII., and the Bretonne Duchesse Anne were married in 1491; and here she after-

THE CASTLE OF LANGEAIS

wards came with her second husband, Louis XII., who seems to have been much attached to the grim old building.

But we are still standing on the drawbridge. Let us pull the bell. What a clang! I hope we shall not be seized for our impertinence, and clapped into a dungeon! But just as we are thinking of running away, the gate beneath the portcullis is opened by a neat, mild-looking parlour-maid, who asks us politely to walk in, and suddenly we find ourselves transported back into the midst of the fifteenth century. I cannot describe the Castle to you in detail. You must go and visit it for yourselves. You will wander through rooms hung with ancient tapestry, furnished with fifteenth-century beds, chests, and settles. Here is the great hall where Charles and Anne were married. It is now the drawing-room of Madame Siegfried—a perfectly charming room, cosy, full of treasures, the Flemish tapestries alone worth a fortune. And as you stroll about looking at everything, the servant tells you stories of the place, stories of Louis XI. and his daughters; of Charles and Anne; and, more than all, of the great Louis, his successor, who seems still to be quite a hero at Langeais. Most of what she says is old history, but there is one name which catches my attention, and when we have climbed the turret stair to the battlements, while the others are peering down the holes

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

through which, in the dear days of long ago, they used to pour boiling oil on their enemies, I ask her again about Pierre de Broce.

It is a curious story that of the barber surgeon. He was already a great Court favourite, and Sire de Langeais, when King Philippe le Hardi, having lost his first wife Isabelle d'Aragon, married the beautiful and fascinating Marie de Brabant. From the very beginning she and the favourite were at daggers drawn; and when the eldest of her stepsons, Louis, died two years after her marriage, Pierre lost no time in accusing the Queen of having had him poisoned.

"Sire," said he who told the King, "it is said that Madame the Queen and her foreign ladies poisoned Monseigneur Louis; and that they intend to do the same with the other children of the late Queen. The people of Paris are so enraged that Madame will be stoned if she ventures there."

Gradually the scandal grew against the Queen, till it threatened to become serious. Then one day, suddenly the storm broke, not on the head of Marie, but on that of her accuser Pierre de Broce. Letters had been found—or forged! He was seized, taken to Montfauçon, and there hanged without even the opportunity of defending himself; three or four of the great lords of France conducting him to the gibbet, and standing round till all was over.

THE CASTLE OF CINQ-MARS

And what was in the letters? Ah! no one ever knew. Some say that the Sire de Langeais himself poisoned the Prince. It seems reasonable, he being a surgeon, and understanding such matters. But the old story does not say. There are many mysteries belonging to a Castle like this.

The cliffs on either side of the Loire, between Langeais and Tours, are honeycombed with caves, many of which are inhabited. They form little villages, or rather, I might say, a long continuous straggling village, very picturesque, and very very ancient; for, as at Les Eyzies, we are here face to face with one of the earliest of human settlements.

Now we find ourselves passing Cinq-Mars, or Campus Martius as it may have originally been called, with its high brick tower, on the top of which beacon fires were once lighted, to warn the inhabitants of the Upper Loire of the approach of those pirates who formerly infested the estuary. The old Castle, whose ruins stand near by, was the family home of that traitorous favourite of Louis XIII., Henri Coiffier de Cinq-Mars, beheaded by order of Richelieu at Lyons in 1642.

A little after, at the opening of a side valley to the north, we come upon Luynes standing on its rock, reminding us of Charles d'Albret, another favourite of Louis XIII. I don't know whether the Duke ever came to his Castle. He was probably too busy at Court, fighting the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

battles of the young King against the machinations of his mother, Marie de Médicis, the Concinis, and Richelieu, to have much time to spare for country life. I remember reading somewhere how skilled he was in training hawks, and that the boy King, who had so little to occupy or amuse him, first grew to love the handsome young Duke on account of the splendid hunting birds he gave him. The King found other uses for him later. Do you remember the story of the murder of Concini? That was Luyne's work. He and the King had planned it between them.

"And now," said little Louis, half crying for joy, as the cries of "Vive le Roi!" told him that the plot had succeeded, and that his enemy was really dead; "and now I am King! I have always been King, but for the future I shall be King more than ever." Alas, poor Louis!

The village, lying at foot of the rock, is picturesque, with a blacksmith's shop beside the entrance to the steps leading up to the Castle, and an old wooden market-hall, such as one seldom now sees in this part of France. And in its broad stony bed, the river keeps turning and twisting about, like a restless sleeper unable to make up his mind on which side he wishes to lie.

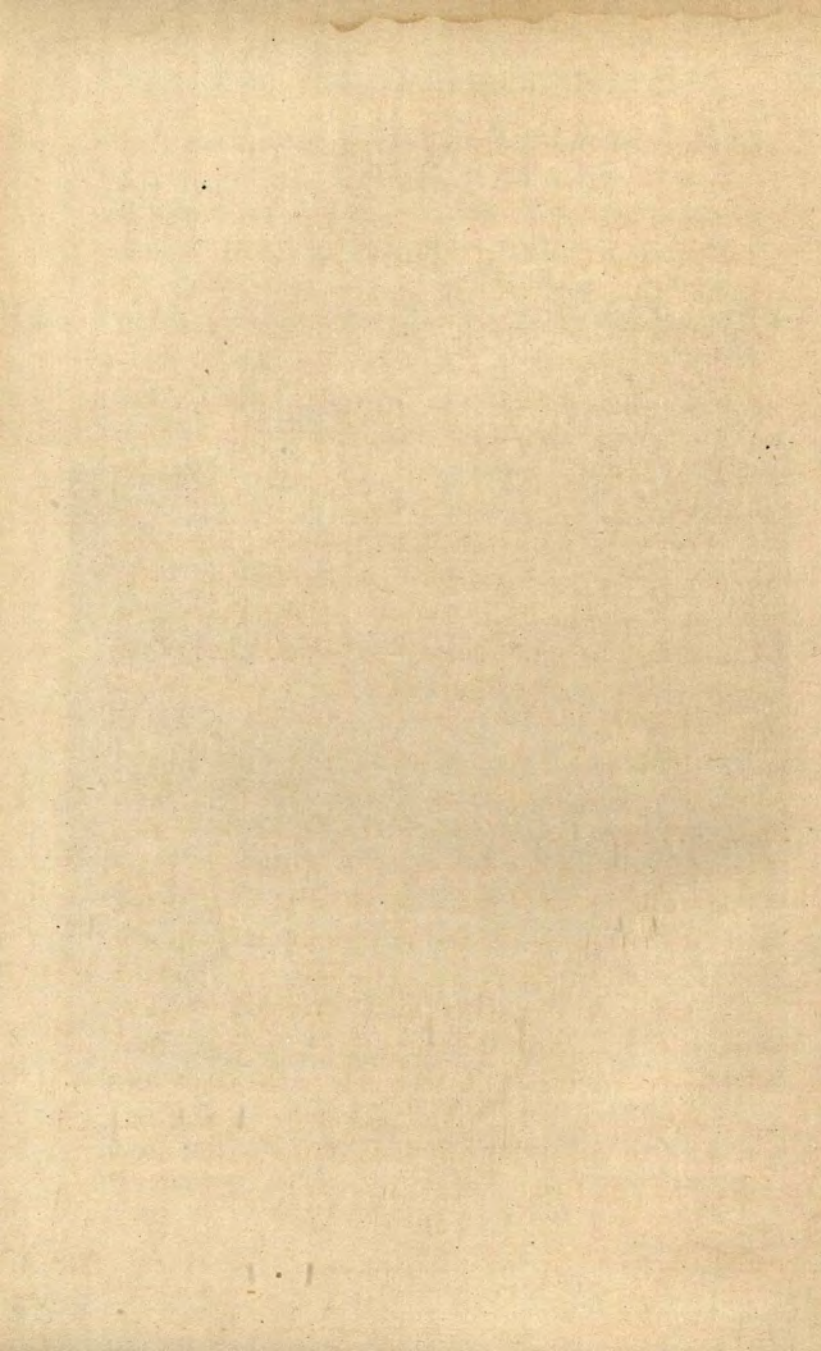
The road is growing more frequented. We must be nearing Tours. Another mile or two and we come in sight of the towers of Saint Gatien,



Photo]

THE CASTLE OF LUYNES.

[J. Stanley Burmester.



TOURS

and enter the old city of Saint Martin to find it just the same as ever: the outside of the Cathedral still in curl papers; the streets still crowded and noisy; the dinner at the Hôtel-du-Faisan still excellent; the rooms still clean and comfortable; the servants still obliging; the bill in the morning still a little more than we expected. How pleasant it is to be back in the dear old place, and feel the familiar Saints around one! I asked Jones next morning what he thought of it.

“Very pleasant place indeed, Madam,” said he beaming; “a good town for making friends. Me and another chauffeur had a walk round after dinner, and he met several people he seemed to know. Quite nice they were for foreigners, so free and easy.”

We also had taken a walk after dinner, and had met some people we knew. We had been into the dark Cathedral, and had just been able to make out, lying together on their slab, the little white forms of the two children of Charles VIII. and Anne of Brittany. There, too, we had found Saint Gregory, the historian, who told us once more the beautiful story of Saint Gatien, first missionary to this valley of the Loire. And above all, in his deep dark crypt beneath the new Basilika, we had just been able to pay our respects to Saint Martin before the gates were closed for the night.

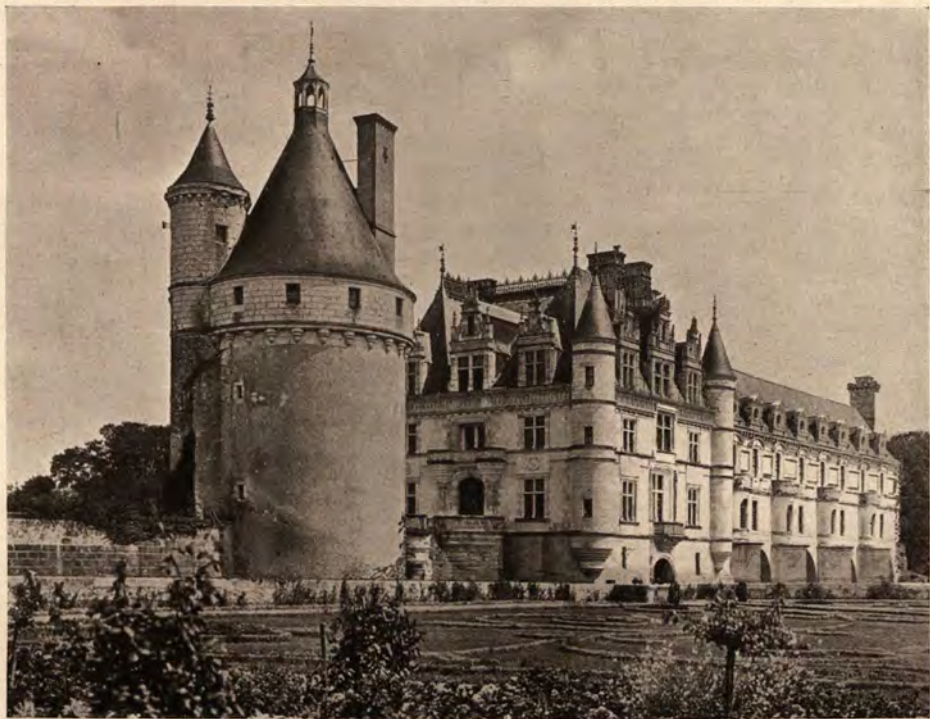
CHAPTER XIX

The Castle of Chenonceaux—Castle of Amboise—Castle of
Chaumont—Castle of Blois—Castle of Chambord.

CHENONCEAUX is one of the few French châteaux around which, as far as I know, there clings no tragedy. Directly we see it, lying among the willows and sedges of the gentle Cher, we feel a sense of pleasure. This is a home, a real home; where we ourselves might live, and sleep, without being afraid of the ghosts which haunt most of the castles we have been visiting; although, to be sure, there are other risks we might run.

The château is not very old, as French castles count age. It was built in the reign of Francis I. by Thomas Bohier, the great financier, as a home for himself and his family. As to its story, the servant who showed us round related it unconsciously, as she named the various rooms and their pictures.

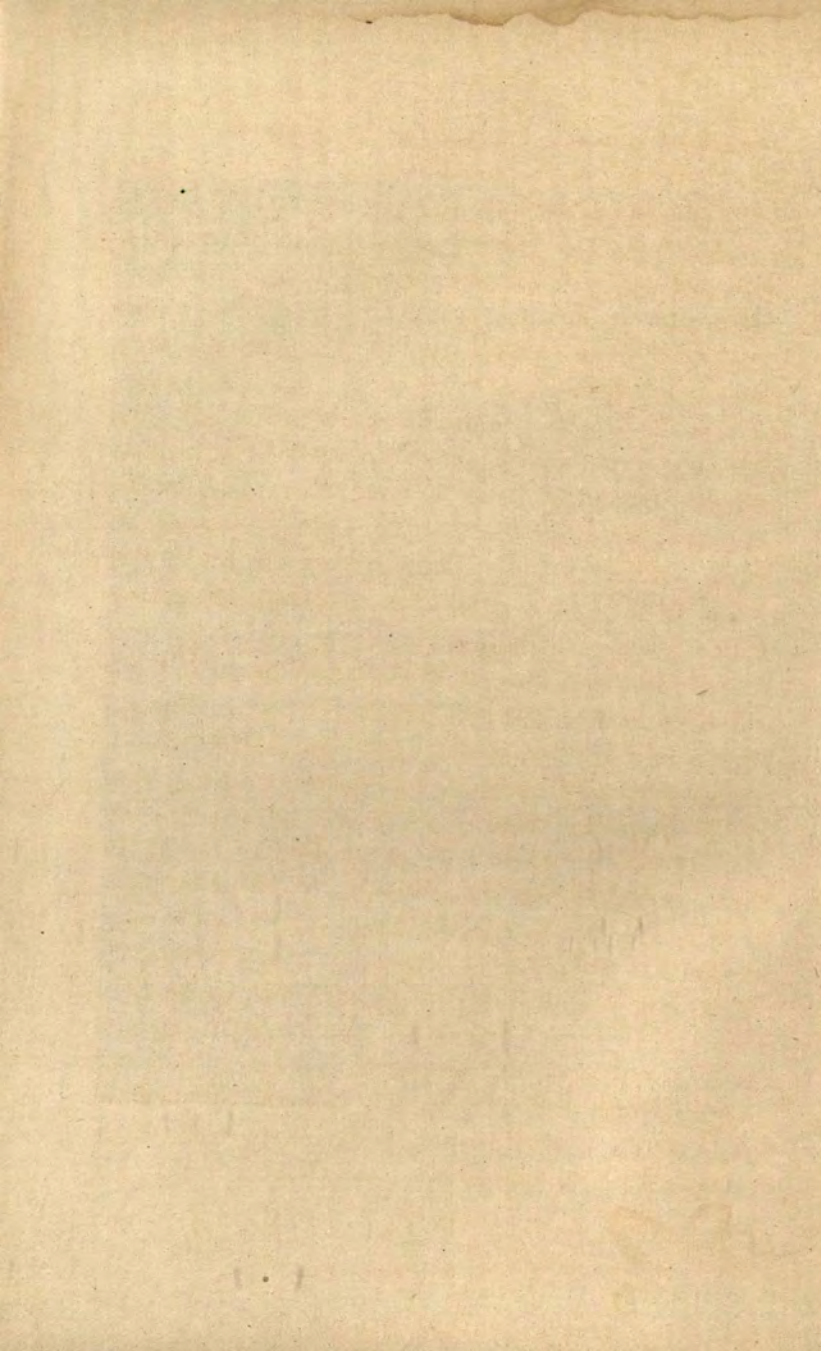
“Portrait of a gentleman, supposed to be Thomas Bohier. It is attributed to Vandyke,” and we saw, looking out of its frame, a strong shrewd face, which seemed to be regarding, with



Photo]

THE CASTLE OF CHENONCEAUX.

[F. Stanley Burmester..



THE CASTLE OF CHENONCEAUX

a sort of amused contempt, the pictures of the frivolous beauties whose expensive tastes had supplied his fortune.

“Chamber of Francis I.” Again we see the long-nosed Valois and his Italian daughter-in-law, Catherine de Médicis. Here is her cabinet; this very ceiling has looked down upon her wax-like face and bulging eyes.

“Le Salon de Diane de Poitiers.” Ah yes, here on the splendid chimneypiece are the interlaced monograms of herself and her royal lover. And see, we have her as the virgin huntress, in blue, surrounded by dogs and cherubs—“Par Primatice, Madame,” volunteers our guide, noting our interest.

And there is the portrait of Catherine herself, hanging in the very chamber of Diane, replacing her, just as she replaced her at Chenonceaux. The Queen had always coveted this estate, and no sooner was the breath out of Henry's body than she seized the castle, giving Diane in exchange the gloomy Chaumont, whither we will presently follow her. But, all the same, it is Diane who flits about before us through the old rooms and galleries, if anything so stately can be said to flit. It was she who built this bridge over the Cher, finding it “desirable to have a quick and easy communication with the farther bank, where is a thick sylvan wood, watered by fountains, and flowery as an April meadow.”

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHATEAUX

We crossed this bridge, passing through the long gallery which Catherine raised over it, "for the giving of feasts, dances by torchlight, and other festivities," as she said. But having reached the other end, we failed to find "Diane's flowery meadow." Indeed, we only discovered an exceedingly objectionable smell, as though all the un-savoury memories, which have gathered round the Queen and the favourite, had arisen from the past to poison the air of the present. Before it we retreated, wondering how Diane, herself such a lover of cleanliness, could have endured it. But as we strolled along the path by the river, where the briar roses grow wild and fragrant, the romance of the old place returned. The perfume of the flowers made us forget the scandals and quarrels of the Court, and we thought of the boy King, Francis II., and his young bride, Marie Stuart, who spent their honeymoon here, and used to wander hand in hand along this walk of an evening. I expect they loved the roses too, and would sit watching the river as it flowed beneath the arches of the gallery.

And Diane's garden—what stories can it not tell of masked balls and illuminated fêtes? But she must have been growing rather old for such a life. It was a woman of sixty who passed down this avenue for the last time. I wonder if she noticed the trees as we do, the dwarf oaks of the forest-land, where later the Huguenots

THE CASTLE OF AMBOISE

used to meet, and plot against the Duc de Guise.

Before we leave Chenonceaux there is one other memory we must evoke—a sweet and gentle memory, of one of the many victims of the manners and morals of those times. At her death, Catherine de Médicis had left Chenonceaux to her daughter-in-law, Louise de Lorraine; who, after the murder of her husband, Henri III., came to live here. Very quiet and religious she seems to have been, a nun rather than a queen; devoting herself to the poor and sick; spending her life in doing good, so that the remembrance of La Reine Blanche, as she was called, on account of her white mourning robes, has come down even to the present day.

The road between Chenonceaux and Amboise is not long, for the châteaux here lie close together. How it rears itself above the river—this great palace-fortress! If Chenonceaux is a recent castle, Amboise is one of the most ancient. Cæsar it was who built the foundations, and raised the first building. Its great tower was crowned by a statue of Mars, which they say fell, struck by lightning, at the approach of the first Christian missionary who came to Amboise.

But we must not go so far back as Cæsar's days. Louis XI. is, I think, the first person who will meet us at Amboise. He is spending his honeymoon here. He has just married Charlotte

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

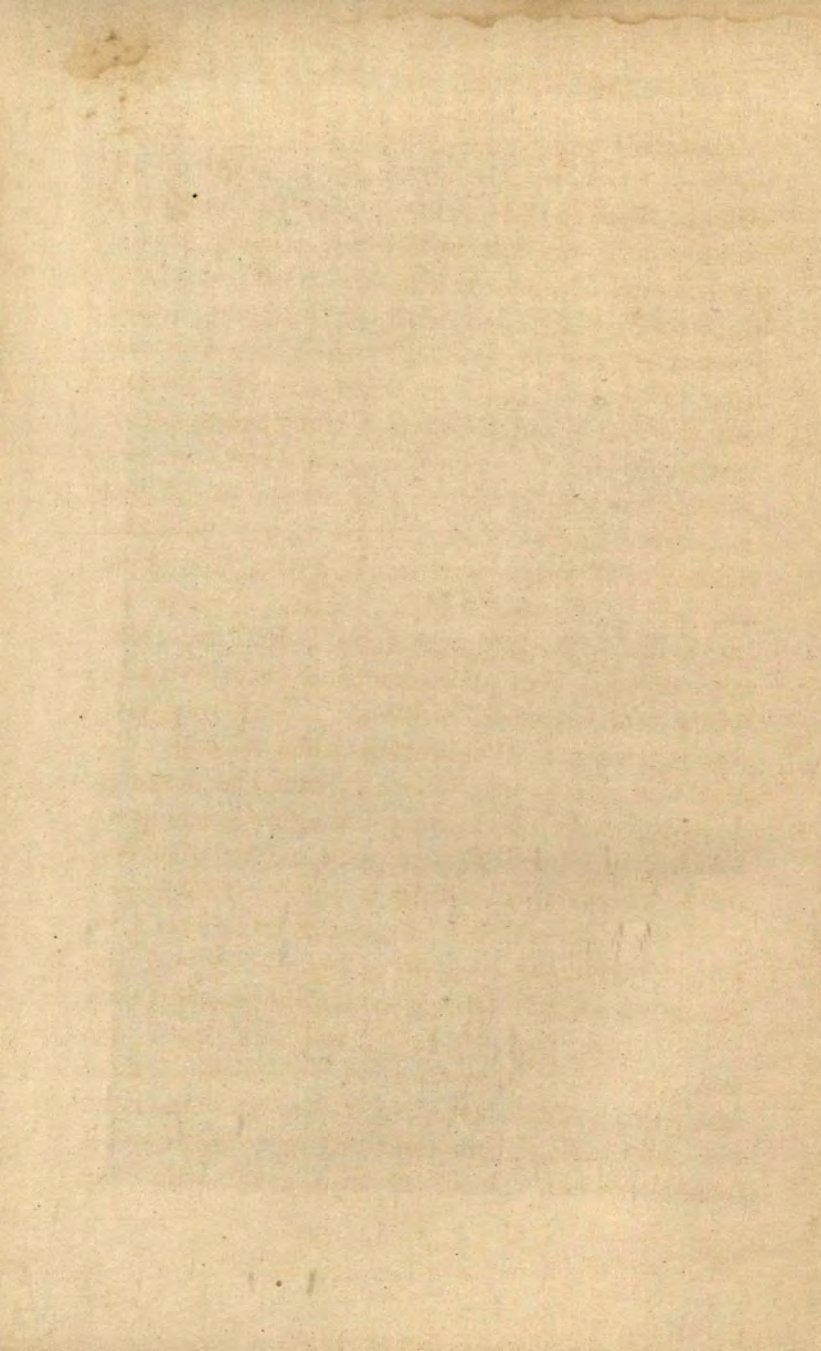
de Savoie, and is giving all manner of fêtes in consequence—perhaps to hide his want of enthusiasm for his bride. A few years afterwards, his son Charles is born, and the bells of Amboise ring out joyfully. But Louis has retired to his lair at Plessis-les-Tours, and poor Charlotte and her son are left alone together. I dare say they were happier without the King. Louis was not a comfortable man to have about the house. He came to see them sometimes, but generally they lived absolutely alone, the Prince growing up almost uneducated, with scarcely the state of an ordinary gentleman.

It was to this Castle that Charles, on becoming King, brought his wife, Anne of Brittany, after the marriage at Langeais. Here their children were born; and here they died one after the other. It was while the young King was walking along this very terrace, on his way to watch a game of ball, that passing beneath yonder low doorway he struck his forehead. For a moment he appeared stunned, then, making light of it, went on his way. But suddenly, as he was watching the game, he staggered and fell back. They carried him to a room close by, a poor dirty place belonging to some servant, where nine hours afterwards he died, as Philippe de Commines says: "A Prince little understood, but so good that it would be impossible ever to see a better creature."



THE CASTLE OF AMBOISE.

[*F. Stanley Burnester.*—



THE CASTLE OF AMBOISE

There is one episode, enacted here at Amboise, so tragic that it blots out the memory of all others. It is the year 1560. The Duc de Guise and his party are not feeling too secure. There are rumours of plots in the air. The Huguenots are suspected of a design to get the young King, Francis II., and his wife into their power, away from the baleful influence of the Queen Mother and the Duke and Cardinal. But their schemes are betrayed. The Court is moved swiftly and secretly out of harm's way to Amboise. A few days later, in the wood, the Huguenot chief, La Renaudie, is found, and hung from a gibbet on the middle of the bridge. What a sight for the ladies to look down upon! But the Duke has provided even more exciting entertainment. Every one suspected of being in any way concerned with the Conjunction d'Amboise, as the plot was called, was seized. Then the walls of Amboise were decorated indeed—hung with bunches of bodies; bossed with groups of heads, till it “became quite interesting to stroll round of an evening, and see how many more had been added during the day!” And there was the execution on the terrace, when the whole Court stood on the balcony above, watching the heads fall. Sometimes they received a shock, as when one old gentleman stopped as he was about to lay his head on the scaffold, and, dipping his hands in the blood of the man who had

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

gone before, raised them red and dripping to Heaven.

“Lord,” he cried, “see the blood of Thy children, and take vengeance!”

The regular executions stopped when some twelve hundred had been tried and put to death. But still out in the forest the murders continued, travellers being strung up to the trees, for no other crime than that of having a little money in their pockets; while others were tied hands and feet together, and cast into the Loire. The town at length grew so unbearable, so foul with murder and blood, that the Court had to move away.

And now, let us go up, and standing on the little balcony, look down, as Catherine and her Court looked down; and as we do so, thank God that such terrible days are gone for ever!

There is at Amboise an exquisite little chapel dedicated to Saint Hubert. Over the entrance is carved the scene of his meeting with the stag, and within is the tomb of Leonardo da Vinci. You can stop at Amboise for days, if you are lucky enough to have the time; but if you stop for weeks, you will not exhaust either its charm or its interest.

And then there is Chaumont! What of Chaumont? The story there is mostly tragedy. . . . For ourselves we found Chaumont a mere country house, occupied by the Duc de Broglie; who,

THE CASTLE OF CHAUMONT

being a great racing man, is covering a large part of his grounds with model stabling. But Chaumont has its history, and a very exciting history; for here, in the tenth century, lived Le Diable de Saumur, the only man of whom Foulques Nerra of Loches was really afraid. However, it is not of him, but of his descendant, Sulpice, that our story has to tell. We cannot go over the Castle, so let us lie on the grass here, and, as we look up at the great towers, I will tell you about it.

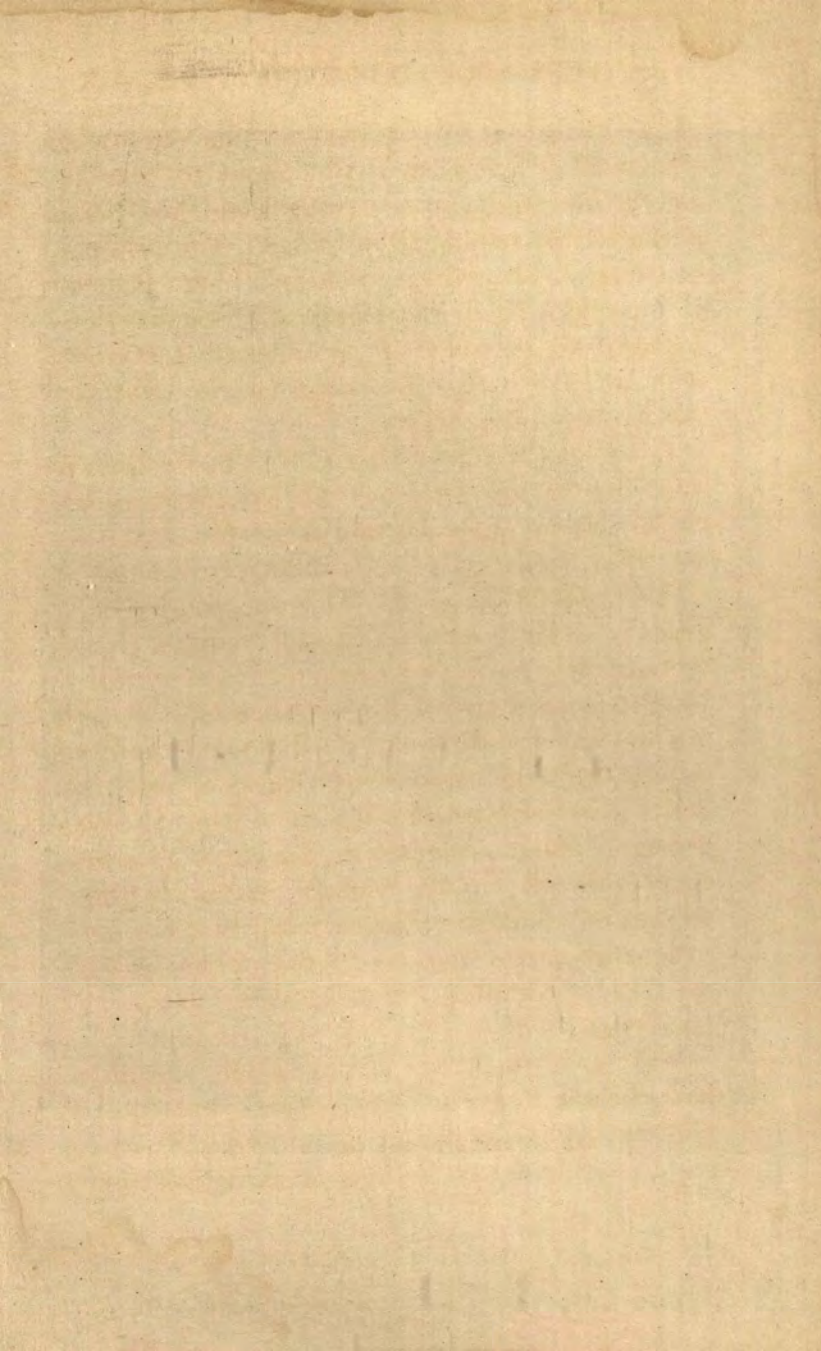
They were a wild race, these lords of Chaumont, and Sulpice found it hard to submit to the Count of Blois, his suzerain. So he rebelled, and a world of trouble it brought him. "At last he was made prisoner, and thrown into a dungeon at Châteaudun, where he had leisure to meditate on the inconveniences of immoderate appetites, and the dangers attending ambition. And the horror of the prison was but the prelude to fearful tortures. The conqueror practised on the unarmed knight all the cruelties which barbarous ages had invented. Sulpice, stripped, and loaded with chains, was stretched repeatedly on a bed of iron, and placed over a glowing fire. The flesh of the unfortunate man was slowly roasted, and they had the ferocious precaution to stop the torture just at the moment his strength was beginning to fail. They then left the patient to recover for a few days, after which they recommenced their fiendish operations."

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

The treatment was applied for the purpose of "persuading" Sulpice de Chaumont to give up his fortress, it being so strong that they found it impossible to take it by force. The prisoner, however, died without yielding; but his son Hugues, himself in the hands of the enemy, was so terrified at sight of his father's sufferings, that he gave up all his possessions on condition that he was set at liberty.

It was at Chaumont that Catherine de Médicis shut herself up with her astrologer, Ruggieri, "homme noir, qui n'a le visage bien fait; toujours habillé de noir, puissant homme," to inquire as to the fate of her sons. The consultation took place in a large hall, which still remains, almost untouched. We may be sure that the wizard—who, it is said, struck even his accomplices with terror—had fitted it up in the most approved fashion, with all manner of bizarre objects, calculated to impress the Queen. After showing her her children's horoscopes, according to which they were all to die violent deaths, without leaving any offspring; he repeated his prognostications by means of a magic mirror, the account of which certainly sounds very weird and terrifying.

"First, through the room which Catherine beheld reflected in the mirror, walked the reigning King, a sad and mournful figure, whom the Queen had barely time to recognise before





THE ENTRANCE TO THE CASTLE OF BLOIS.

THE CASTLE OF BLOIS

it vanished. After him followed Charles, who made thirteen and a half turns, and disappeared, leaving a blood-stained cloud over the glass. Then came the Duc d'Anjou, afterwards Henri III., who passed fifteen times before stopping."

No wonder that Catherine took a dislike to Chaumont, and insisted on Diane de Poitiers accepting it in exchange for Chenonceaux.

In later days Chaumont became for a time the home of Madame de Staël, who here composed some of her most charming works.

And after Chaumont comes Blois. "Qui n'a pas vu la ville de Blois au temps des lilas n'a pas connu la douceur de vivre," runs the old saying; and though this is not the time of lilacs, "La Perle de la Loire" is looking very beautiful in the October sunset.

To write the story of Blois would mean to write the greater part of the history of the Kings and Queens of France, for they have almost all dwelt in this lordly Castle. That task is, of course, impossible for me. But there are certain episodes which have left their mark upon Blois, and which flash upon our memory directly we enter the courtyard.

Even as we approach the entrance we are reminded that this was the birthplace of Louis XII. See his statue in its beautiful niche over the great door! It was here that he lived

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

a great part of his happy life, with Anne of Brittany, whom he had married as soon as he decently could after the death of her first husband Charles VIII. There is in the Chapel a painted window, representing the betrothal of the King and Queen; and everywhere you will find their emblems—the porcupine of Louis, and the ermine of Anne. There are the windows from which they leaned; the hearths by which they sat; the room where this Father of his People lay, sick of his terrible illness; and the Queen's chamber, where Anne breathed her last. As we stand in the gallery looking down on the courtyard, we can fancy we see the Queen's coffin, covered with its ermines, being borne out under the archway, Louis following as chief mourner, and weeping, for he loved this little lame wife of his with all his heart. And as he passes away, followed by the splendid cortège, we bid farewell to him, for we know that he will never return to Blois.

But come, let us look round the courtyard again. Even the Chapel, which we have already mentioned, reminds us of the tragedy which is the great story of the Castle. Here, on the 9th of October 1566, King Henri III. and the Duc de Guise took the Sacrament together, to mark their renewed affection and friendship. Was there ever such a sacrilege since the time of Judas? There they knelt before the High

THE CASTLE OF BLOIS

Altar. In the Duke's heart there were black thoughts enough, but in Henri's there was murder—the murder of this very man beside whom he was kneeling. It was but ten weeks afterwards that the blow was struck. The Duke, Le Balafré, was, with other members of the Council, discussing the question of the salt tax, a never-ending subject of dispute. The Duke was grave and a little distrait. There were whispers in the air; even Catherine de Médicis had warned him that there was danger brewing. As he was mounting the magnificent outside staircase, he found himself followed by the captain and archers of the Guard, which startled him a little. But, with all his faults, Le Balafré was no coward. "Even if death is coming in by the door, I am not going to fly out by the window," said he haughtily, when the Archbishop of Lyon begged him to leave Blois. And so there he stood, leaning against the great chimneypiece, a handsome figure of a man, listening perhaps to certain noises in the next room, which is the King's bedchamber. And all the while, the talk is going on about "la gabelle."

The King is not present. He has other things to occupy him. There are the daggers to be given out to the fifty-five assassins; the question to be settled as to who should strike the first blow. And all the time he is restless and nervous, for though he knows that prayers are

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

being offered up in his private oratory for the success of his plot, this Duc de Guise has become so great a power in the land that the very idea of killing him seems impossible. When all is ready, Henri retires to the New Cabinet, which opens off the great bedroom, and closes the door. At the same time, Revol, the Secretary of State, goes out into the Council Chamber, and whispers to the Duke that His Majesty wishes to speak with him. So Le Balafre goes to the door, knocks, and enters. The King is in the Old Cabinet, says the hussar who admits him; and thither the Duke is making his way, when he finds himself closely followed by the Fifty-five. Surprised, he turns. Instantly there is a scuffle. Unable to draw his sword, because of his mantle, he is seized by the arms and legs, flung down at foot of the King's bed, while more than forty daggers are plunged into his body.

For two hours, they say, he lay there, with his cloak thrown over him. At last Henri, who had been giving orders for the capture of the other brother, le Cardinal de Guise, entered, and approaching the body, pushed the head aside with his foot.

"I should not have thought he was so tall," was all he said, contemptuously, and ordered the body to be burned and the ashes scattered over the Loire.

But in Paris much more was said. Over a hundred thousand persons, led by the clergy,

THE CASTLE OF CHAMBORD

walked through the streets, bearing lighted candles, and chanting the *De Profundis*. At a given signal they stopped, the lights were extinguished, and a savage cry arose: "May God extinguish in like manner the race of the Valois!" And all the while the Queen of the League, the Duchesse de Montpensier, sister of the murdered men, walked at the head of the procession, calling vengeance on the assassins.

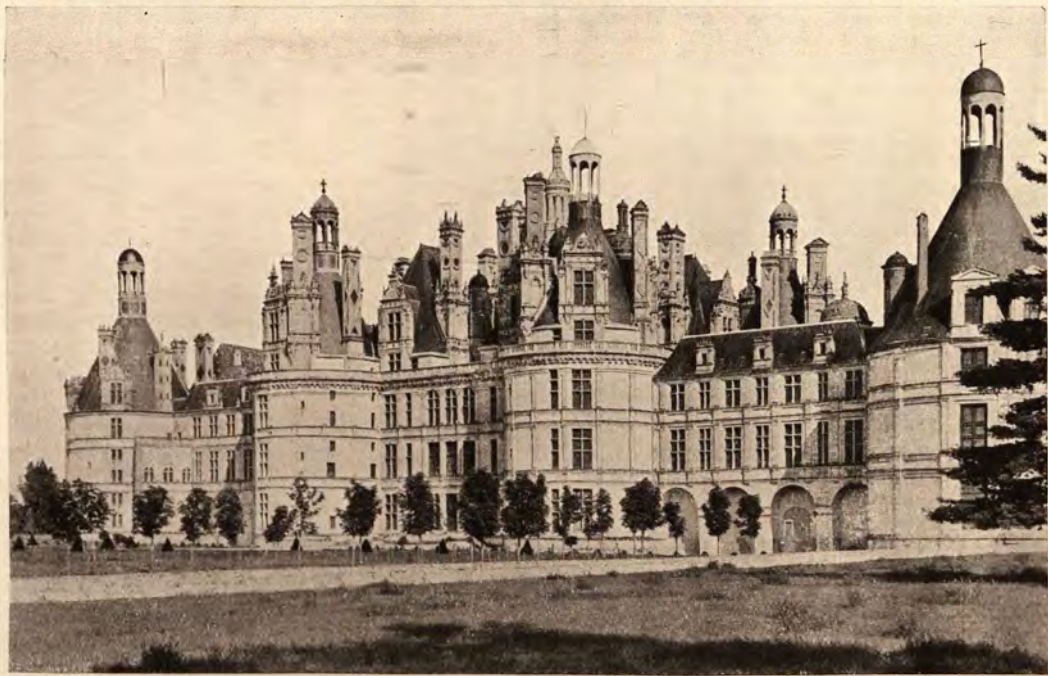
As we pass through the great rooms, we can live the scene again. Here is the *Salle des Gardes* where the Council was being held; here the chapel where the priests knelt, offering up their terrible prayers. The guardian will point out to you the Oratory of Catherine de Médicis; the *Tour de Foix*, where she studied the stars with her astrologer, Ruggieri; and the bed-chamber where she died only ten days after the murder of the Duke and Cardinal.

There is one King who appears very little at Blois, and yet it was he who built the most splendid portion of the whole Castle, as we know from the "salamanders" which figure on the great staircase. It was probably too small and old-fashioned a residence for Francis I. He needed a Chambord. Twelve years Chambord took to build, though 1800 workmen were employed. It is an unsatisfactory palace to visit, far less interesting than the other castles of the Loire. Even Francis I. himself seems to have been

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

disappointed with it; and the Kings who came later occupied it very little. Louis XIV., it is true, spent some time here; it was at a fête given at Chambord in honour of Mademoiselle de la Vallière that Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* was performed for the first time.

Chambord was built on the site of the old hunting-lodge of the Dukes of Orléans, and was said to be haunted by no one less than his satanic majesty himself, who, dressed in black, mounted on a black horse, followed by black dogs, and black-habited servants, used to gallop about through the black night, filling the woods with shouts and cries. "Le chasseur noir" he was called, and it was death to meet him. Francis I. must have been a bold man to pull down the devil's own lodge to make room for the Castle. I wonder if he and his sister, the Queen of Navarre, used to hear the sound of the ghostly hunt, and if that is the reason the great palace has never become popular like the other châteaux.



Photo

THE CASTLE OF CHAMBORD.

[*F. Stanley Burmester.*

CHAPTER XX

Châteaudun—Siege by the Germans—Story of Dunois.

THE sun was already beginning to set as we turned our backs on Blois, and commenced our journey over the bare plateau which bounds the Loire valley to the north. Flat as a desert, flat as the ocean on a calm day; one can see on every side for miles and miles, for there is scarcely a bush or a tree, and the road goes on and on and on, endlessly, wearisomely. Even the most desolate country generally has its moment of beauty when the sun is sinking below the horizon. But there was nothing beautiful about this plain; it was hard, flat, unnatural.

For a time I wondered vaguely at the effect, then suddenly it occurred to me that there were no shadows; save for the faintness of the light it might have been midday. I suppose it was merely that there was nothing to cast a shadow, but it gave a very weird effect, and one not altogether pleasant when one recalled the history of 1870.

“I don't think we shall find anything here,”

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

said I. "The plain seems to go on for ever and ever. I wish we had not come."

The road, however, was good, and we raced along at such a pace that it was still light enough to find our way when we entered Châteaudun.

A large square *place*, dimly lighted, and in the centre a monumental fountain. At one corner an old-fashioned inn, which improved on acquaintance. And still I wished we had not come, for I was tired, and, to tell the truth, almost satiated with the glories of the South. It had begun to rain, a fine drizzling rain, but it was not cold, and after dinner we sat with the windows open, while I wrote my notes of the day's doings. Suddenly there arose, on the farther side of the *place*, a wailing chant, a sound so weird and melancholy that it froze one's very heart.

"What is it?" I whispered to the waiter, who had just brought in the coffee. "What is it?"

"They are practising the music for the 18th of October," answered the man.

"The 18th of October? But—but why the 18th?"

The man looked at me as if unable to believe his ears.

"But, Madame," said he solemnly, "because it is the Day of the Defence."

"Ah, yes, of course, I had forgotten. That, I suppose, is why you call this La Place du 18 Octobre?"

CHÂTEAUDUN

“Précisement, Madame.”

“And the hotel was standing then?”

“Madame, it was all as you see. Nothing has changed, save that *le patron* was then young and active.”

I pricked up my ears.

“The *patron*? He was present at The Defence?”

“Mais, oui, Madame,” with conscious pride. “I should have assisted myself had I been born.”

“Do you think the *patron* would tell me about it?”

“Madame, he will be ravished. It is his great pleasure to speak of those days. I will call him.”

“Well,” said my husband, as soon as he had gone. “Are you still sorry you came?”

A moment later the door opened, and into the dimly lighted room came an elderly man, with the dignity of a soldier, and the self-assurance of one who had a good story and knew how to tell it with effect.

“Monsieur le Patron?” He bowed, and seating himself opposite the window, looked out meditatively into the night. The lamplight was behind him, like the fire and glory of that past he was trying to recall, and his face was already shadowed by the night which was beginning to close down upon him. And so we sat for a while in silence, listening to the rise and fall of that moaning dirge-like music; and all the time the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

slow heavy drops fell one by one from the roof, like tears:

“We had been warned that the Germans had taken Orléans,” said he at last; “we ought to have been prepared, but one always hopes for the best; and although we had seen the glow of the flames of Varize and Avny, we thought we might escape. Defence? But le Conseil Municipal had decided that the town should not be defended—no walls, no garrison, no artillery, it was impossible; they considered it contrary to their duties to expose it to pillage and fire. Grand Dieu! but we defended it all the same.” His quiet voice had a ring of pride about it. “The Germans may say what they please, they had over twelve thousand troops; they came settling down like crows all over the plateau beyond the railway. Six batteries there were, six batteries, all directed on one defenceless town. Ah, they made a noise, I assure you. The shells burst everywhere—in the Church of the Madeleine, the Castle, even in the hospital among the wounded. For us, we had a few *franc-tireurs* and national guards, perhaps five hundred in all, and for the rest there were the citizens. As I have said, no guns, no cavalry, but good barricades, and plenty of garden walls from behind which to shoot, and moreover, every house was a fortress. But one cannot fight eternally against such odds. Already the greater number of the *franc-tireurs* had been withdrawn

THE DEFENCE OF CHÂTEAUDUN

by the commander Lipowski, who saw that all was over, and had made off by the Route de Brou. The Germans were in the town, the defence had retreated to the eastward."

The old man was sitting forward, gazing out into the night, as though the scene were once more being enacted before him. I followed his eyes, and this is what I saw, or fancied I saw.

The *place* was dark no longer, but glowing with a red shifting light. At the farther end, away on the left, a little group was standing at bay, a few rough-looking irregular soldiers in shirts and dark blue trousers, backed by a wild, desperate throng of citizens, old men, boys, even a girl or two. Suddenly, down the street at the side of the hotel, came a shouting and tramping of many feet—a sound of wild running, shooting; and into the square poured the hosts of the Germans. Soon our end of the *place* was full of them, while at the opposite side waited that little band, and between them was the fountain. Then the shooting recommenced, deadly shooting at such close quarters. And all the while some frantic souls at the back were shouting the "Marseillaise," answered from time to time by a heavy echo of "Die Wacht am Rhein." Shooting, singing, and the flames of burning houses, for the Germans had fired each house as they had taken it.

Soon behind me I seemed to hear German voices, and found the hotel invaded. I heard

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

them demanding food, champagne, and a feast begins.

“Fine thing to see a town in flames,” said one officer. “That is what ought to be done to the whole of France, men, women, and children—get rid of them all, say I.”

I looked out again on the *place*. The firing had ceased—the wild singing had died away. Silence, save for the sound of heavy footsteps, moaning cries, and the crackling and roaring of the flames, roused to madness by the wind which was blowing over the plateau. Then that too ceased, the darkness fell, and I heard once more the drip, drip of the rain. The *patron* was sitting forward, peering eagerly out of the window, and there was a new light in his old eyes.

“Thank you,” said I presently; “I shall never forget the siege of Châteaudun.”

The old man turned quickly.

“Nor will the Germans,” said he, with a chuckle.

“I suppose they lost a good many?”

“There were a few moments when the ground here was covered with corpses, and they were not mostly French, I assure you. It was said at the time that 1800 Germans fell.”

“And the French?”

“Assez! But there were not so many to fall.”

It is morning. We have crossed the *place*,

THIBAUT LE TRICHEUR

stepping lightly as one does in a cemetery, and by the Rue de Luynes have made our way to the Castle of Dunois. High above the walls I can see the pointed roof of the old keep of Thibaut le Tricheur. You remember Thibaut le Vieux, or the Trickster, the terrible Count of Blois. I believe it is really he whom the peasants mean, when they talk of the Black Huntsman who haunts the woods round Chambord. A terrible man was Thibaut—"plein d'engin et plein fu de feintie," as the old chronicle says. He spent much of his time ravaging Normandy, advancing to the very walls of Rouen; and so fearful was the devastation of the country, that it is said there was not the bark of a single dog to be heard in the province. And this is his Castle we are entering.

For some time I have been becoming conscious that I was mistaken in thinking that Châteaudun lies in the midst of the plateau. It is, on the contrary, perched at its very edge, just where the wall of supporting cliff falls to the valley of the river Loire. Here Thibaut built his fortress, and made his home. It was well fitted with dungeons, which in those days was a great consideration; and it overlooked all his country, between Chartres, Blois, and Tours. So he lived there, and so splendid was it in his day that it gained the name of Le Palais de Thibaut.

Some of the Thibauts who succeeded this old

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

reprobate were very different men; one being surnamed Thibaut-le-Bon, on account of the almost unheard-of goodness and charity he exercised with regard to his poor tenants. He died in the Holy Land, and even after his death, his wife, Princess Alix, continued his good works. It was, however, he, I must confess, who roasted Sulpice of Chaumont over a slow fire in one of the dungeons below the great tower. Still, that was the manner of the times.

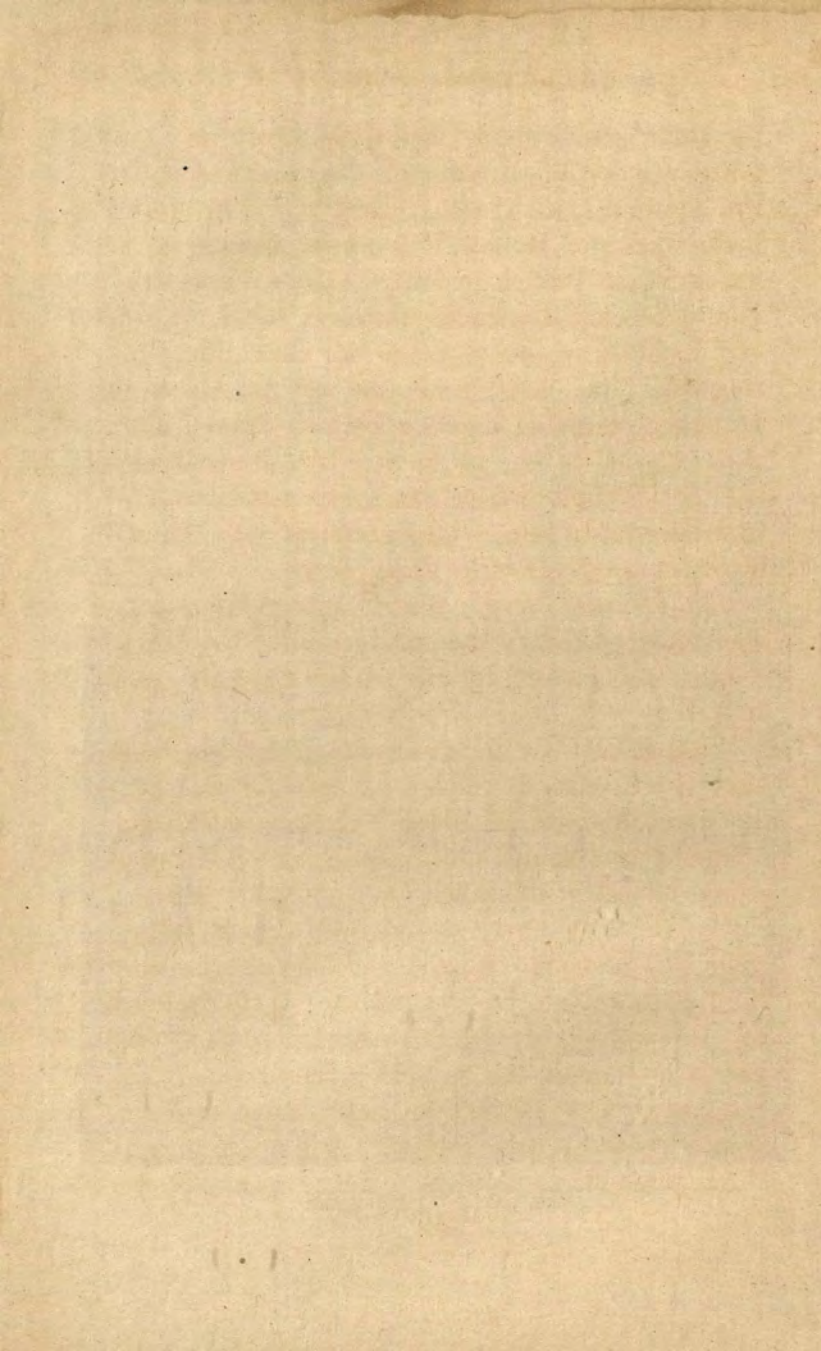
But it is as the home of the great Dunois, Jehan le Bâtard d'Orléans, the brother-in-arms of Jeanne d'Arc, that the Castle is famous. It was given him by his brother Charles, Duke of Orléans, in gratitude for the help Jehan had rendered him in setting him free from the English.

As you enter the courtyard you see the building where he lived with his wife, Marie d'Harcourt, at the farther end. This was his great kitchen. You may yet see the spits on which the meat was roasted. And close by, quite handy for heating the irons, is the torture chamber—for torturing had not quite gone out of fashion in Dunois' days. Here, too, is the Salle d'Honneur, with the stag over the chimneypiece. And you may mount by the magnificent staircases, second only to the great staircase at Blois, to the upper rooms, and look down from the old windows over the river to the ancient Church of Saint Jean.

The chapel of the Castle, or rather the chapels,



THE CASTLE, CHÂTEAUDUN.



LE BÂTARD D'ORLÉANS

for there are two, one above another, are still quite wonderful, in spite of the profanations of the Germans in 1870. There you will find a little statue of Dunois, clothed in armour as he appeared at the siege of Orléans. There, too, you will see the private oratories of the Lords and Ladies, the old statue of Mary the Egyptian, robed in her hair, and one of Elizabeth of Hungary, carrying her basket of roses. More than all, before the altar, you can descend into the little vault where once lay the Lords of Châteaudun, where the hearts of Le Bâtard d'Orléans and his wife were buried.

"There was a much finer statue of Dunois on the gable up there," said the guardian, pointing; "but it was broken by one of the German shells in 1870."

"You don't seem to love the Germans any more than the English do?" said I.

"Less, Madame, much less!" exclaimed the man. "It is a pity we did not finish them off. But it would have cost too much."

On the way home we visited the Hôtel de Ville, where we fell in with the Mayor, who very kindly showed us the great picture of the Defence of Châteaudun. It is a fine painting representing the last stand in the *place*. There is our hotel, there the "Chapellerie Jumelle." Running about among the French soldiers is a young girl, "Mademoiselle Laurentine Proust," as the Mayor

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

explained, who all night hastened from post to post, carrying cartridges, and attending to the wounded and dying.

“Is she still living?” I asked.

“Yes,” said the Mayor. “She lives close by. She married one of the bravest of the defenders.”

“And you, Monsieur,” I asked. “Were you present?”

“I fought at Coulmiers,” said the Mayor. “I was fifteen.”

“But that is very young for a soldier.”

“Oh,” he replied, with a laugh, “we fought younger than that in 1870.”

As we left the building he pointed out the decree of President Maréchal MacMahon, authorising the town to carry the Cross of the Legion of Honour above its arms, and over the entrance the shield bearing the three crescents with the cross on a field of blue.

CHAPTER XXI

Le Mans—Berengaria of Navarre—Rennes—Saint Melaine—
Bertrand du Guesclin—Mont-Saint-Michel—Story of King
Arthur and the Giant of Mont-Saint-Michel.

WE have almost reached the end of our journey. There are many other castles we should like to visit together—perhaps some day we may do so. But for the present we must leave Châteaudun, and turning westward work our way through Le Mans and Laval into Brittany, for there we have still a halt to make.

The rain of the previous night had ceased, but the sky was torn and wild, and where the sun should have been was nothing save a diffused glory, across which clouds were speeding like flocks of great birds, white, grey, and dove-coloured. It was easy to see that we were back in the north; these were not the warm dahlia tints of Provence.

Of course, we had the usual trouble with the animals—especially the cows. Just because we were pressed for time, the roads seemed full of them. I remember particularly three old ladies out for an afternoon stroll. Two, being on the

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

alert, moved aside for us to pass. But the third, intent on her own reflections, went sauntering on, till, suddenly realising what the horn meant, she made a bolt for the ditch, where she set upon one of the others, who was standing watching. "Why didn't you tell me?" I heard her exclaim indignantly, as she prodded her sleek neighbour with a horn; "letting me make a fool of myself like that. Besides, I might have upset those people!"

And there were the geese. Somewhere near Le Mans we came suddenly upon a great white flock, who, at sound of the horn, took to their wings and flew before us, so that our car seemed drawn by birds, and I felt like one of the old goddesses.

At Le Mans we had to stay for a few moments, if only to visit the tomb of the beautiful Berengaria, widow of the lion-hearted Richard. The Cathedral itself is wonderful, some parts of it dating back to the eighth and ninth centuries. And in the Cathedral, in the south transept, you will find the monument, brought here from the Abbey of Epau, where this sweet Queen lived out her life, after the death of her adored husband. All the romance I seemed to have lost, came crowding round me again, as I looked at the statue, with its long flowing hair, veiled like a bride and bound about the forehead with its jewelled fillet. I daresay it was a long time since

TOMB OF BERENGARIA OF NAVARRE

Berengaria had heard any one talking of her, of her romantic marriage ; her great love for the golden-haired King ; of the long wanderings with Richard and his sister Joanna in Palestine. We thought of her terror when Richard's yellow horse, Flavalle, was shot beneath him at the battle of Jaffa, and of all the talk there was about the charger Saladin sent him. Then we came with her to Rome, in her ship with Joanna and the captive Princess of Cyprus ; watched her as she turned pale at recognising the King's jewelled belt, which had been put up for sale ; and pictured her through the long months of his captivity, when no one knew where he was. For, whatever we may think of Richard, Berengaria was undoubtedly a saint. And when the short troublous reign was over, and she had seen both him and Joanna laid by their father in the Abbey of Fontivault, she came here to Le Mans, and established herself in the old Abbey of Epau to pray for their souls.

Le Mans was a royal city in those days. Henry II., himself, had been born in the Castle. But most of the antiquities of Le Mans have disappeared, together with the Abbey of Epau. When some years ago it was visited, the site was occupied by a barn, and the tomb itself lay buried beneath a mass of wheat. To-day this sepulchre lies in all the glory of one of the finest cathedrals in France ; but, even as we are watching it, the shadows tell us that it is

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

time to be moving if we would sleep to-night in Rennes.

It was very late when we arrived; they had given us up at the Hôtel Moderne. Nevertheless they managed to serve us one of those wonderful suppers which seem to spring from fairyland; and I was soon sleeping behind the familiar red curtains of my room overlooking the canal.

A Rennes Sunday is for me a red-letter day, for I see friends whom I seldom meet at any other time. After church, we usually go to call on an old lady, who has a little apartment, opening off the courtyard of what was once the Parliament House.

"Ah!" she cries, as soon as my head is above the staircase. "It is Madame Gostling! But why did you not let me know you were in Rennes? Mon Dieu, I might have been out, and my son, he is not here. Oh, la! la! la! How disappointed he will be."

For a while we sit in the pleasant little room, hung with photographs of relations living and dead, and listen while this Breton mother talks of her priest son.

"He is very like you," I say at last; "he has your eyes," at which she flushes with pride.

"Mais, Madame," she answers coyly, "he has the most beautiful eyes in the world, my son."

After we have left her, we stroll along by the canal, to a house where other friends are waiting

RENNES

lunch for us. Oh, the dear house, with its gay voices and warm hearts! They are watching for us, and no sooner have we turned the handle of the door, than we find ourselves in half a dozen pairs of arms. And there are greetings and kisses and laughter, even a tear or two, for we are so happy at being together again. We sit down and talk and talk, not as we talk in England, but all together, at the tops of our voices, no one listening or attempting to listen; for it is just noise we want, the noise of cheerful voices. And when lunch is ready, how good it is to sit once more, all in our accustomed order, around the oval table, with its checked red and white cloth, and eat the familiar cabbage soup and great slices of bread.

“Papa, Madame Gostling has no butter!”

“Rosalie! Rosalie! A clean plate for Monsieur le Docteur.”

And Robert is sitting beside me—Robert, who has grown quite a young man since I saw him last, but is not too big to put his head on my shoulder and kiss me in the middle of lunch, as three years ago he would do in the street, bless his heart!

“Madame, how do you like my hairs?” he asks presently, and I notice that, by dint of much vaseline, he has taken to parting his hair in the middle.

“It’s all right in front, but you have forgotten

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

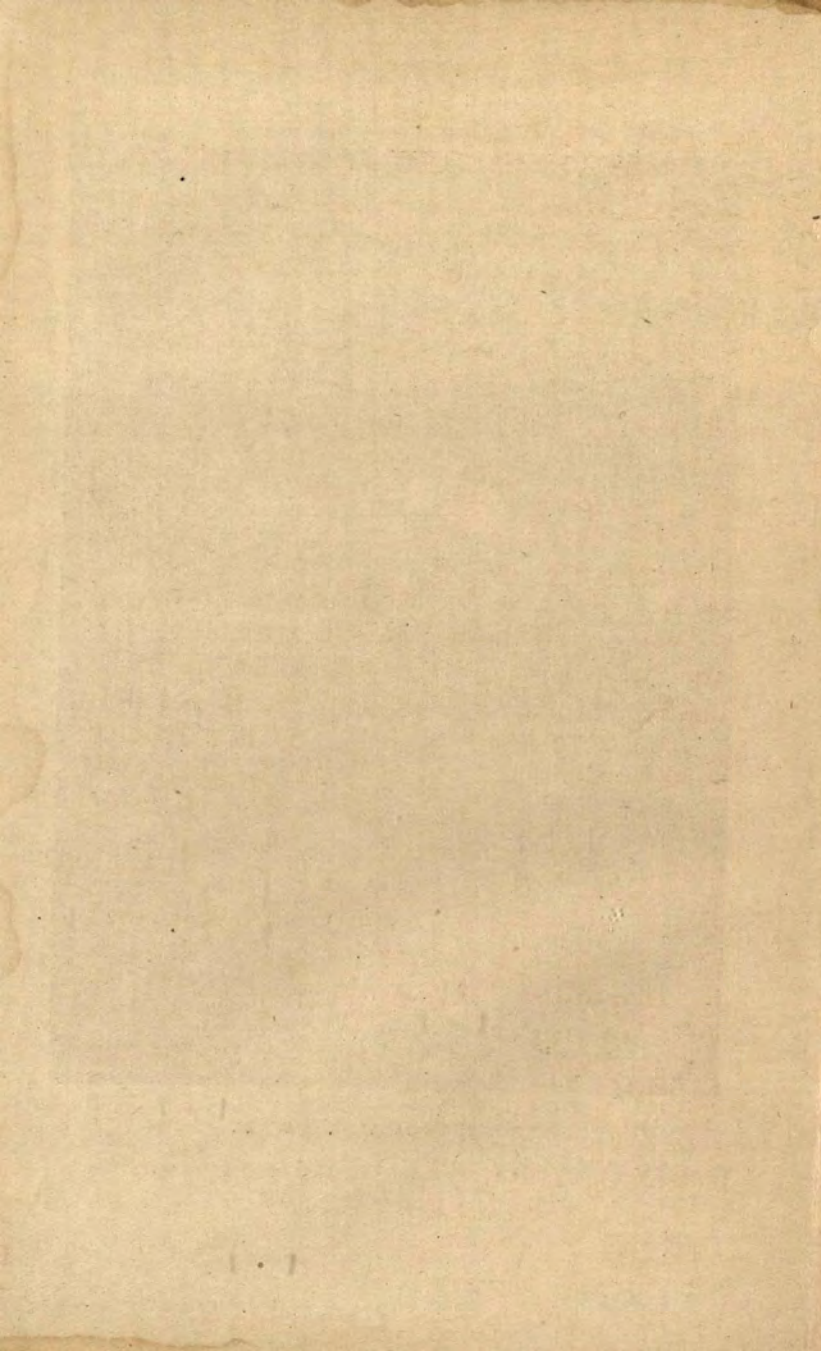
the back," says some one cruelly, at which a fresh tumult arises and has to be quelled by "Papa"!

"Ah! how good it is to see you both, mon ami. Why cannot you live here always?" Yes, that is the question. Why not? Oh! this incessant thought for bread and cheese. Adam, Adam, you have much to answer for!

In the afternoon we walk by the Vilaine, meeting other friends, and so, still talking, with a girl on my left arm, and Robert hanging like a big basket on the right, find our way through the meadows to a certain little restaurant known to the Rennais. There, as if we had not had anything to eat for twenty-four hours, we sit and devour great slices of new crusty bread, and the salted butter of Prelavaye, and drink bottled cider. By this time we have around us many of our Breton friends, and the noise of talking and laughing is louder and more indecorous than ever. Yet what care we? Robert has endangered his life, and undergone a scolding, that he might present me a love token, in the form of a water lily with an extremely long and slimy stalk, which he insists upon my wearing in the bosom of my dress. And when at last we rise and turn homeward, it would be difficult to find a gayer or more light-hearted company. As we pass through the suburbs they drop off, one by one, with an "Au revoir!" and a handshake, and a



"CHÂTEAU BRANLANT," RENNES.



RENNES

few parting shots exchanged as we go on our way. In the evening, after supper, we talk again, more quietly this time, with the cloud of parting already on the horizon. Some One tells stories of his youth, such stories as no one but he can tell, and we all sit round the lamp listening. And when we find we cannot coax another tale from him, we rise reluctantly to put on our hats, and, accompanied by all the dear family, stroll back to the hotel, still with a girl on my left arm and Robert like a big basket hanging on the right.

But you may not be so fortunate as we are. You may not have friends in Rennes. In that case you should go and see the antiquities, the Porte Mordelaise, through which, in the days before the union of Brittany with France, the Dukes passed to their Coronation in the Cathedral of Saint Pierre hard by. After spending two days in prayer before the altar, they were crowned, just as a King is crowned, save that they were not anointed. A procession then formed, bearing the jewelled State sword, and a rich veil; and the Duke, still wearing his gold circlet, was conducted to the old Church of Notre Dame de la Cité, there to return thanks.

Civitas Rubra, or the Red City, was the original name of Rennes, and there were in it several heathen temples, notably one to Thetis. It was Maximinus, disciple of Saint Luke and first Bishop

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHATEAUX

of Rennes, who, according to tradition, destroyed the statue of that goddess, reconsecrating the temple to the true God under the invocation of Mary, calling the Church Notre Dame de la Cité.

There are many old churches to visit, notably that of Saint Melaine, upon the hill by the Tabor. It is built on the site of the monastery founded in the fifth century by a great Bishop of Rennes—Melaine, who was the friend of King Clovis, and largely responsible for the union of Gaul under that monarch. There are many stories told of Melaine—delightful old-fashioned legends such as one finds lingering in every corner of Brittany. For instance:—

“One day, an old man, having lost his son, said to his friends: ‘Carry the body of this child to the blessed Melaine; I have every confidence that he will restore him to life—he who preaches about the living God.’ And when the body was laid at the feet of the miracle-worker, the poor father cried with the same faith, ‘Man of God, I believe that you have the power to recall my son from among the dead.’

“A crowd had naturally gathered to see the miracle. ‘Oh, Veneti,’ cried the Bishop, ‘what is the use of showing you miracles in the name of Christ, since you obstinately refuse to receive His faith?’ But the Veneti cried with one voice: ‘If you do restore this child, be sure, O

SAINT MELAINE—BERTRAND DU GUESCLIN

man of God, that we will all for the future believe in the God whom you preach.'

"Then Melaine made his prayer, laid a cross on the breast of the child, and he returned to life, and all the people shouted, 'We believe in the God of Melaine.'"

So Melaine baptized them, and then set to work destroying the temples which still remained in the neighbourhood. To-day he is almost forgotten, even in his own church, which is called the Church of Notre Dame, and which you may recognise by the huge statue of the Virgin with which it is crowned.

The great hero of Rennes is here, as elsewhere in Brittany, Bertrand du Guesclin. We have spoken in another place¹ of his boyhood and youth. Let us now think of that day when Rennes, being straitly shut up by the English, Bertrand made his way in and defended it. There are plenty of souvenirs of that time. In a back street, near the Cathedral, you will find the Church of Saint Sauveur, where, just before the altar, the sacristan will point out the spot where Bertrand du Guesclin commanded the countermine to be made, by means of which the enemy, caught in the subterranean passage they had been digging beneath the walls, were killed like rats in a trap.

"Who is this young man who foils us at every

¹ *Bretons at Home.*

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

turn?" asks the Duke of Lancaster, who is in command of the English :—

"C'est un jeune vassaux qui Bertrand est nommez
C'est Bertrand Du Guesclin qui vient si faitement,
Tout ainsi que le loup qui hors du bois descent,
Il nous tient à brebis, il nous montre la dent,"

as the old song says.

One day to the Porte Mordelaise comes an English herald, with a request from the Duke that Bertrand will go and confer with him about terms. The herald finds the ugly misshapen brigand in the royal castle of many memories, which, alas! has disappeared. He is dressed all in black, with a great axe flung over his shoulder.

"Come," says the Duke, when next day Bertrand enters his camp fearlessly, "let us be friends. It will cost the life of a hundred thousand men if the war continues."

"So much the better for the survivors," replies Bertrand coolly. "Their share of the spoil will be all the richer. . . ."

I wish I could go on talking about Bertrand du Guesclin—of the horse the Duke gave him, that the English might see him fight the renowned champion, William Bembro.

"Never till this day, Duke," says Bertrand, "has any one given me a present. Whatever I possess has been taken at the point of my sword. But as you have given me this beautiful horse, you shall see me try him to-morrow." And next

MONT-SAINT-MICHEL

day the combat was fought, du Guesclin, as usual, coming off victor—or the Bretons would probably not have preserved the legend!

Of the end of the siege, when the Duke paid a hundred thousand crowns, for the satisfaction of placing the English flag on the walls of Rennes for five minutes, to acquit himself of the vow he had made to his brother, the King of England, we must not wait to speak. Our time is up. The Southampton boat only sails three times a week, and we have already written to the agent at Saint-Malo to reserve a place for "Mademoiselle" L.D. 7222. So now for our last Castle.

I wonder how many of the tens of thousands of tourists who stand in wonder gazing up at the marvellous guarded Mount of the Great Archangel, think of the old legend of its foundation. Mont-Saint-Michel, or Mont Tombe, as it was once called, has always been a celebrated place. It is said that, ages ago, all this part of the coast was covered with a great forest, which reached from Dol to Cap Fréhel, and that in its centre rose the Mont Tombe, the home of a sacred band of Druidesses. No doubt it was their special function to watch beside some ancient, and now forgotten, dolmen, once the tomb of a mighty chief.

One of the earliest accounts of Mont Tombe or Mont-Saint-Michel is given by Malory in his *Mort d'Arthur*. It tells how King Arthur,

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

always on the look out for wrongs to right, had heard of a giant living on the Mount, a terrible creature, who had eaten up all the children of the neighbourhood, and finally run off with the beautiful wife of Arthur's own cousin Hoël, Duke of Northern Brittany. . . .

“So Arthur called unto him Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere, and commanded them secretly to make ready horse and harness for himself and them twain, for after evensong he would ride on a pilgrimage, with them two only, unto the Mount. So they three departed thence, and rode forth as fast as ever they might, until they came to the foot of that Mount. And there they alighted, and the King commanded them to tarry there, for he would himself go up into that Mount.

“And so he ascended up into that hill till he came to a great fire, and there he found a careful widow, wringing her hands and making great sorrow, sitting by a new-made grave.”

It turns out to be the grave of the Duchess above-mentioned, and the “careful widow” warns Arthur that he too will fall a victim to the giant, unless he forthwith takes himself off. But this is not Arthur's way.

“‘Well,’ said he, ‘I will accomplish my mission for all your fearful words,’ and went forth by the crest of the hill, and saw where the giant sat at supper, gnawing on the limbs of a man, basking his broad limbs by the fire, and three

KING ARTHUR AND THE GIANT

fair damsels turning three spits, whereon were broached twelve young children new born, like young birds!

“When King Arthur saw that piteous sight, he had great compassion on them, so that his heart bled for sorrow, and he hailed the giant in this wise:—

“‘He that all the world wieldeth, give thee short life and shameful death, and the devil have thy soul! Why hast thou murdered these young innocent children, and this Duchess? Therefore arise, and dress thee, thou glutton! For this day shalt thou die of my hand.’

“Then the glutton anon started up and took a great club in his hand, and smote at the King that his coronet fell to the earth. And the King hit him again that he carved his belly, that his entrails fell to the ground. Then the giant threw away his club, and caught the King in his arms, that he crushed his ribs. Then the three maidens knelt down and called to Christ for help and comfort of Arthur. And then Arthur weltered and wrung, that he was other while under and another time above. And so weltering and wallowing they rolled down the hill, till they came to the sea-mark, and ever as they so weltered Arthur smote him with his dagger, and it so fortunèd they came to the place where as the two knights were and kept Arthur’s horse. Then when they saw the King fast in the giant’s

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

arms they came and loosed him. And then the King commanded Sir Kay to smite off the giant's head and set it upon a truncheon of a spear, and bear it to Sir Hoël, and tell him that his enemy was slain, 'and after let his head be bound to a barbican,' said he, 'that all the people may see and behold it.'"

I cannot help thinking that, in this old legend, we have a poetical account of the founding of Christianity on Mont Tombe.

There is, however, another story. It is the year of our Lord 708. Saint Michel has already made his famous appearance on Mont Gargue on the shores of the Adriatic. One day he comes to the Bishop of Avranches—Saint Aubert. "Go to the Mont Tombe," says he, "and there on the summit hollow out for me an oratory, that I may be worshipped for all ages." That is the generally received version of the founding of a Christian church on the old pagan worshipping-place.

As we cross the causeway, and look out over the flat desert of quicksand, where so many pilgrims have lost their lives in days gone by, we wonder which was the more merciful death—to be swallowed slowly, inch by inch, or to perish as a sacrifice on the old stone of the Druids above.

It is a wonderful place, Mont-Saint-Michel. In summer, of course, it is crammed with tourists

MONT-SAINT-MICHEL

—every shop a trap to catch visitors, every house a hotel or restaurant to feed them. But the Mount itself. Nothing can spoil it. From the moment one enters the Porte du Roi one is back in the Middle Ages. I am not going to take you step by step through the various buildings of the great Benedictine Abbey-Castle. Your guide will do that. It is a bewildering labyrinth of halls, towers, and winding stairways; now, you look down from a window, and see far below the smooth rippling delusive sands stretching away to infinity; now you stop in a stately pillared hall, and listen while the guide tells you that it was here Louis XI. instituted the Order of Saint-Michel. At last you reach the Abbey Church, and stand wondering whether somewhere below your feet lies buried the old dolmen, or altar tomb, which was the first object of worship on the Mont-Saint-Michel. And all the time you are picturing the royal pilgrims who came thither, to worship the great Saint Michel and the small Black Virgin in the parish church. And you look out and see once more the modern pilgrims making their way in a long line over the treacherous quicksands, to-day crossed by the causeway; and your mind is so full of stories, so crowded with legends and pictures, that, as you turn and descend the hill, you fancy yourself back in the days of Saint Louis, or Joan of Arc whose devotion to the Saint brought

RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHÂTEAUX

such renewed glory to the Mount; so it is with something of a shock that you find the automobile waiting in the tiny *place* ready to bear you away to Saint-Malo and the *Princess Ena*.



MAP TO ILLUSTRATE "RAMBLES AROUND FRENCH CHATEAUX"

THE RED LINE SHOWS THE ROUTE FOLLOWED

INDEX



- Abbey of Epau, 353.
 Abbey of Fontivrault, 314, 353.
 Abbey of Saint Germain, Auxerre, 63.
 Adelaïde de Savoie, 49.
 Adelaïde des Baux, 206.
 Agnès de Montpellier, 253.
 Agnès Sorel, 308.
 Alba, 108.
 Albigenses, 248 et seq.
 Albret, Charles d', 323.
 Alet, 261.
 Aliscamps, Les, 234 et seq.
 Allamanon, Bertrand d', 198-207.
 Ambert, 81 et seq.
 Ambert Fête Dieu, 83.
 Ambert, Huguenots at, 84-85.
 Amboise, Castle of, 329 et seq.
 Amboise, Conjunction d', 331.
 Amboise, Executions at, 332.
 Amour, Pavillon d', 211.
 Andéol, Bourg Saint, 108.
 André of Hungary, 136-137.
 Anglas, Boissy d', 107.
 Anjou, René of, 176.
 Anne of Austria, 9 et seq., 35.
 Anne of Brittany, 310, 330, 336.
 Anselm, Saint, 92.
 Aqueduct, Roman, 166.
 Aragon, Peter of, 254.
 Ardèche, Gorge of the, 101.
 Arènes, Les, 233.
 Arles, 227 et seq.
 Armagnac, Comte d', 275.
 Arthur, King, 361 et seq.
 Assassination of Henri III., 17 et seq.
 Aubenas, 102 et seq.
 Aubenas, Château d', 106.
 Aude River, 256, 261, 267.
 Austria, Anne of, 9 et seq., 35.
 Auxerre, Cathedral of, 61.
 Avignon, 124-126 et seq.
 Avon, 55.
 Azay-le-Rideau, Castle of, 313-317 et seq.
 Balafgré, Le, 337-338.
 Balue, Cardinal la, 306.
 Barri, Madame du, 30 et seq.
 Baux, Adelaïde des, 206.
 Baux, Béragère des, 204.
 Baux, Les, 201 et seq.
 Baux, Les, Origin of family, 202.
 Baux, Les, Siege, 203 et seq.
 Bembro, William, 360.
 Benedict XII., 129, 141, 285.
 Bénézet, Legend of, 131.
 Bénézet, Bridge of, 225.
 Béragère des Baux, 204.
 Berengaria of Navarre, 352.
 Bertrand d'Allamanon, 198-207.
 Bertrand de Gourdon, 296 et seq.
 Bertrand du Guesclin, 359 et seq.
 Béziers, 247, 249, 256.
 Béziers, Vicomte de (See Raymond Roger Trencavel), 248 et seq., 253 et seq.
 Birth of Louis XIII., 44.
 Black Prince, 300 et seq.
 Blois, Castle of, 335 et seq.
 Bohier, Thomas, 326.
 Boissy d'Anglas, 107.
 Bonaparte Napoléon, 51 et seq., 266.
 Bossuet, 25.
 Bourg Saint-Andéol, 108.
 Bridge of Bénézet, 225.

INDEX

- Brittany, Anne of, 310, 330, 336 et seq.
 Broce, Pierre de, 320-322.
 Broglie, Duc de, 332.
 Bugue, Le, 288.
- Cabestaing, 204, 205.
 Cahors, 286.
 Camargue, Tête de la, 237.
 Carcassonne, 251 et seq.
 Cardinal Colonna, 157.
 Cardinal de Rohan, 93.
 Cardinal Mazarin, 35.
 Card-makers of Thiers, 78 et seq.
 Carpentras, 223.
 Castle of Amboise, 329 et seq.
 Castle of Aubenas, 106.
 Castle of Azay-le-Rideau, 313, 317 et seq.
 Castle of Beaucaire, 184.
 Castle of Bishops of Cavaillon, 163.
 Castle of Blois, 335 et seq.
 Castle of Carcassonne, 253 et seq.
 Castle of Châlus, 296 et seq.
 Castle of Chambord, 339, 340.
 Castle of Châteaudun, 342 et seq.
 Castle at Châteauneuf-du-Pape, 219.
 Castle of Chaumont, 332.
 Castle of Chenonceaux, 326 et seq.
 Castle of Chinon, 311.
 Castle of Cinq-Mars, 323.
 Castle of Foix, 269 et seq.
 Castle of Fontainebleau, 42 et seq.
 Castle Gaillard, 5.
 Castle of Langeais, 320.
 Castle of Les Baux, 202.
 Castle of Loches, 305 et seq.
 Castle of Luynes, 323.
 Castle of Montdragon, 113.
 Castle of Mornas, 113.
 Castle of Orange, 118.
 Castle of Pognac, 94.
 Castle of Roquemaure, 222 et seq.
 Castle of Saint-André (Fort Saint-André), 146 et seq.
- Castle of Saint-Cloud, 16 et seq.
 Castle of Saint-Germain, 8 et seq.
 Castle of Tarascon, 174.
 Castle of Versailles, 22 seq.
 Cathedral of Auxerre, 61.
 Cathedral of Le Mans, 352.
 Cathedral of St. Trophime, 227.
 Caudebec, 3.
 Cerfs, Galerie des, 46.
 Césaire, St., 238.
 Cette, 247.
 Cévennes, 99.
 Châlus, 296 et seq., 315.
 Chapel of St. Honorat, 234.
 Chapel of St. Saturnin, 50.
 Charlemagne, 257.
 Charles d'Albret, 323.
 Charles de Montpensier, 69.
 Charles II. of England, 4-13.
 Charles VI., 9, 277.
 Charles VII., 308-316.
 Charles VIII., 320-330.
 Charlotte de Savoie, 329.
 Charnai, Geoffroy de, 223.
 Château-Gaillard, 5.
 Château-Renard, 170.
 Châteaudun, Castle of, 342 et seq.
 Châteauneuf-du-Pape, 215.
 Chaumont, Sulpice de, 333.
 Chinon, 311 et seq.
 Christina of Sweden, 46.
 Church at Fontainebleau, 42.
 Cinq-Mars, Castle of, 323.
 Cinq-Mars, Henri Coiffier de, 323.
 Clement v., Death of Pope, 222.
 Clement VI., Pope, 90, 135, 142.
 Clodowald, 17.
 Clovis, 302.
 Cœur-de-Lion, Richard, 5, 209, 276, 315.
 Colonna, Cardinal, 157.
 Concini, 324.
 Conjunction d'Amboise, 331.
 Conqueror, William the, 3.
 Constantine, Palace of, 232.
 Corneille, 25.
 Coulmiers, Battle of, 350.
 Courts of Love, 211.

INDEX

- Cutlers of Thiers, 72.
- Dante, 202.
- Death of Henriette d'Angleterre, 19 et seq.
- Death of Jacques de Molai, 223.
- Death of Louis XIII., 11.
- Death of Pope Clement v., 222 et seq.
- Diane de Poitiers, 43, 327, 328.
- Dominic, St., 249, 253, 277.
- Dorat, Le, 302.
- Duchesse d'Etampes, 42.
- Duclair, 4.
- Duke of Lancaster, 360.
- Duke of Richmond, Henry, 2.
- Dunois, 348.
- Durance, 153-169.
- Edith of England, Queen, 92.
- Enfants de Dieu, Les, 247.
- Epau, Abbey of, 353.
- Etampes, Duchesse d', 319.
- Etang de Thau, 247.
- Extermination of Knights Templars, 222.
- Eyzies, Les, 287.
- Félix Armand, the Priest Roadmaker, 263 et seq.
- Fénelon, 25.
- Fête Dieu, Ambert, 83.
- Foix, Castle of, 269 et seq.
- Foix, Comte de (See Gaston Phœbus), 269 et seq., 277 et seq.
- Foix, Death of Gaston de, 273 et seq.
- Fontainebleau, 34 et seq.
- Fontainebleau, Church at, 42.
- Fontevrault, Abbey of, 314, 353.
- Fort Saint-André, 146 et seq.
- Foulques Nerra, 305, 320.
- Foulques Rechin, 306.
- Foulquet, 206.
- Fountain of Vaucluse, 163.
- Francis I., 37, 43, 70, 310, 318, 319, 326, 339.
- Francis II., 328-331.
- Gabrielle d'Estrées, 7, 319.
- Gaillard, Château, 5.
- Galathea, 229.
- Galéas de Mantone, 138.
- Galerie des Cerfs, 46.
- Gaston de Foix, Death of, 273 et seq.
- Gaston Phœbus (See Comte de Foix), 269 et seq., 277 et seq.
- Gaulish city, The, 294.
- Genez, St., 74 et seq.
- Geoffrey Rudel, 198, 206, 207.
- Geoffroi de Charnai, 223.
- Geoffroy le Bel (Count of Anjou), 311.
- Gilles Berthelot, 318.
- Gilles, St., 238.
- Glanium, 200.
- Gorge of the Ardèche, 101.
- Gourdon, Bertrand de, 296 et seq.
- Guesclin, Bertrand du, 359 et seq.
- Guillaume au Cornet (Prince of Orange), 119.
- Guillaume Cabestaing, 204.
- Guillaume de Pastrengo, 159.
- Guillaume de Porcelet, 209.
- Hauser, Monsieur O., 289 et seq.
- Haute-Laugerie, 295.
- Havre, Le, 1.
- Helvii, The, 103.
- Henrietta Maria, Queen of England, 9, 12 et seq.
- Henriette d'Angleterre (Madame d'Orléans), 19, 37.
- Henriette d'Angleterre, Death of, 19 et seq.
- Henriette d'Entragues, 45.
- Henris, Les Quatres, 134.
- Henri II., 43.
- Henri III., 329.
- Henri III., assassination of, 17 et seq.
- Henri IV., 6, 37, 44, 319.
- Henri Coiffier de Cinq-Mars, 323.
- Henry, Duke of Richmond, 2.
- Henry I., of England, 311.

INDEX

- Henry II., of England, 310 et seq.
 Herakles, 229.
 Homo - Moustériensis - Hauseri, 292.
 Honorat, Chapel of St., 235.
 Hôtel d'Armagnac, 38 et seq.
 Huguenots at Ambert, 85.
- Innocent III., Pope, 254.
 Inquisition, The, 249, 255.
- Jacques de Molai, Death of, 223.
 James V., of Scotland, 43.
 Jeanne d'Arc, 316, 317, 365.
 Jeanne de Laval, 201.
 Jeanne, La Reine, 135 et seq.
 Jeux Floraux, Société des, 285.
 John XXII., Pope, 140, 148, 149, 286.
- King Arthur, 361 et seq.
 King René, 176, 201.
 King Robert of Naples, 156.
 Knights Templars, Extermination of, 222.
- La Chaise Dieu, 88 et seq.
 La Fontaine, 25.
 Le Moustier, 289.
 Lancaster, Duke of, 360.
 Langeais, 320 et seq.
 La Sainte Baume, 174.
 Laura, 159 et seq.
 Laval, Jeanne de, 201.
 La Vallière, Louise de, 26 et seq., 340.
 Lavanet, 268.
 Lazarus, St., 174.
 Le Bugue, 288.
 Legend of Bénézet, 131.
 Le Havre, 1.
 Le Mans, 351.
 Le Mans, Cathedral of, 352.
 Le Puy, 96 et seq.
 Le Thor, 154.
 Les Andelys, 5.
 Les Arènes, 233.
 Les Baux, 201.
- Les Baux, Origin of family of, 202.
 Les Baux, Siege of, 203.
 Les Eyzies, 287.
 Lillebonne, 3.
 Limoges, 299.
 Limoges, Siege of, 300.
 Limoux, 260.
 Loches, 304 et seq.
 Loire, River, 320.
 Lorraine, Louise de, 329.
 Louis VIII., 258.
 Louis XI., 306, 318, 320, 329, 365.
 Louis XII., 310, 321, 335, 336.
 Louis XIII., 10, 11, 44.
 Louis XIV., 12, 14, 25 et seq., 49, 247, 340.
 Louis XV., 30 et seq.
 Louis XVI., 31, 50.
 Louise de Lorraine, 329.
 Louise de la Vallière, 26 et seq., 340.
 Louise de Savoie, 69.
 Louise Motier (La Fayette), 10.
- Madame du Barri, 30 et seq.
 Madame de Maintenon, 29.
 Madame de Montespan, 25, 28.
 Madame de Sade, 161.
 Madeleine, Princesse, 43.
 Mademoiselle de Montpensier, 46, 74, 224 et seq.
 Maillane, 171, 195 et seq.
 Maintenon, Madame de, 29.
 Maison Carrée, 240.
 Maison des Porcellets, 208.
 Mans, Le, 351.
 Marcellin, Festival of Saint, 115.
 Maréchal d'Ornano, 106.
 Margot, Queen, 319.
 Maria, Henrietta, Queen of England, 9, 12 et seq.
 Marie Antoinette, 31, 50.
 Marie de Médecis, 8, 44.
 Marie Stuart, 328.
 Marie Thérèse, 29.
 Marius, Arch of, 114.
 Martha, Saint, 173 et seq.
 Martyrs of Orange, 120.

INDEX

- Marzères, 277.
 Matilda, Queen, 311.
 Mazarin, Cardinal, 35.
 Médicis, Catherine de, 327 et seq., 332, 334, 337 et seq.
 Médicis, Marie de, 8, 44.
 Melaine, Saint, 358.
 Mélisande, 207.
 Merle, 85.
 Milan, Duke of, 307.
 Molai, Death of Jacques de, 223.
 Molière, 25.
 Monadelschi, Murder of, 46 et seq.
 Montdragon, Castle of, 113.
 Montespan, Madame de, 25, 28.
 Montfort, Simon de, 249, 253 et seq., 274.
 Montpellier, 245.
 Montpellier, Agnès de, 253.
 Montpensier, Mademoiselle de, 46, 74, 224 et seq.
 Mont-Saint-Michel, 361 et seq.
 Moret, 56.
 Motier, Louise (La Fayette), 10.
 Moulins, 69.
 Moustier, Le, 289.

 Naples, King Robert of, 156.
 Napoléon (See Bonaparte), 51 et seq.
 Nîmes, 239.
 Notre Dame des Doms, 128 et seq.
 Nymphs, War with the, 157.

 Orange, 114.
 Orange, Castle of, 118.
 Orange, Martyrs of, 120 et seq.
 Orange, Revolution at, 120.
 Ornano, Maréchal d', 106.

 Palace of Constantine, 232.
 Palace of the Popes, 139.
 Pascal, 25.
 Pastrengo, Guillaume de, 159.
 Pavillon d'Amour, 211.
 Pavillon de la Reine Jeanne, 211.
 Peter of Aragon, 254.
 Petrarch, 142, 156 et seq.

 Philip Augustus, 296.
 Philip le Bel, 222.
 Philip the Bold, 274.
 Philippe de Cabassol, 163.
 Pierre Cardinal, 198.
 Pierre de Broce, 320, 322.
 Pierre-Lys, Gorge of, 263 et seq.
 Pierre Vidal, 198, 206.
 Pius VII., Pope, 50.
 Polignac, 94.
 Ponsirade, Story of, 166 et seq.
 Pont-Saint-Esprit, 110.
 Pont-sur-Yonne, 56.
 Pope Benedict XII., 129, 141.
 Pope Clement V., Death of, 222.
 Pope Clement VI., 90, 135 et seq.
 Pope Innocent III., 254.
 Pope John XXII., 140, 148, 149, 286.
 Pope Pius VII., 50.
 Popes, Palace of the, 139.
 Porcellet, Guillaume de, 208.
 Porcellets, Legend des, 209.
 Porcellets, Maison des, 210.

 Queen Edith of England, 92.
 Quercy, 285.
 Quillan, 262.

 Raymond VI., Comte of Toulouse, 277.
 Raymond Roger Trencavel (See Vicomte de Béziers), 248 et seq., 253 et seq.
 Reine Jeanne, La, 135 et seq.
 Reine Jeanne, Pavillon de la, 211.
 Rémy, Saint, 199.
 Renard, Château, 170.
 Renaudie, La, 331.
 René of Anjou, King, 176, 201.
 Rennes, 354 et seq.
 Rennes, siege of, 359.
 Revolution at Orange, 120.
 Rhone, the, 109.
 Richard Cœur-de-Lion, 5, 209, 276, 315.
 Richmond, Henry Duke of, 2.
 Rienzi, 142.
 Robert of Naples, King, 156.

INDEX

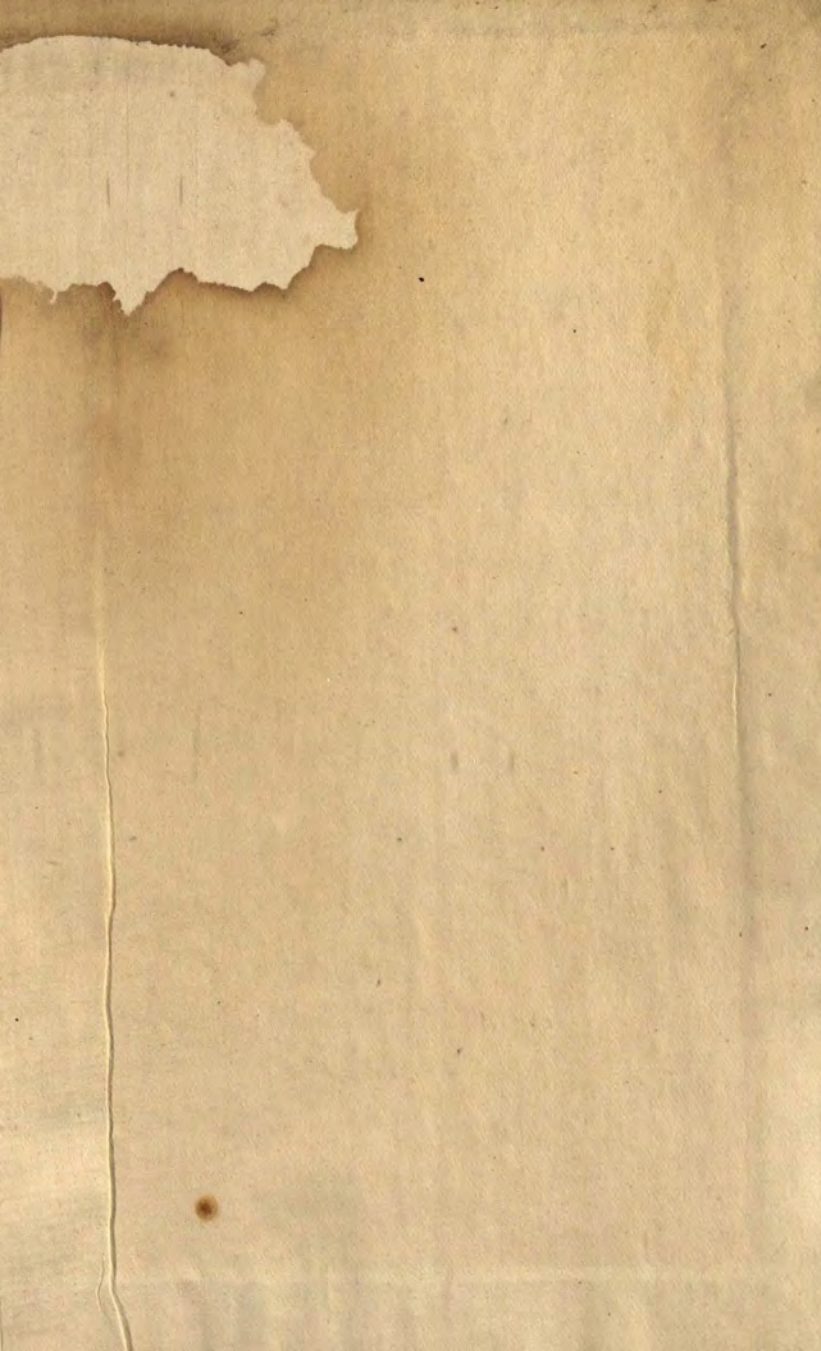
- Robert the Pious, 8.
 Rocher des Doms, 127 et seq.
 Rohan, Cardinal de, 93.
 Roman Aqueduct, Vacluse, 166.
 Roman Baths, Nîmes, 240.
 Roquemaure, Castle of, 222.
 Rouen, 4.
 Rousseau, 246.
- Sade, Madame de, 161.
 Saint Anselm, 92.
 Saint Apollon, 282.
 Saint Césaire, 238.
 Saint-Cloud, 16.
 Saint Dominic, 249, 253, 277.
 Saint Etienne, Cathedral of, 283.
 Saint Honorat, Chapel of, 235.
 Saint-Germain, 6 et seq.
 Saint Germain, 60 et seq.
 Saint Germain, Abbey of, 64 et seq.
 Saint-Germain, Forest of, 6.
 Saint Genez, 74 et seq.
 Saint Gilles, 238.
 Saint Lazarus, 174.
 Saint Louis, 8, 36.
 Saint Marcellin, Festival of, 115.
 Saint Martha, 173 et seq.
 Saint-Martin-en-Lys, 263.
 Saint Melaine, 358.
 Saint-Paulien, 94.
 Saint-Rémy, 199.
 Saint Robert, 88.
 Saint Saturnin, 279 et seq.
 Saint Saturnin, Chapel of, 50.
 Saint-Sernin, Church of, 279.
 Saint Trophime, 76, 236 et seq.
 Saint Trophime, Chapel of, 236.
 Saint Trophime, Cathedral of, 227.
 Saint Véran, 156.
 Sainte Baume, La, 174.
 Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, 174.
 Saladin, 353.
 Saumane, Castle of, 155.
 Savoie, Adelaide de, 49.
 Savoie, Louise de, 69.
 Sens, 56.
 Simon de Montfort, 249, 253.
- Société des Jeux Floraux, 285.
 Sorel, Agnès, 308.
 Sorgue, River, 157.
 Story of Ponsirade, 166.
 Stuart, Marie, 328.
 Sulpice de Chaumont, 333.
 Sweden, Christina of, 46.
- Tarascon, 171 et seq.
 Tarascon, Castle of, 174.
 Tarasque, The, 171 et seq.
 Tecto Sages, 276.
 Tête de la Camargue, 237.
 Thau, Etang de, 247.
 Thibaut-le-Bon, 348.
 Thibaut le Tricheur, 347.
 Thiers, 71 et seq.
 Thiers, Card-makers of, 78 et seq.
 Thiers, Cutlers of, 72.
 Thiers, Viscounts of, 73.
 Thor, Le, 154.
 Thueyts, 101.
 Toulouse, 276.
 Tours, 324, 325.
 Trencavel, Raymond Roger (Viscount de Béziers), 248 et seq., 253 et seq.
 Tricline de Roussillon, 205.
 Trophime, Saint, 76, 236 et seq.
 Trophime, Cathedral of Saint, 227.
 Trophime, Chapel of Saint, 236.
- Vaison, 115.
 Vallière, Louise de la, 26 et seq., 340.
 Vacluse, 155 et seq.
 Véran, Saint, 156.
 Versailles, 22 et seq.
 Vézère, River, 288 et seq.
 Vidal, Pierre, 198, 206.
 Villeneuve, 144 et seq.
 Viviers, 104, 108.
 Voltaire, 25.
- War with the Nymphs, 157.
 William Bembro, 360.
 William III., of England, 118.
 William the Conqueror, 3.

Printed by MORRISON & GIBB LIMITED, Edinburgh









140