LITERARY RAMBLES IN FRANCE

M. BETHAM-EDWARDS

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Descent into Padirac

LITERARY RAMBLES IN FRANCE

BY

MISS BETHAM-EDWARDS

'Belle et bonne France, on ne te connaît pas!'

GEORGE SAND

LONDON
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CHAPTER I

FLAUBERT'S LITERARY WORKSHOP

THE summer-house or pavilion in which *Madame Bovary* was written may well be so styled. With a celebrated predecessor Flaubert regarded novel-writing as no less of a trade than the making of watches. But from an artistic standpoint only. Money, popular applause, contemporary fame were not dreamed of in his philosophy. What he aimed at and what by dint of superhuman laboriousness he achieved, was literary excellence, the high water mark of style. Hence it comes about that Croisset will ever be an interesting literary pilgrimage. We may not find *Madame Bovary* delectable reading, to some of us the so-called *roman nécessaire* will prove 'thin sown with aught of pleasure or delight.' The author's figure compels homage, the artist enlists general sympathy.

Despite his ingrained pessimism, Flaubert's life is a noble lesson. From first to last, struggling against fell disease and a melancholious temperament, manfully he went his way, no obstacle

damping his ardour, no checks, however mortifying, for a single moment detaching him from his purpose.

Croisset lies three miles from Rouen and may be pleasantly reached by steamboat. Hurried travellers will prefer to drive and, once off the cobble-stones of the distractingly-paved city, bowl along the quays agreeably enough. We pass an immense stretch of bustling wharfage and warehouses, the river bristling with masts and alive with smaller craft, the new bridge a beautiful object amid much that is unlovely. As we advance on both sides we have more taking scenes. Over against us rise dimpled green slopes, and soon we come within sight of one long wooded islet immediately succeeded by another—châteaux, farm-houses, and chalets peeping between the trees of both.

My guide informed me that in 1875 these islets were ice-bound, the river being frozen. Many Rouennois have a tiny cottage orné, or what is called a pavilion, here, in which they spend their summer holidays. How delightful thus to be islanded, shut off from the dust, glare, and turmoil of what is now one of the most bustling commercial centres in France! Little steamers ply to and fro, apparently the favourite mode of locomotion, for every one we saw was crowded. Leaving the quays behind we

pass rows of handsome country houses and villas, all with long flower gardens reaching to the road. Above these is a background of wood and poplar groves. Croisset, reached in about three quarters of an hour, consists of a long line of scattered houses facing the river. The opposite bank is low and featureless, a mere rim of yellowish green, but immediately before Flaubert's eyes lay a lovely little island, truly—

> 'A place of nestling green for poets made.'

But alas! put to unidyllic uses in the pages of *Madame Bovary*.

Nothing in nature indeed can be prettier, more soothing, than such a combination, from amid clear, sky-reflecting waters rising a fairy kingdom, glades, woods and velvety swards of brightest, freshest green. The river here broadens and, matching such beautiful proportions, the landscape on one side takes a bolder outline. Above the site of Flaubert's dwelling we gaze upon richly wooded hills, chestnut, alder, and poplar here attaining a great height, the latter trees often having a crest-like branching out at the summit. This mass of woodland and the verdant declivities running down to the road complete the picture.

Where formerly stood Flaubert's house is now seen a dilapidated factory advertised for sale. The

garden-house however in which were written *Madame Bovary* and *Salammbô* remains intact. Here too he wrote those delightful letters (an expurgation here and there would not render them less so) to Madame Louise Colet, George Sand and others.

The original dwelling with its acre or two of garden must have represented the handsomer kind of *campagne* or French country house. The entire property was sold by Flaubert's niece and heir, and on the site of the demolished dwelling a factory was built, this also being destined shortly to disappear. But a little knot of ardent admirers have succeeded in getting together enough money to purchase the pavilion, which is to be turned into a memorial museum. A bit of ground has also been obtained, so that the little building will soon stand amid flowers and shrubs. The long avenue of lime-trees, destined, as Flaubert wrote, for '*graves et douces causeries*,' has of course disappeared long ago.

The garden-house consists of a single room of commodious proportions, overlooking highway, river, wooded islet, and low-lying banks.

Doubtless, the road beneath his windows was much less frequented sixty years ago than it is to-day, but noise and dust there must have been. In every other respect no author could desire a more seductive retreat.

Yet these walls remind us of the most painful literary labours on record. Flaubert was a veritable Sisyphus, and miraculous it seems that he ever accomplished his self-imposed tasks, above all, that from such agonising throes should have emerged living creations and a masterpiece! Toilsomely as Jacob wooed his brides, Flaubert wooed the creations of his fancy, in his case being no difference between Leah and Rachel, his literary wooings never inspired by love or admiration.

A septennate was given to the composition of *Madame Bovary*, another to *L'Éducation sentimentale*, only a year or two less to *Salammbô*.

'I have just copied all that I have written since the New Year,' he wrote to Louise Colet, '*thirteen pages in seven weeks*, neither more nor less. At last they are done and as perfect as I could make them.'

In this charmingly situated workshop he would literally entomb himself, only the sound of his own voice from time to time breaking the silence. It was his habit, and an excellent one without doubt, to read and re-read aloud every newly framed sentence. Old folks at Croisset still remember those clear strident utterances, on dark winter nights his lighted window guiding fishermen and sailors as a beacon.

In search of the right word, with Boileau he could

have said, *je cherche* and *je sue*, and the seeking and sweating went on with results more or less successful throughout his life. We are told that the occurrence of two genitives in the phrase *une couronne de fleurs d'orangers* disturbed him greatly; he wondered how he could have committed such a crime. Paragraphs were often re-written half a dozen times before being set aside as perfect as literary carpentry could make them. The typical phrase in Flaubert's writings, has said one critic, resembles a symphony having an Allegro, an Andante, and a Presto rhythm, sonority, completeness, all the qualities necessary in verse. Flaubert wanted to 'give prose, leaving it prose, the systematic construction of verse,' he wrote to Louise Colet, 'perhaps an absurd undertaking, but it is a fine, an original experiment.' The experiment occupied his days and nights.

Nor was he less careful in the matter of punctuation. Like the great humorist of Samothrace he paid the utmost attention to stops; commas, he called the vertebrae of a phrase, and in the use of them was a pronounced master. Little wonder that under these circumstances composition went on at a snail's pace. Nor need we feel astonished at the utter joylessness with which the self-imposed tasks were got through. 'You have no notion,' he wrote to his friend, George Sand, 'what it is to sit throughout an

entire day with your head between your hands, beating your unfortunate brains for a word. With yourself ideas flow copiously, unceasingly as a river. In my own case they form a narrow thread of water. I have herculean labours before me ere obtaining a cascade. Ah! the mortal terrors of style, I shall have known all about them by the time I have done.'

One inevitable result of such fastidiousness was compression. Take, for instance, the oft-cited description of Rouen seen from the heights of Bois-guillaume in *Madame Bovary.* This incomparable passage of ten lines originally filled a page. Six revisions reduced it to a sentence, not a single idea having been lost in the process!

Presentment made him no less of a galley-slave. The horrible death-scene in his famous novel was the result of application so close and conscientious that, having poisoned his heroine, Flaubert himself felt all the symptoms of poisoning. Have not folks been said to die of imaginary hydrophobia, even cholera and small-pox, before now?

If in realistic presentment Flaubert always succeeds, so much cannot be said of his descriptions. These are not always crystal clear.

In his history of French civilisation, M. Rambaud alludes to the cap worn by Charles Bovary as a

schoolboy, the head-gear of youth worn in Louis-Philippe's time. But on reading and re-reading Flaubert's elaborate description I cannot for the life of me conceive what poor *Charbovari's* cap was like. An illustrator of the scene would probably be in similar case. If, which is very likely, the description of Charles Bovary's cap occupied Flaubert many hours, maybe days, we must remember that he was no Issachar weighed down by a double burden. Throughout his literary career he was able, in the noble words of Schiller, having 'achieved a *chef-d'œuvre,* to cast it without a second thought on the waves of Time.'

If literary conscientiousness gave tormented days and sleepless nights, from other cares he was free. Ample means allowed him to do his best, to give as many days as he pleased to a single page. His career was an instructive comment on Dr. Johnson's dictum that no one but a fool would write except for money. Flaubert's earnings must have been meagre, but the imperishable harvest was rich indeed.

Volumes have been devoted to Flaubert's style and method. It is not surprising that Montesquieu and La Bruyère were his models, Fénelon and Lamartine his detestations. The superfine, the chiselled phrase *à la Goncourt* he ever avoided; honeyed sweetness, *la phrase molle* as exemplified in *Télémaque* and

Graziella, he positively loathed. What he strove after and attained was the virility, precision, and strength of the great seventeenth-century masters.

Of his half dozen works which will live? All were written, as he said that authors must ever write, for eternity. 'But the people's voice, the voice and echo of all human fame?' What will posterity say?

The rank of *Madame Bovary* in French literature seems assured. Only twenty-five years after the author's death one character out of that unlovely portrait gallery has become a household word. In the chemist of Yonville, Flaubert has created a type, added yet another figure to the list of literary creations.

'You ask my opinion of Flaubert,' said a French critic to me the other day. 'My reply is, he created Homais.'

'I reproach myself sometimes,' wrote Renan (*Souvenirs de Jeunesse*), 'for having contributed to M. Homais' triumph over the *curé*. What would you have? M. Homais is in the right. Without M. Homais we should all be burnt alive.'

The vain, meddlesome, half-educated, would-be Voltairean and encyclopædist, the great little man of the country town, may not at first strike English readers. Familiarity with French middle-class life is necessary for an appreciation of such a portrait.

Our neighbours now cite Homais as we speak of Podsnap or Micawber.

Flaubert's contempt and dislike of the *bourgeoisie*, whether sincere or affected, was a fashion, an epidemic in his day. But surely it is strange that belonging as he did to the same class, surrounded as he was by admirable types, he should have neglected them for all that was mean, poor-spirited, and odious. With the exception of Dr. Larivière, *Madame Bovary* gives us the *bourgeois* bereft of every redeeming quality.

Foresight, thrift, family affection, the virtues that may be said to have built up a nation, with one exception are absent from the picture. In the hospital doctor, 'belonging to the great school of Bichat,' Flaubert portrayed his father, 'who pursued his way full of *debonnaire* dignity, imparted by the self-consciousness of distinguished talent, fortune, and forty years of a laborious and honourable career.'

Madame Bovary, strange as it may seem, was the subject of a criminal trial on the score of its immoral tendencies, Flaubert emerging victorious. The result could hardly be otherwise, since from first to last the novel portrays the disillusion of vice.

Tastes may differ concerning *Salammbô*, which George Sand found unreadable, also concerning *L'Éducation sentimentale*. With regard to *Bouvard*

et Pécuchet there can be but one opinion, that it is the dreariest farrago ever penned by genius. And when all is said and done, many readers will doubtless prefer Flaubert the letter-writer to Flaubert the novelist. No more delightful letters exist in the French language. His outpourings to the *chère muse*, the beautiful, eccentric, and talented Madame Louise Colet for whom Maxime du Camp composed the following elegy :—'Here lies Louise Colet, who compromised Victor Cousin, ridiculed Alfred de Musset, illtreated Flaubert, and tried to assassinate Alphonse Karr. *Requiescat in pace.'*—adored by him so reluctantly, are the best preparation for this literary pilgrimage. As we read, we realise the existence led within these walls. Future visitors will find a fillip to the imagination. Manuscripts, portraits, and other memorials are being put together and will form a most interesting little temple of fame.

Regretfully I tore myself away from the scene of Flaubert's labours, and the picture on which his eyes daily rested, meandering Seine, low-lying banks, narrow islets, with their wind-tossed trees and steamer succeeding steamer, only the mast and funnel being visible 'as in the background of a theatre.' Such experiences bring home to us an author's personality as no mere study of his works, however persistent, can do.

I was driven back to Rouen by another road, or rather by a country lane. Here were hedges bright with purple loosestrife, saponaria, agrimony and other late flowers; soon rows of suburban villas, each standing in a garden, each unlike its neighbours, announced the town.

On joining a French literary friend at Meudon I found that she had seen Flaubert, and the glimpse given of him by this lady is highly suggestive.

'Once, and once only I saw the author of *Madame Bovary*,' she said; 'at that time in the prime of life and in the zenith of his fame. Although physically afflicted throughout his entire life, being, as you know, subject to epileptic seizures, Flaubert possessed the figure of an athlete and was remarkably beautiful.

'With a few, a very few, highly-favoured admirers I was invited to a reception given in his honour by Madame de A——. It was late when a thrill ran through the assembled company. Flaubert had arrived! Fastidiously attired in the most approved style of evening dress he made his way to his hostess, addressed to her a few courteous words, shook hands with this acquaintance, bowed to that, then like a phantom, a meteor, vanished quickly as he had come. Not one of us got so much as a word from him, and in my case, the opportunity never occurred again.'

Tall, broad-shouldered, with a flowing beard of

pale auburn, eyes described by one who knew him as of the colour of the sea, all the beauty of northern races, wrote another friend, was represented in his person.

His behaviour at the evening party just named must be set down to anything rather than vanity or the desire of posing. He called himself a hermit, a literary monk, and conventional society he ever avoided, reserving himself for his mother, his niece, and his friends.

A gloomier childhood than his it is hard to conceive. Son of a physician attached to the municipal hospital of Rouen, his boyish years were spent within its gloomy precincts, daily experiences familiarising him with pain, sickness, and death. Little wonder that, subject as he was to a distressing infirmity, he became a confirmed pessimist. His otherwise delightful letters are a perpetual reiteration of the preacher's text: vanity, all is vanity.

Flaubert's father died in 1846, and Madame Flaubert removed to Croisset, henceforth the novelist's home for the rest of his days. Brief sojourns in Paris, travels in Brittany, the Pyrenees, Italy, the East, and Tunis, in his declining years a flying visit with Tourgeneff to George Sand at Ushant, formed the only breaks in a singularly uneventful life. The loss of an only sister, later of a boon companion and

friend, saddened him to his dying day. Family affection and friendship, indeed, satisfied his heart. Of passion he seems only to have known the disenchantments.

Between his mother and himself existed the closest ties of love and confidence. To her as to a comrade he poured out his innermost thoughts; 'dear old thing,' he called her in the two or three letters that remain of their correspondence. The pair were indeed seldom separated, and, if the tenderest mother possible, we gather that she was also one of the most exacting. If Flaubert was indeed a typical French son, devoted, submissive, yielding on every point, Madame Flaubert seems to have been a typical French mother, regarding the grown-up, even middle-aged, son as completely her own as when a baby in arms. 'She loved him,' writes one of his biographers, 'with the devotion that not only binds but crushes.[1] It was on her account that he became a stay-at-home. In order to please her he was very near throwing up his Eastern journey at the last

[1] In 1848 the great painter Fromentin, at that time aged twenty-eight, wrote to a friend from the paternal home: 'Je mène, on me fait mener, une vie propre à tuer l'esprit le plus solide. Vivre ici n'est pas vivre. Mon père oublie qu'il a eu mon âge, ma mère oublie qu'elle n'a pas toujours passé sa vie entre l'aiguille et le confessional.' Fromentin's father being alive, the young man depended upon him for every penny. Here Flaubert was more fortunate, but the restraint was the same.

moment. His briefest absence filled her with anxiety. Of his art she understood nothing; at first jealous of it, she became reconciled to a pursuit that kept him at home. The last years of his life were very sombre for both. She could think and talk of nothing else but her own health, and Flaubert's principal occupation was to make her take little turns in the garden.' Her death in 1872 proved a tremendous blow. A few days after the event he wrote to George Sand: 'I have discovered within the last fortnight that that poor good woman, my mother, was the being I loved best in the world. It is as if I had lost a part of myself.'

Flaubert, who despised the *bourgeoisie*, essentially belonged to it; in him the homelier national virtues were conspicuous—strong family feeling, utter freedom from pretence, and strict probity in all practical matters. We must live like bourgeois and think like artists, he used to say, a maxim he carried out.

Amiably nepotious, as are most French bachelors, Flaubert not only made an idol of his niece, but also undertook her education, his methods, as might be expected, being highly original. The history lesson consisted of an impromptu narrative delivered by himself which next day the pupil had to repeat, the repetition being followed by questions and comments. 'In this fashion,' Madame Commanville tells us, 'I

acquired a knowledge of ancient history, sometimes puzzling him with my questions; for instance, Were Cambyses, Alcibiades, and Alexander good men? What is that to you, he would reply; well, not perhaps exactly nice. I was disappointed not to have more details, I expected him to know everything.

'Geography I never learned from books either. Children should learn from pictures, he said. Thus, in order to make me understand what was meant by an island, a promontory, a bay, and so forth, he would take a spade and give me object-lessons in the garden. As I grew older these daily lessons became longer, and they continued till my marriage at the age of seventeen.'

His little Caroline was indeed to him a daughter, and as we shall see there was no sacrifice he was not prepared to make for her happiness. Flaubert was also a devoted friend, the loss of several boon companions afflicting him greatly. During his short residence in Paris from 1840 to 1844 he was an habitué of Pradier's studio, there meeting De Vigny, Jules Janin, Leconte de Lisle, Victor Cousin, and other leading spirits. But it was Dr. Cloquet, at that time a foremost anatomist and clinical lecturer, whose acquaintance most influenced the future author of *Madame Bovary*. The novel could only have been written by one who had made medicine a special

study, and we learn that Dr. Cloquet introduced him to the most eminent of his medical brethren. Flaubert was thus able to pursue his favourite subject, unconsciously laying the foundation of his life-work and his fame.

His friends we learn to know in those charming letters, his favourite books also. A finer literary taste no writer ever possessed, yet his exceptions sometimes come with a little shock. Fénelon and Lamartine were put on the index, George Sand he found delightful as a friend but unreadable as a romancer, and De Musset he set down as a great poet but no artist. Béranger, Thiers, Augier were *bourgeois* writers, who wrote for *bourgeois* readers; Sainte-Beuve fared at his hands as did George Sand: the man pleased, the critic was insufferable. Sully Prudhomme he damned with faint praise, Shakespeare he adored, but neither Dante nor Goethe seems to have been a god of his idolatry. The Greek dramatists and one or two Latin authors, Rabelais, Montesquieu, Montaigne were daily pasture; to Spinoza at three different periods of his life he returned with zest. Ronsard he 'discovered' in 1852. Herbert Spencer won his suffrages.

Sad was the close of a uniformly honourable career, sad and very French! A Frenchman's family is ever part of himself; no Frenchman

owning kith and kin however remotely related can be regarded as a unit, for good or for evil he is member of a clan. Thus it came about that when the husband of his much-loved niece was on the verge of ruin, Flaubert flew to the rescue. Without a second's hesitation—at that time being elderly and in failing health—he sacrificed his entire fortune in order to avert the catastrophe. The sum-total of several hundred thousand—some say a hundred thousand—francs was as nothing in French eyes by comparison with the loss of family honour. If bankruptcy no longer entails the pillory and the green cap with steps of the Bourse, forfeiture of civil rights and banishment as under the first Napoleon, it is still high treason, mortal sin as in the days of César Birotteau. But the famous author of *Madame Bovary* could not be left to starve. The librarianship of the Bibliothèque Mazarine, bringing in just three thousand francs a year, was awarded him. He survived the nomination a few months only, dying in 1880, his end doubtless being hastened by anxieties, unhygienic habits, and persistent self-neglect. For days, even weeks at a time, he would shut himself up in his garden-house, not even the avenue of favourite lime-trees tempting him abroad. To his manuscript, like Lear, he was bound as to a wheel of fire.

Since these pages were written, that is to say, on

the 17th of June of the present year, 1906, the Pavilion Flaubert was inaugurated with much ceremony and handed over to the city of Rouen. Many interesting mementoes of the novelist have been laboriously got together: an alley of lime-trees has been planted on the site of his favourite walk, a tulip-tree, a rose bush and a root of honeysuckle, occupy the exact spot of former favourites. The Pavilion Flaubert therefore wears a very different aspect to that seen by me nine months before. Two monuments memorialise Flaubert in his native city, one adorning the museum of the Jardin Solférino, the other, the walls of the École de Médecine, both having portraits in bas-relief.

And this year has been published a volume which not only reveals the character of the man in its entirety but is a revelation of French national character.[1] Not only Flaubert—all France—lives in its pages, the France, not of fiction, but of real life, with all its homely lovingness, amiability and self-devotion.

Few readers, I presume, will be at pains to peruse the three hundred and ninety letters to his adored niece Caroline, some of these the merest scraps, only a caress on paper, covering a period of thirty-four

[1] Gustave Flaubert, *Lettres à sa nièce Caroline*. Paris, Charpentier, 1906.

years. The first, dated from Paris, April 25, 1856, compliments his dear Lilinne—as he goes on he finds a score of pet names for his darling—on her improved spelling, and speaks of a new doll which is impatiently awaiting the journey to Croisset and new clothes. The last was written from his Rouen home on May 2, 1880, just six days before his death, and is in a characteristically pessimistic strain. His Loulou's pictures have been badly hung in the Salon and he has suffered shabby treatment at the hands of a publisher. 'This is how one is always treated by these people,' he writes bitterly; 'the contrary is quite exceptional.'

There is very little literature in these five hundred and odd closely printed pages. From this point of view the letters to his Caro, his Loulou, his Carola, his *bibi*, his *bichon*, will not bear comparison with those previously published. The interest of the volume lies elsewhere. For, in thus portraying himself, Flaubert portrays the real Frenchman to whom family life and family affection stand before every other earthly good.

In the melancholy days following Sedan, after an outburst of despair concerning the national outlook he concludes with : 'But I am ungrateful to Heaven, since I shall have my poor Caro.'

CHAPTER II

THE STORY OF THE MARSEILLAISE

Never was the irony of fate more conspicuously displayed than in the history of Rouget de Lisle, never did splendid renown suffer completer eclipse. When, stricken in years and broken in health, the pensioner of Louis-Philippe died at Choisy-le-Roi, the announcement aroused no interest. The poet-musician who had sounded the clarion note of revolution, imbuing peasant lads with the spirit of Lacedaemon, was utterly forgotten. Could he have lived, as do many, to be a nonagenarian, how would he have electrified the Paris of Lamartine and Victor Hugo, the France of '48! By comparison the apotheosis of Voltaire would have faded into insignificance. Who can say? Had such a span been accorded to Rouget de Lisle, the Second Empire and Sedan might have been averted, France might still rejoice in her Rhine provinces. It was not to be. He died in 1837, just a decade too soon.

With its author, the most famous song in the world had been condemned to oblivion. Like the

genii of Arabian story, the Marseillaise was long hermetically sealed, on its deliverance from prison proving a greater miracle-worker than the guide to the enchanted lakes. The trumpet-call of 1792 became the rallying cry of democratic France, the watchword of the great western republic.

From another point of view Rouget de Lisle's story is equally strange. The efflorescence of this strange genius remained single, unique, neither bud nor blossom keeping its one glorious outburst company. Voluminous composer, novelist, song-writer, *vaudevilliste*, with a solitary exception Rouget de Lisle's works are as completely forgotten as if they had never been. He lives in an impromptu durable as the language in which it was hastily jotted down.

Claude-Joseph Rouget, afterwards self-styled de Lisle, was born at Lons-le-Saulnier, Jura, on the 10th of May 1760. Perhaps no part of France is less familiar to the English tourist than Franche-Comté, the country of Victor Hugo, of how many other great names in art, literature and science, and of how many historic associations! It is, moreover, in these eastern highlands, to quote Ruskin, that 'a sense of great power is beginning to be manifested in the earth, and of a deep and majestic concord in the long, low line of piny hills, the first utterance of those mighty mountain symphonies soon to be heard

more loudly lifted and wildly broken along the battlements of the Alps.'

Ruskin wrote of Champagnole lying ten miles further eastward, but the mighty mountain symphonies begin to be heard at Lons-le-Saulnier. In clear weather Mont Blanc may be descried from the wooded height of Montciel above the town, crowning feature of a majestic panorama.

Lons, as the *chef-lieu* of the department is familiarly called by residents, when I first knew it twenty-five years ago, was a cheerful, artistic little town, nothing more. It has now become a fashionable inland spa, its valuable mineral springs attracting large numbers of valetudinarians : hotels, casino, and concert-rooms forming quite a new quarter. More than one pleasant autumn have I spent under a French roof here, on the occasion of my latest visit finding many changes. In one respect, however, I found no difference. Despite modernisation and natural attractions, the English and American tourist had not discovered Lons-le-Saulnier. The brilliance and sublimity of Franc-Comtois scenery, its underground marvels, glittering cascades, lovely little lakes, and frowning donjons, piny solitudes and pastoral vales, remain unknown to my travelling compatriots.

The young military engineer who revolutionised France with a song, was born in the house now

numbered twenty-four of the ancient Rue des Arcades, that picturesque street recalling the Spanish régime of Franche-Comté. A delightful lounge alike during winter and summer is this long stretch of covered galleries, and many towns hereabouts are similarly embellished.

Rouget is a very usual patronymic in this part of France, and the aristocratic de Lisle, belonging to some ancestor on the paternal side, was adopted as a matter of necessity. The Rouget family were bourgeois, Claude-Joseph's father being an *Avocat de Parlement*. Unprovided with the particle, the young man would not have been admitted into any military academy, such schools being exclusively reserved for youths of the *noblesse*.

Like most of the well-to-do professional classes in France, formerly as nowadays, the Rouget family possessed their country house and small landed property. Travel was out of the question. Then, as to-day, the long vacation was mostly spent by lawyers and notaries on their modest ancestral domain. Till his dying day Rouget de Lisle's fondest memories clung to the paternal home at Montaigu, a suburban village, a mile and a half from Lons-le-Saulnier. One bright September afternoon I set off for the spot with my host, a Protestant pastor, and his little daughter, who carried a basket

of grapes with which to refresh ourselves on the way.

The neighbourhood of Lons-le-Saulnier abounds in delightful walks, the half-hour's climb among the vineyards to Montaigu being one of the prettiest. As we ascended we saw magnificent views: to our right lay the vast plain of La Brasse, now dim and blue as a hazy summer sea; to our left rose the Jura range, dark purple shadows flecking the green slopes, standing out boldly on isolated peaks the donjons of Le Pin and Montmorot, and the ruined châteaux of L'Étoile and Bornay; whilst at our feet lay the pretty little capital of the Jura. Although we were midway through September, and the air was keen, a hot sun poured down upon the vineyards.

In these days numbering seven hundred and odd souls, Montaigu at one time possessed considerable importance. In the eleventh century like a watch-dog it kept guard over the valuable springs of Lons-le-Saulnier, Étienne, Count of Burgundy, having turned the place into a fortress. Nothing worth mentioning remains of feudal Montaigu to-day, but its aspect is old-world, not to say antiquated, and little changed since Rouget de Lisle was rocked in his cradle, just upon a century and a half ago.

The village street is picturesque, if not on the whole suggestive of comfort. To each deep red

roof are attached corner pieces for letting off the snow, which often falls in terrible superabundance in the Jura. During the bitter winter of 1870-71, indeed, wolves could be seen prowling by daylight around these suburban villages!

At the time of my visit there was nothing to distinguish Rouget de Lisle's birthplace from its neighbours but a handsome iron gateway, or rather door. No tablet commemorated the 10th of May 1760. Looking through that doorway and beyond a small courtyard, we saw a modest but substantial *bourgeois* dwelling with iron balcony, the whole suggesting respectability and easy circumstances.

A marble inscription now arrests the attention of passing travellers; a second ought to be added, that to a dog deserving a niche among historic hounds.

But indeed for the country lawyer's good house-dog, the world might never have heard of Rouget de Lisle and the Marseillaise. When a child of three or four, Montaigu and its neighbourhood was infested with foreign gipsies. The little fellow at this early age seems to have showed the daringness characterising his entire career; having strayed beyond the home premises he was popped under the cloak of a crone. Already she had reached the extremity of the village street when the barkings of the faithful dog alarmed the household. One and

all rushed out; the child was hastily set down, his would-be kidnapper beating a hasty retreat. Another fright he gave his family when six years old. One day a company of strolling musicians gave a concert in the village, and so fascinated was he by the music that he followed the band as they marched away, playing as they went. On being brought back and scolded, he excused himself thus: 'O Mamma, I do love you, but they played so beautifully!'

The family was musical, and at this period the violin enjoyed especial vogue. At an early age Claude-Joseph took lessons on the instrument from a local master, his musical education, however, never having passed the elementary stage. Of harmony he learned little.

As we survey the beautiful environment of Montaigu, its vine-clad slopes and majestic perspectives, we can understand Rouget de Lisle's passion for his childhood's home. 'The first utterance of those mighty mountain symphonies soon to be wildly lifted along the battlements of the Alps,' of which Ruskin speaks, awoke an echo in his turbulent nature.

As we shall see, neither wedded love nor the domestic affections brightened his stormy career. Of friendship he fully tasted the solace, but his

tenderest recollections clung to Montaigu, the corner of France no less endeared to him by childish associations than by natural charm. 'Thine were my first affections, thine my last regrets,' thus pathetically he apostrophises the place in his latter years. To the 'séjour charmant de mon enfance' he consecrated touching words and plaintive melodies. And Montaigu, the dearly cherished home and paternal estate, with everything else that he prized, was destined to slip through his fingers, become a thing of the irrevocable past whilst he yet lived and felt stirred by the ambitions of youth!

II

On the 25th of April 1792, Rouget de Lisle was a guest at the historic banquet given by Baron Friedrich Dietrich, first Mayor of Strassburg.

The brilliant young military engineer had already attained a certain notoriety as novelist, poet, musical composer, and dramatist. One of his pieces had even been produced at the Opéra Comique, and the celebrated musician Grétry had accepted his collaboration in several works now forgotten. As was the fashion among young gentlemen of the period, he had composed innumerable society verses, besides throwing off sentimental romances.

Rouget de Lisle's early ambitions would appear

to have been by no means those of a soldier. Had success crowned these versatile efforts, his career would doubtless have been very different. France might perhaps have wanted her Marseillaise, but the poet and musician of Lons-le-Saulnier might have fared after happier fashion.

A few words about this memorable dinner and the young captain's hosts and fellow-guests.

The banquet, although unofficial, was eminently a patriotic manifestation. A few days before, the Legislative Assembly had declared war against Austria and Prussia, in other words, against the coalition of *émigrés* and foreign powers formed for the restoration of absolute monarchy. Threatened with the fate of Poland, France answered the summons to submission by a general call to arms.

In Strassburg excitement was at fever pitch. Alike the king's oath to maintain the constitution and the declaration of war had been enthusiastically acclaimed. A religious ceremony in the Cathedral, a grand musical celebration in the open air, banquets to the aged poor and orphans, celebrated these events, the day winding up with Dietrich's great dinner of farewell. The unfortunate General Luckner had been named Commander of the Alsatian forces; on the morrow officers and volunteers would be on the march, many with little likelihood of meeting again.

The first Mayor of Strassburg, as he is known in history, is an ingratiating figure. A cultivated gentleman and high-minded citizen, the friend of Turgot and Condorcet, he had welcomed the Revolution, but from a monarchical point of view. With Arthur Young's friend, the amiable Duc de Liancourt, and many others, he believed in the possible establishment of constitutional monarchy. To Dietrich's cost he believed the word of Louis XVI. Hence his growing unpopularity among the more violent faction at Strassburg, hence the swift waning of his once immense and deserved popularity, and tragic end.

Just now the Dietrich salon (early in 1792) was the centre of all that was most public-spirited and refined in the city. Both husband and wife were accomplished musicians, and the former possessed a magnificent tenor voice. Their two sons, Friedrich and Albert, both volunteers in the army of defence, were present at the dinner. Among the guests were the generals in command, Desaix, the future hero of Marengo, other officers and a few leading citizens. The hostess and two young nieces seem to have been the only ladies present.

Little wonder that under the circumstances conversation took an entirely martial turn. Marches, battles, the chances and fruits of victory formed the sole topic of conversation. The words 'Enfants de

la patrie,' a name given to the younger Dietrich's volunteers, 'Aux armes, citoyens!' 'Marchons,' and other phrases were on every lip, emphasised many a sentence. Champagne circulated freely, voices became more impassioned and vociferous, and as it was then the fashion in France, as it is still, for ladies to remain at the table to the last, Madame Dietrich and her nieces interposed. Could not something else be discussed?—they had heard enough of campaigns and wars.

Then patriotic songs were mentioned. Might not some substitute be found for the jingling 'Ça ira, ça ira'? Could not some one compose a hymn for the army of the Rhine, General Luckner's brave followers? The host's first notion was of a publicly advertised competition, of offering a prize for what should be not only a war-song, but become a national hymn. Then, another thought having struck him, he turned to the young military enginer.

'But you, Monsieur de Lisle,' he said with charming insinuation and persuasiveness, 'you who woo the Muses, why should not *you* try to give us what we want? Compose, then, a noble song for the French people, now a people of soldiers, and you will have deserved well of your country.'

Rouget de Lisle tried to excuse himself, but alike host and fellow-guests would not hear his depreca-

tions. Again the champagne passed round, and just as at last, amid tears, smiles, and passionately patriotic farewells, the party broke up, a fellow-officer, about to quit Strassburg next day, begged de Lisle for a copy of his forthcoming song.

'I make the promise on behalf of your comrade,' Dietrich replied with affectionate authoritativeness.

In a state of tremendous surexcitation Rouget de Lisle reached his lodging close by, but not to sleep. His violin lay on the table. Taking it up, he struck a few chords. Soon a melody seemed to grow under his fingers, harmonising with the words that had been reiterated throughout the evening, 'Aux armes, aux armes, citoyens, marchons, formez vos bataillons!' No sooner had he gripped his air, and put down the notes on paper, than he dashed off the words. Thus having in a brief hour secured for himself an undying name, he threw himself upon his bed and slumbered heavily.

III

In his declining years, Rouget de Lisle would ofttime narrate the genesis of the Marseillaise to friends and acquaintances, memory sometimes playing him false in immaterial particulars. Again and again he told the story, among his listeners being the celebrated painter David d'Angers.

The following version is now accepted as substantially correct. On awakening next morning, his eye immediately rested on the composition of a few hours before. After glancing at verse and melody, early as was the morning, the clock had just struck six, he hurried off to a fellow-officer and guest of the night before, who in turn hurried him off to the Mayor's. The young men found Dietrich strolling in his garden.

'Let us go indoors,' he said ; 'I will try the air on the *clavecin*,[1] and shall be able to tell at once if it is very good or very bad.'

Dietrich, true musician as he was, unhesitatingly anticipated the verdict of posterity. All the available guests of yesterday were again invited to dinner; he had an important communication in store for them, he said. During the banquet his secret was carefully withheld. The party having adjourned to the salon, one of the young ladies opened the *clavecin*, and the Mayor's magnificent voice thundered forth :—

> 'Allons, enfants de la patrie,
> Le jour de gloire est arrivé.'

The audience was electrified. Forthwith copied and distributed to local bands and musical societies, the song acted like a charm. Hitherto enrolling

[1] Precursor of the piano.

themselves by twos and threes, the youth of Alsace now donned the tricolour cockade by hundreds and thousands.

As yet, however, the composition was only known by the name of 'Le Chant de Guerre de l'Armée du Rhin,' and its fame remained local. One interesting feature of this history is the part played in it by a woman.

Although a prolific musical composer, Rouget de Lisle possessed, as has been said, only an imperfect knowledge of harmony and counterpoint. It was his host's wife, the accomplished and public-spirited Madame Dietrich, who now set to work, not only correcting technical errors and arranging the piece for part-singing and orchestration, but making numerous copies. In a charming letter to her brother at Basle she wrote in May: 'Rouget de Lisle, a Captain in the Engineers and an agreeable poet and musician, at the suggestion of my husband, has composed a song suited to present events (*un chant de circonstance*), which we find very spirited, and not without a certain originality. It is something after the manner of Glück, but livelier and more stirring. I have put my knowledge of orchestration to use, arranging the song for different instruments, and am therefore very busy.'

It was not till the following August that Rouget

de Lisle's composition reached Paris, henceforth to be known as the Marseillaise.

In his famous novel, *The Reds of the Midi,* the Provençal novelist dramatically describes a march historic as that of the Ten Thousand. The volunteers of Marseilles set forth early in July, harnessing themselves like beasts of burden to their field-pieces, singing as they went, and bequeathing the new song to every village passed through. It was not till the last day but one of the month that they arrived, and on the 4th of August, for the first time, the great war-song was heard in the capital.

A few days later the king and his family were prisoners, the Legislative Assembly dissolved, and the newly-formed Convention demanded adhesion from all officers and public functionaries, the alternative being immediate dismissal.

Rouget de Lisle's reply was a decided *No,* the fateful word changing the course of his career, a little later bringing his head within an inch of the guillotine.

IV

How are we to account for *il gran refiuto,* such a withdrawal of the hand from the plough? Was the step due to social influences, to conviction, or simply to waywardness and instability of character? He carried his secret with him to the grave.

Anterior events may in part account alike for his reactionary mood and his incarceration later as a *suspect*. Strassburg had been divided into two factions. On the one side were Dietrich and his followers, who believed in the possibility of constitutional reforms whilst retaining monarchical institutions ; on the other the ultra-Jacobin party, headed by that ferocious ex-priest Euloge Schneider, the Carrier of the east, of whom Charles Nodier has left us so striking a portrait.

Rouget de Lisle, like many another, unhappily for himself, possessed one gift he could well have spared. Not only could he dash off songs, operas, novels, and plays, and skilfully handle the violinist's bow, but he wielded a mordant pen. In the art of invective he equalled Rochefort himself. During his stay at Strassburg he had in his editorial capacity violently lashed Schneider and his associate Lapeaux, another and equally violent ex-priest, in the organ of Dietrich's party. The attacks were continued after his removal to Huningue, a small fortified place in what until 1871 was the department of Haut Rhin. Small wonder, therefore, that he soon found himself by these an object of suspicion. For many months after his dismissal from the army he led the life of a wanderer, effacing himself in the wilds of his beloved Jura. So little, as yet, was he generally

known as the author of the Marseillaise, that six months after its composition a friend wrote to him saying that the new war-song was performed in all the Paris theatres, and adding: 'You have never told me the name of the composer. Is it Edelmann?' This Edelmann, a former close friend of Dietrich, and, with himself, an accomplished musician, afterwards became his accuser and bitterest enemy. In his invaluable *Reminiscences of the Revolution,* Charles Nodier relates how he heard him with horrible sang-froid thus arraign his old associate when on his trial at Besançon: 'As my friend I am bound to weep for thee; as a traitor thou must die!'

During these wanderings, Rouget de Lisle one day engaged a youth as guide through some mountain passes unknown to him: his ear was greeted with the refrain:—

'Allons, enfants de la patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé.'

'What is that you are singing, my lad?' he asked with some surprise.

'You don't know, monsieur!' replied the boy still more astonished. 'Why, that's the song of the Marseillais volunteers that everybody knows by heart.'

His song had not only reached the capital, but his native province.

The instability of Rouget de Lisle's character is

evidenced in the next phase of his chameleon-like career. Apparently overtaken by remorse he demanded re-admission into the army, now that of the First Republic, took the civic oath, and joined the victorious forces of Valmy at Verdun. What followed remains a mystery. Shortly afterwards he was again dismissed the service, and once more effaced himself among his native solitudes. Then he returned to Paris, seeking distraction in music and literature, was soon arrested, set at liberty, re-arrested, this time being kept in prison till the great deliverance of Thermidor. His immediate liberation was lastly due to the fact that he was the composer of the Marseillaise, now proclaimed the national hymn of the Republic.

It is not perhaps astonishing that despite these facts and certain honours decreed by the Convention, his first mood was of violent reaction. He could not indeed say with Charles Nodier[1] that he had been the sole guest of a famous banquet who had preserved his head. But the amiable Dietrich, his noble guest Victor de Broglie had fallen victims to personal vindictiveness; a second guest on that memorable 25th of April 1792, Achille de Chastellet, had poisoned himself in prison; a third was in exile;

[1] This happened twice to the charming author of *Trilby* and other classic pieces. By the way, did Du Maurier here find the name for his once famous novel?

others had died on the field of battle; the rest were scattered.

In curious contradiction to the mercilessness of partisanship at this period was the prison régime. During his incarceration Dietrich found distraction in musical composition for the *clavecin*. No less than twenty pieces called Allemande, a kind of quick dance, were composed by him whilst a prisoner, the manuscripts still remaining in his family. For the rest Henrietta Maria Williams tells us how the prisoners of the Terror fared, how conversation, cards, books, music and painting in company relieved the tedium of confinement, how 'her tea-kettle was never allowed to get cool,' and above all how one of her jailors, Benoît by name, did his utmost to alleviate the condition of his charges by little kindnesses and comforts, 'without deviating from duty ever pursuing his steady course of humanity.' Schneider and Edelmann, be it recalled, met with the fate they had so ruthlessly meted out to others.

The mental see-saw characterising Rouget de Lisle's career now manifested itself in adhesion to the party of counter-revolution. Heart and soul he joined the *Jeunesse dorée*, danced at the celebrated *bals de victimes*, and frequented the salons of Madame Tallien and of General Beauharnais's widow,

the future Empress. A little later we find the author of the Marseillaise, as he now styled himself, demanding reintegration into the army under Hoche, a request unhesitatingly accorded.

Disappointed at not receiving promotion after Quiberon, once more he retired from the service, a little later once more asking re-admission. This time he had to do with 'the organiser of victory,' now the most powerful man in France. Carnot would make no exception to the new law, for once and for all excluding officers who had voluntarily thrown up their commissions. The correspondence of the pair is curious reading. To the great 'Citoyen directeur,' as afterwards to his still greater rival, the young military engineer took the tone of a commander-in-chief addressing a subaltern. With Carnot's fall and Napoleon's star in the ascendant, Rouget de Lisle's hopes of a career revived. Excluded from the army, he dreamed of diplomatic distinction. His protectress Josephine, now Madame Bonaparte, twice procured him employment, firstly a mission to the Spanish court of no political importance, secondly a post in the commissariat. As envoy complimentary he acquitted himself satisfactorily; as contractor for the barracks he naturally proved a dismal failure. The complicated story is too long for reproduction here, sufficient to say that

addressing the 'Citoyen Premier Consul' haughtily and defiantly as he had addressed Carnot, he announced his intention of crossing the Manche, assured, he said, of receiving honourable hospitality in England. The intention was not carried out. A year later again he dipped his pen in gall, his long tirade containing such sentences as these: 'Bonaparte! you are hastening to your own destruction, worse still to the destruction of France. What have you done with our liberties? What in your hands has become the fate of the Republic? . . . Bonaparte! It was not with the intention of becoming your patrimony that France threw herself into your arms,' and so on and so on, an admirable and powerful arraignment, unfortunately coming from a negligible quarter. So insignificant a personality indeed was now the author of the Marseillaise that despite this harangue he kept his head on his shoulders!

V

Rouget de Lisle's career recalls a certain Norse fable. One day a farmer set out for market on a valuable horse he wished to turn into money. But being of a fantastic and capricious disposition he thought he would try barter instead. After many, as he deemed, excellent bargains, having exchanged

his good beast respectively for a cow, pigs, cocks and hens, and what not, the final lot was sold for a small piece of money which he lost ere reaching home. Maybe, the one success of Rouget de Lisle's explains his many failures.

In another respect his story is even more exceptional. During the long struggle with poverty, neglect, and enforced inaction that followed, but for his friends he would have found himself alone. Family affection, the usual adamantine bond of sympathy and good-fellowship among our neighbours, was here wanting. 'Talk not to me of brothers!' he one day said, the words recalling Tacitus's bitter epigram, 'They hated with the hatred of brothers.'

The Musée Carnavalet is now the depository of Rouget de Lisle's correspondence with his brothers and sisters, a collection revealing painful dissensions. One brother was now a general in Napoleon's army, another was employed in the naval commissariat. But the family had not prospered, bit by bit the patrimony of Montaigu had been parted with; finally the ancestral home, Rouget de Lisle's asylum for five years, was sold also.

In 1817, at the age of fifty-seven, he settled in Paris, earning a scanty and uncertain livelihood by teaching and copying music, making translations

from the English for reviews, and literary hack-work. The inventive faculty was still alert. He composed new national hymns and accompaniments to Béranger's songs, wrote librettos, and, it is said, suggested to St.-Simon the agency of music in social regeneration.

Many old friends were now dead or scattered, but one or two remained, among these his former companion in arms General Blein, who survived him by some years, gave him shelter under his roof and raised a monument to his memory, and new friends gathered round him devoted as the old. Rouget de Lisle, like most of his countrymen, possessed a veritable genius for friendship. His warm heart, generous spirit, versatile, scintillating nature, and talent for conversation, endeared him to all with whom he came in close contact, atoning for exasperating foibles. Again and again some faithful comrade proved 'the man whose name was Help,' and who dragged him out of the Slough of Despond. When, in 1826, he was torn from his Paris garret and thrown into prison for a trifling debt, it was Béranger who flew to the rescue, discharging the claim and collecting a little money for future needs.

General Blein, who lived at Choisy-le-Roi with his mother and sister, now offered him a home, and partly as guest, partly as boarder he remained under their

friendly roof for some years. The Blein home was later broken up owing to the death of the two ladies, and then other friends equally devoted made him one of their family circle.

The Revolution of 1830 brought him belated honours and independence. I have ever had a corner in my heart for the homely citizen king who, like any honest bourgeois, used to preside at the head of his dinner-table and carve for his large family, and who would daily have a 'good-day' and a gossip with the guards. Louis-Philippe never forgot that he owed his crown to revolution and to the Marseillaise. Even before crowned as Roi des Français he accorded a pension of 1500 francs to his comrade of 1792, the pair having fought side by side in Dumouriez's army. Through Béranger's agency two other pensions of a thousand francs each were awarded Rouget de Lisle by the Ministers of the Interior and of Commerce respectively. Finally on the 6th of December of the same year came that honour which sends all Frenchmen happy to the grave. The cross of the Legion of Honour now adorned his breast!

It is pleasant to find this storm-tossed career ending in days of deep halcyon repose, and indeed in something more. Rouget de Lisle's last years were not only free from care, suffering and mental depression, they were enlivened by intellectual intercourse,

irradiated by the quick, keen sympathies of artistic fellowship. The central figure of a highly cultivated circle, every evening he found himself surrounded by kindred spirits. Music and conversation, above all, the reminiscences of the author of the Marseillaise, made his hostess's reunions animated and stimulating. The Voiart dwelling commanded a beautiful prospect, before it stretching the verdant valley of the Seine, at that time undisturbed by railways and unpoetised by the speculative builder. In 1892, the centenary of the Marseillaise, old folks living here could remember the old soldier as slowly strolling to and fro he sunned himself and drank in the beauty of the scene.

And strange as it seems, in this year of grace nineteen hundred and five, some hale nonagenarian might still be found who could tell us of that pathetic figure,—the red rosette, atoning in part for so many cruel disillusions, conspicuous on his shabby military coat!

Surrounded by his friends, Rouget de Lisle died on the 27th of June 1836, a vast crowd following his remains to the grave. Even under the citizen king, the son of Philippe Égalité, the Marseillaise had been silenced, but just as the funeral party prepared to disperse, some workmen began with solemn measure:

'Allons, enfants de la patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé.'

The refrain, taken up by the crowd, swelled into a mighty volume of sound, fitting requiem of one now numbered among the immortals!

VI

The fate of the Marseillaise had been meteoric as that of its composer, one day flashing forth with blinding brilliancy, now buried in Serbonian obscurity, now the theme of Europe, now silent as the voice of one gone down to the tomb.

It was hardly likely that Napoleon, having used the Marseillaise for his own ends, would allow it to serve any other. The song might prove a siren to his soldiers when in his early days he led them on to victory. No sooner had the Corsican Cæsar crushed the Republic and trampled French liberties under foot, than the electrifying strains resounded no more. Nor was it at all probable that the Restoration would tolerate consecration of principles it had adhered to so gingerly. Louis-Philippe, indeed, on first coming to the throne, allowed himself to be occasionally serenaded with the hymn of liberty and revolution, but in his ears also and in those of his advisers, its democratic note soon seemed a portent and a warning. Eighteen years later the Marseillaise was resuscitated, once more not only to awaken France but Europe. Then followed the Napoleonic legend and its fatal

magic, and for eighteen years more, like the princess of fairy tale, it was condemned to deathless slumber.

And not with the proclamation of the Third Republic was Rouget de Lisle's song pronounced the national hymn of France. During the reactionary MacMahon régime the Marseillaise was studiously kept in the background. From August 1875 until the same month of the following year I lived at Nantes, being the guest of a French lady, widow of a former Préfet. Never once do I remember hearing the strains now familiar even to children of our own national schools. It was not indeed until the 14th of February 1879 that the Chamber under Gambetta's presidency recalled and ratified the decree of the 26 Messidor, An II. (14 July 1795) and the Marseillaise was proclaimed the national hymn of France.

As we review this strange history an inevitable reflection occurs to the student of history. For strange it is, but true, the Revolution was pre-eminently a lyrical epoch. A period of fiercest passions and superhuman endurance, of Titanic struggles for national existence, found expression in song and melody. The stormy years preceding the Restoration constitute indeed the most musical period of French history. Song and *vaudeville*, *vaudeville* and song, characterise crises appalling as any in modern annals. Seeking relief from actualities,

native genius took a sportive turn. The authors of *Jean qui pleure et Jean qui rit*, of *Le Temps et l'Amour*, of *Il pleut, bergère, il pleut*, were severally contemporaries of Robespierre and Napoleon.

These and many other graceful trifles have become classics, numerous editions having been unearthed within recent years by the *Société de l'histoire de la Révolution.*[1]

The Conservatoire, that great national school of music and declamation, was founded by the Convention, similar schools being opened at Marseilles, Nantes, and other large cities. In the words of M. Rambaud, the history of French national music dates from the Revolution, the crown being decreed to the young soldier, who as a child followed the pipe of wandering minstrels in his beloved Jura—whose verdict on himself was so singularly falsified. 'Your musical talent,' he wrote to Berlioz in 1830, 'is a volcano always emitting flame. Mine is only a lighted wisp, blazing for a moment, then smouldering away.'

[1] *Histoire de la Civilisation Française*, vol. iii. latest issue.

CHAPTER III

ON THE TRACK OF BALZAC—LIMOGES

There are certain French towns to which Balzac is the best possible, nay, the indispensable guide. Saumur, the home of Eugénie Grandet, and Guérande, the scene of *Béatrix*, have, indeed, become literary pilgrimages, but other places of great interest in themselves possess a double interest for the Balzac student, notably Limoges and Angoulême.

The Danton of fiction, as Philarète Chasles has called him, whilst bestowing world-wide fame upon a sleepy Breton bourg or a remote Touraine hamlet had little general knowledge of his own country. In *Béatrix*, for instance, he speaks of France still retaining two walled-in towns, perfect specimens of feudal architecture, namely Guérande and Avignon. As all travellers know, such specimens are numerous —Carcassonne, Saumur, Provins, Montreuil, by no means exhaust the list. Travelling was expensive and laborious in Balzac's day, and we must be thankful that he travelled much more than most people.

Limoges, the scene of *Le Curé du Village*, and Angoulême, that of *Les Deux Poètes*, are both cities commandingly placed and rich in archaeological and artistic attractions. On lately revisiting the capitals of the Haute Vienne and the Charente I found them more engaging than ever and quite as neglected. Seldom, indeed, do you encounter a stray compatriot in the surroundings so minutely interwoven with Balzac's stories, stories as full of pathetic interest as any of his vast series. Crowning the lofty banks of the Vienne, Limoges is seen from afar, the gloomy tower of its beautiful cathedral forming a strange contrast to the bright landscape. September is the month for the chestnut country, such is the Limousin *par excellence*. What the apple-tree is to Normandy, the olive to Provence, is the chestnut in these regions, and the veteran trees are a glory to behold. Formerly chestnuts almost supplanted bread with the country folks. Of late years, alas, wide areas of chestnut wood have been levelled for the culture of cereals.

Strolling through the lower town with Balzac's novel in hand we feel that these tortuous streets and ancient dwellings must remain very much as he saw them three quarters of a century back. The tumble-down shop 'unchanged from the middle ages' in which the ill-fated girl's miserly grandfather

Limoges

amassed riches—the bookseller's window on which *Paul et Virginie* caught her eye, a turning point in her history—the stately hotel of the rich banker with 'the façade of a public building,' her home when exchanging an avaricious father for an equally avaricious husband — the cottage on the opposite bank whither she strolled on summer evenings to enjoy the view, her mother's society—and stolen interviews—the lonely suburban dwelling by the river with its garden, scene of her lover's crime, the double murder saving her from shame and exposure—all these sites seem as identifiable as any in guidebooks.

Here, indeed, is a page that might well have been transcribed for traveller's use: 'The bishop's palace of Limoges crowns an eminence bordering the Vienne, the gardens flanked with solid masonry descending stairwise to the river. So considerable is this elevation that the Faubourg St. Étienne on the opposite bank seems level with the lowest terrace. From that point, according to the direction pedestrians may take, the river winds sinuously or flows with unbroken sweep through a rich panorama. Westward from the bishopric gardens is seen a graceful curve, the Vienne here bathing the Faubourg St. Martial, a little further on rising the poplar-covered islet fancifully designated by Véroni-

que, the Île de France. Eastward the perspective is one of hills forming a natural amphitheatre. The witchery of its site and the rich simplicity of its style make the évêché the most remarkable edifice of Limoges. . . . The bishop was seated in an angle of the lower terrace under a trellised vine taking his dessert and drinking in the beauty of the evening. The poplars on the islet seemed a part of the water, so clear their reflections gilded by the setting sun. Thus mirrored, a variety of foliage made up a whole tinged with melancholy. . . . Beyond, the spires and roofs of the Faubourg St. Martial gleamed between clustering greenery. The subdued murmur of a country town half-hidden in the bent arc of the river, the softness of the air'—here follows a truly Balzacian touch—'all contributed to impart to the prelate that quietude of mind insisted upon by all authorities on digestion—his eyes wandered to the right bank, soon becoming fixed upon the enclosed garden, scene of the double assassination.'

The bishop's palace, so glowingly described by the great novelist, had moved Arthur Young to enthusiasm half a century before. 'The present bishop,' wrote the Suffolk farmer in 1787, 'has erected a large and handsome palace, and his garden is the finest object to be seen at Limoges, for it commands a landscape hardly to be equalled for

beauty; it would be idle to give any other description than just enough to induce travellers to visit it! A river winds through a vale surrounded by hills that present the gayest and most animated assemblage of villas, farms, vines, hanging meadows, and chestnuts blended so fortunately as to compose a scene truly smiling.'

Balzac's good bishop and the country priest fetched from the murderer's village in order to confess him play an important part throughout the story. Véronique, whose beauty at nine years of age was the marvel of Limoges, whom a chance reading of *Paul et Virginie* in girlhood made sentimental and visionary, is a character after Balzac's own heart. She seeks refuge from a loveless home in Byron, Walter Scott, Schiller, Goethe, and in pietistic exercises. These failing to satisfy her aspirations she accepts the love of a protégé, a young man of inferior position whom, as she said in her dying confession, she 'intended to train for heaven, but had conducted to the scaffold.' When this supreme crisis in her life came, when her lover lay sentenced to death in prison, the conduct of *cette sublime femme*, as Balzac calls her, was what might have been expected. The sentimentality that did duty for passion prompted no heroic initiative. Instead of throwing good repute to the four winds, consoling

her lover in prison, confronting his judges, thereby averting the death penalty, she held aloof. The unhappy youth, showing a temper truly valiant, went to his doom with sealed lips, and Véronique betook herself to works of abstinence and piety, thereby expiating her fault and gaining saintly renown.

But all this time the dreadful secret had not been her own. The bishop had divined it in the first instance, and the *curé* was put in possession of it by means of the confessional. When, worn out by fasting, the cilice, and other penances, she wished to make public avowal, these two endeavoured to dissuade her. 'Die in peace,' urged the bishop, 'you have endured enough, God has heard you.'

The dying penitent insisted, however, and before a numerous assemblage—priests, civic authorities, and friends—she unburdened herself, pleaded excuse for the reticence that had saved her own reputation at the cost of another's life, for having been 'carried away by the terrible logic of the world' ('*entraînée par la logique terrible du monde*').

Le Curé du Village is far from being one of Balzac's greatest stories, and Limoges is by no means one of the greatest cathedral towns in France, but the romance embellishes the town and a sight of the town vivifies the romance. Henceforth we cannot

think of them apart. Balzac's excessive minuteness is far from being a fault in the eyes of the wayfarer on his track. His long descriptions do not weary under such circumstances; on the contrary, they become vitally interesting. We should re-read *Béatrix* at Guérande, hardly changed, I dare say, since I saw it many years ago—*Eugénie Grandet* at lovely little Saumur, *Le Curé de Tours* at Tours, *Ursule Mirouët* at the pretty town of Nemours, and so on, in each case the scenery being elaborated with as much care as the figures with which they are animated.

Heretical as it may appear, to my thinking the fine gothic cathedral of Limoges is disfigured by its gloomy clock tower. The entire town seems overshadowed, rendered gloomy, by this tall lank steeple of funereal stone which we catch sight of from every point.

After an interval of some years I lately revisited the capital of the ancient Limousin and chef-lieu of the Haute Vienne. The clock tower, I thought, looked grimmer, more spectral, than ever. It is slightly, ever so slightly, inclined, a peculiarity no little adding to its eeriness. As we gaze, we cannot help contemplating a possible calamity, death and destruction dealt by a sudden collapse of that tremendous pile.

How came these leaning towers and curved spires about? Was it by chance, caprice, or from devotional motives that the clock tower of Limoges, like the beautiful spire of Dijon cathedral, was thus constructed, made to bow before Heaven?

For many years I was in the habit of staying at the old Burgundian capital, ever admiring that bending spire, as graceful a thing in stone as fancy could picture. But the inclination gradually became more marked, and it was feared that some day the spire would fall; so, ten years since, it was taken down and a new perfectly upright one erected in its stead.

Limoges cathedral itself is beautiful alike without and within, perfect type of Northern French Gothic, a type we shall soon exchange for another.

With delight I again lingered in the exquisitely proportioned interior, ruminating on the grand old architects, stone-masons, its creators, their names for the most part forgotten, their life's work recorded in imperishable stone. These modest but truly great artists have ever been to me a subject of admiring contemplation, and at every stage of French travel the traveller is reminded of them. It would seem that sacred legend did not suffice for the prolific fancy of such builders, so often do we find mythological subjects turned to account. Thus the richly

ornate rood-loft here represents the six labours of Hercules in bas-relief, unfortunately much damaged. St. Michel-aux-Lions, on high ground to the right of the cathedral, recalls our own beautiful Grantham, so elegant and conspicuous is its spire.

The interest of Limoges is far from being exhausted when we have revisited cathedrals and churches. Limoges is the cradle of two exquisite arts, one, alas! now lost to the world for ever, the other flourishing. The inimitable enamels of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are only to be admired in museums. The dainty *faïence,* due to the discovery of a lady in 1760, is to-day an important manufacture, one of the first, if not the first, in France.

Genius has its harvests, its extraordinary efflorescence as well as Nature's products: thus not one, but groups of enamellers sprung up simultaneously, the delicate art ran in families, in clans, the skill of one merged in the excellence of all, fathers and sons, brothers and cousins earning collective fame, inheriting collective renown! These sons of Limoges have glorified their native city, lent it unique distinction. Their enamel remains inimitable, unpurchasable, existing collections are not to be added to, for all time they must remain stationary. These masterpieces of an art which dealt in masterpieces only do not appeal

to all, they are appreciated by the eclectic, the connoisseur, not by ordinary lovers of painting and the decorative arts. But the other speciality of Limoges, its famous *faïence,* is more readily understood and admired. The manufacture too, if we must so call it, is eminently serviceable and within reach of rich and poor. At very reasonable cost we can embellish our tables and walls with this lovely ware.

The history of Limoges porcelain is curious in more respects than one. The fine white clay (called kaolin), found in strata above gneiss, had long been known to the Chinese and used by them in the manufacture of their hard or kaolinic porcelain. The Germans had also discovered the value of kaolin at an early period, but long kept their methods secret. In France search had been made for the precious clay in vain, and, as in the Arabian fairy-tale, a woman it was who discovered the speaking bird, the singing tree, and the golden water; so, in 1768, the wife of a poor country doctor named Darnet discovered magnificent beds of kaolin at St. Yriex near Limoges, a find worth a mine of gold. Madame Darnet's happy treasure trove and the discovery of petuntze a little later for once and for all assured the splendid future of Limoges *faïence.* The latter mentioned substance is a kind of felspar hardly less valuable than kaolin in this manufacture, and equally

familiar to the Chinese. In the ceramic museum of Sèvres is to be seen a fragment of the very kaolin accidentally lighted upon by Madame Darnet, a memento making up for the non-erection of a statue. For with the strangest inconsistency in what is *par excellence* a statue-raising country, no monument records the fact. Whilst at Angers, though portraits in stone memorialise a worthy gentlewoman who bequeathed her small fortune to the municipality, the benefactress of generations has not been similarly honoured. Between three and four thousand potters of both sexes and just upon a thousand artists and designers are employed in the various manufactures here, the annual value of the commerce amounting to many millions of francs.

The ceramic museum and school of decorative art called after their founder—Adrien Dubouché—may worthily be compared to those of Sèvres, and in the former I have twice spent delightful afternoons. No special training of the eye or technical knowledge is indispensable to such enjoyment. Without being able to identify 'Pompadour rose' or 'bleu de Sèvres' we can revel in the lovely things before us—little landscapes in pale green, pink, or deep purple; seaweeds on a pure white ground; moon and constellations on deep blue heavens; flowers, shells, insects, butterflies, on porcelain.

Limoges ware does not usurp undue space. The famous *faïences* of France, ancient as well as modern, are here represented—Moustiers, Strassburg—alas! poor Strassburg—Nevers, Rouen, Marseilles, Chantilly, Sèvres, Gien—and oriental nations are also in full force, also admirable specimens of our own Wedgwood, Worcester, and Crown Derby. Modern work is seen as well—ware from the great houses of Minton and Doulton and the pretty Torquay majolica.

Close to this modest-looking but rich and important museum are grouped potteries, and on my first visit to Limoges I was shown over one of these—certain processes are not exhibited to strangers, but an even limited insight into the fabrication is full of instruction.

Kaolin, a bluish-white substance, found in a pure state, is first reduced to the consistency of pulp in works by the river, and afterwards dried, next modelled and turned, next immersed in liquefied pegmatite, a substance composed of felspar and quartz, which imparts the glaze. Elaborate processes of testing, sorting, and drying follow, the pieces being finally consigned to the artist and the decorator. The gradual transformation of uninviting looking earth to a beautiful miniature or a cup of crystalline transparency, is an object-lesson not to be despised by grown-up children. Certain opera-

tions involving trade secrets are naturally withheld from inspection.

As I recall the peaceful aspect of Limoges during my two sojourns, it is with difficulty I can realise the turbulent scenes of the late strike (1905).

Next to the potters, the butchers form an important section of the community here. From the historic point of view, these worthy citizens possess uncommon interest, once forming a powerful guild or corporation; they still enjoy certain privileges, occupy a certain area, have their own church, and intermarry after the manner of Jews. Thus five or six patronymics only are found among the families of the seventy or eighty butchers carrying on business at Limoges. The *Boucherie* or butchers' quarter with its mediæval houses, having deep wooden dormers overlapping the lower stories, is highly picturesque. How came it about that Balzac missed this curious feature of a town he had studied so closely?

CHAPTER IV

ROCAMADOUR AND PADIRAC

Travellers in quest of romance and adventure cannot do better than follow me from Limoges to Rocamadour, the more venturesome including Padirac in their programme. The railway journey of sixty miles will not be found long by the most impatient.

A hundred and odd years ago Arthur Young dilated on the charm and variety of Limousin scenery, and those who follow in his footsteps will not feel cheated. The fine old farmer has by no means exaggerated the natural beauties of this region. 'It is not,' he says, 'that a fine view breaks now and then upon the eye to compensate the traveller for the dulness of a much larger district; but a quick succession of landscapes, many of which would be rendered famous in England by the resort of travellers to view them. The country is all hill and valley; the hills are all high and would be called by us mountains, if waste and covered with heather, but being cultivated to their very tops, their magnitude is

Rocamadour

lessened to the eye. Their forms are various, they swell in beautiful semi-globes, they project in abrupt masses which enclose deep glens, they expand into amphitheatres of cultivation that rise in gradation, in some places tossed into a thousand inequalities of surface, in others, the eye reposes on scenes of the softest verdure. Add to this, the rich robe with which nature's bounteous hand has dressed the slopes with hanging woods of chestnut. And whether the vales open their verdant bosoms and admit the sun to illumine the rivers in their comparative repose, or whether they be enclosed in deep glens that afford a passage with difficulty to the water rolling over their rocky beds and dazzling the eye with the lustre of cascades, in every case the features are interesting and characteristic of the scenery.'

The above lines, written in June 1787, might have been penned yesterday, so true are they as a bit of description.

An hour's railway brings us to Brives, Brives-la-Gaillarde is the little town deservedly called, for gay it is of aspect and valiant has ofttimes been its part in history. All travellers should halt here for the sake of the lovely walk by the Corrèze—Brives has little else to show—and of its old-fashioned, ingratiating hôtel de Toulouse in the principal street. The house itself is a delight, with its oak panelling, roomy

passages and irregularities, and landlord and landlady we found all friendliness and courtesy. Such a reception came as an agreeable surprise after the frosty manner with which we had been greeted at the new big house near the station. Two quiet ladies unlikely to spend money upon expensive wines were evidently not wanted there.

Let me here set down the items of our *déjeûner* or midday meal at that cordially-remembered hotel, the cooking being first-rate and the price one franc and a half, just 1s. 3d.

Melon.
Trout.
Pâté de foie gras.
Roast Veal.
Partridge.
Bifteck.
Ceps bordelaises (mushrooms in oil).
Grapes. Figs. Peaches.
Roquefort, Gruyère, and local Cheese.

Here let me mention that *bifteck* was introduced into France with many other English things in the early years of the Restoration. It was a reign of Anglomania, and a French historian gratefully alludes to the importation of this excellent dish. The word *bifteck* was adopted by the French Academy in 1835.

Brives has not its surname for nothing. In 1374 the hardy little town opened its gates to the Duke of

Lancaster, a little later refusing the entry of French troops under the Duc de Bourbon. Cruel reprisals followed the taking of the town, which afterwards rehabilitated itself by driving out the English from their strong places in the Limousin.

At Brives we take the Toulouse railway, getting magnificent views on either side, and soon quit the department of the Corrèze for the Lot—the ancient province of Quercy.

Rocamadour is one of the most traditional French sites : the nether world of Padirac was only discovered a few years ago. For nearly eighteen hundred years pious pilgrims have flocked to the shrine of Zacchæus the publican, canonised under the name of Saint Amadour. On the 10th of April 1899, eight thousand votaries of science fêted the inauguration of Padirac. Here we find venerable antiquity and natural marvels in close proximity, twin spectacles of extraordinary grandeur, as yet, however, a myth to us, the three quarters of an hour's drive, or rather jolt, from the station suggesting neither picturesqueness nor sublimity. Alike the bold promontory shooting into the heavens, and the awful chasm yawning in close proximity remained hidden, no sign betokening their existence. After the manner of Arabian story, genii darkening the sky appear by magic, as suddenly the very bowels of the earth are

revealed to our astounded eyes. We were indeed traversing the Causse of Gramal, one of those treeless, waterless plateaux of central France, only within the last twenty years familiarised to the traveller.

Closely packed as we were in the stuffy little omnibus, we contrived to get glimpses of the landscape—here patches of rye, lucerne or potatoes, there tiny hayfields, the autumn crop or *regain* relieving the stony waste.

On we jogged, peering curiously to right and left, vainly looking for the rocky apex, the natural Tour Eiffel we had travelled so far to behold. Nor when the vehicle came to a halt was there any sign of the famous shrine. We found ourselves in an open space covered with carts, omnibuses, *calèches*, and amid most disconcerting surroundings. Silence and desolation were now exchanged for clamouring crowds. Around pressed the lame, the halt, and the blind, gibbering crones, unsightly cripples, dwarfs, humpbacks, paralysed and palsied besieged us, one laying hands on my tea-basket, another on my companion's travelling-bag, a third and fourth pounced upon our portmanteaus, the rest groaning, whining, supplicating in professional sing-song. It really seemed as if Toulouse, that metropolis of mendicancy as I have elsewhere described it, had hither despatched her beggars.

The confusion and uproar were at their height when to our great joy appeared a knight-errant, in other words, a most capable-looking man in his shirt-sleeves, who drove off our assailants and took our persons and belongings under his protection, afterwards informing us that his name was Monsieur Espinasse. Let future travellers bear the name in mind, or rather I should advise them not to follow our example approaching Rocamadour from behind, rather to stop short at the head of the gorge taking the excellent road winding corkscrew fashion to its base and setting you down in the village street.

We soon realised our position. We had flanked the rocky pile, lofty as the pyramids of Ghizeh, below opening a vast ravine, its velvety green depths set round with a semi-circle of silvery crags. Half-way between the church-crowned summit and the rim of verdant gorge below, a ledge or shelf of rock had been built over, a little inn and a cluster of houses occupying the level space, whilst opposite the masonry, dove-tailed into the rock, stands the bishop's palace, formerly a fortress and a convent of cloistered nuns. Adjoining there is the famous shrine, a congeries of cavernous buildings hollowed out of the natural wall.

Rocamadour proper, with its one long street, ancient gateways, shops and cafés, and one or two inns, lies several hundred feet below. Thus the place may be

described as a gigantic staircase having three landing-stages.

Following our protector in shirt-sleeves we descend the giddy flight of steps leading to the half-way bit of Rocamadour just named. Fortunately, and at the same time unfortunately for us, if I may be permitted an oxymoron, we had arrived with two bishops and hundreds of pilgrims. The last pilgrimage of the year and the great sight of the place had filled every hotel, inn, and *auberge* to overflowing. At first it seemed highly probable that we must pass the night in armchairs or be jolted back to the station. After much searching we were accommodated with two tiny rooms in a humble restaurant, the kindly hostess of the hôtel St. Marie promising to send in our early tea, other meals being taken with her pilgrims. The price charged for each room was a franc and a half. The Lourdes of the Lot had not as yet rendered folks mercenary.

Matters being so far comfortably settled and our spirits restored by some excellent tea and bread and butter, we sallied into the crowded bit of street. The entire population of the department seemed pouring into Rocamadour, a mere wedge of a place, its capacities as strictly limited as those of a tunnel. What would become of such an army? The first disagreeable impression we had received was soon

effaced. Affability itself we found this perpetually increasing stream of peasant folk. Loquacious, animated, were our fellow-pilgrims certainly, but no crowd could be better behaved.

Before and around the hôtel St. Marie dozens of country-people were making *al fresco* meals, while farther on a fair was held, vendors of toys, photographs, clothes, eatables, and devotional objects doing a brisk trade.

From this noisy, turbulent little platform one steep flight of stone steps leads upward to the votive church crowning the rock, another winds downward to the village, a third and intermediate flight leading to the vast vestibule of the bishop's palace, scene of the benediction. The Rocamadour of pilgrimage occupies several stages, one ledge of the rock after another having been built upon, the entire mountain,—for so it may be called,—being honeycombed with churches, sanctuaries, and votive chapels. It is a veritable ecclesiological beehive. The long, narrow street of Rocamadour proper with its fine old portcullises is very picturesque. Nothing can be prettier than the animated street, little scenes and bits of mediæval architecture peeped at through their grey stone arches, the peasant folk, both men and women, in their sober black garb having an antiquated look well harmonising with their surroundings.

After dull, showery days just experienced at Limoges, perfect September weather compensated us here. The temperature was seasonable, a delicious breeze stirred the trees; moss green valley, glittering parapets, and dark sugar-loaf rock glowed under a cloudless, deep blue sky. As we strolled down the village street, now admiring the bishop's hanging garden - garland brightening the gloomy fortress-like building—now in an opposite direction gazing on the verdant reaches of the Alzon and dazzling parapets above, we encountered an increasing inflow of pilgrims, some afoot, some in carts and *calèches*, the majority belonging to the peasant class. The men wore long black blouses or frocks and black cloth trousers with broad-brimmed felt hats; the women were also dressed as if in mourning, neat, serviceable stuff gowns with white coiffes made up their Sunday costume. Here and there a bonnet and modish dress proclaimed the *bourgeoise* or lady visitor, these also habited in black, only a few little girls having coloured frocks and ribbons in their hats.

The prevalence of decorum was very noticeable. It is not the fashion in France, even among working folks, for young men and women to pair off when holiday-making. A girl who should separate herself from the family party when out for the day, and go

her own ways with her sweetheart, would at once lose caste. This great festival therefore, the only fête day of the year to many, in no respect resembled a Bank holiday at home. There was no rollicking, no excitement, and not a single pair of lovers to be seen. The *sergent de ville* and gendarme were equally absent, nor during our stay did we see any one the worse for drink. In fact, to compare things totally dissimilar, this assemblage of Romanist devotees suggested a Puritan concourse, a coming together of Covenanters!

As the evening wore on, village street, cafés, *al fresco* restaurants, and booths became deserted. After an excellent dinner at the hôtel St. Marie we descended a little way, then climbed the broad flight of steps leading sideways to the bishop's palace, and here a strange spectacle met our eyes. We had indeed come to visit Rocamadour in the nick of time, and my advice to others is this—put up with no matter what accommodation, with no matter what noise and other inconveniences, but arrive anyhow for the great September pilgrimage, allow yourself for once to be transported to the Middle Ages. The ceremony of the Benediction had now completely emptied both upper and lower village, filling the vast vestibule or court. I hardly know what other name to give this open portico used as a church,

and presenting us with an unforgettable sight. Massed together in what looked like the narthex of some vast cathedral, were hundreds of black-robed worshippers holding lighted tapers, whilst from a gallery above, priests and acolytes led a dolorous chant in Latin, the congregation chanting the responses in the same funereal tone. So lugubrious was the entire proceeding, litany, voices, and attitude of the assemblage, that the ceremony suggested a commination. It might have been supposed that these devotees were met together for the purpose of expiating some national calamity, plague, pestilence, or famine. On a sudden, at the tinkling of a bell, all fell on their knees, the momentary hush imparting unspeakable impressiveness to the scene. You could have heard the softest sigh, the mere drawing of breath. Never had I witnessed more self-abandonment, and that deep, momentary hush rendered the scene singularly impressive.

We could realise how profound was the import of such annual ceremonies to these simple country folks.

Myself and fellow-traveller straightway retired early to our queer little roosting-places, but for some time sleep was out of the question. Till past midnight I heard the distant chanting of little processions, some climbing to the votive church crowning the rock, others descending to the village. It is my

belief that many spent the night abroad or in the churches, for the very good reason that no kind of lodging was available.

The tiny bedroom allotted to me was over the kitchen, in which to-night, on the floor, slept master and mistress of the humble restaurant, with their little son. I could plainly hear them breathe as I lay, for the inner wall had not been carried up to the ceiling, the interstice admitting air, at the same time noise, smoke, and kitchen smells. A cleaner, more comfortable bed nobody could desire; by five o'clock next morning, however, the household was astir, savoury steam announced the preparation of soup, the countryman's substitute for coffee, soon pilgrims dropped in for a breakfast. Sleep became out of the question. Then girls' merry voices reached me from the courtyard under my window. Looking out I saw three ruddy-cheeked, well-made damsels performing their toilette like Trooper George at the pump, and combing and braiding their long, dark hair before a bit of broken looking-glass hanging from the wall.

But even standing-room represents money at Rocamadour during a pilgrimage. No sooner had the three maidens adjusted their lustrous braids, nature's head-dress in rural France, than they went away, and their place was taken by three stalwart

peasant farmers in black smock-frocks and cloth trousers. The little yard contained nothing on which any one could sit, but contentedly enough the men broke their fast standing. What it was their earthen bowls held I could not discern, most likely a compound of milk, flour, and vegetables, with a flavouring of bacon.

Next day was one of delightful softness and beauty. Not being expert at scaling walls like a fly, and not being fond of explorations underground, I left my friend to explore the subterranean church, votive chapels hollowed out of the rock, and hermitage of Zacchæus, 'chief among the publicans and he was rich.' According to tradition and pious credence, he made his way hither from Palestine, and here under the name of Saint Amadour ended his days, having presented the community with a statue of the Virgin Mary.

So runs the legend. Archæologists on the other hand, assign another personality to the anchorite called Saint Amadour, from Roc-amator or *amator rupis.* The miracle-working statue said to have been presented to Zacchæus by the Virgin Mary, and brought hither by him from Palestine, is now pronounced a work of the thirteenth century, and the date of the sanctuary is stated to be apocryphal.

Be this as it may, ex-votos testifying to miraculous

interposition cover the walls, the epoch of electricity, telephone, and aerial telegraphy supplying as many as the dark ages.

Among historic worshippers at the shrine of the publican were Saint Louis—a very doubtful saintship if viewed in the light of humanitarianism; Blanche of Castille, the cruel persecutor of religious dissidents; Simon de Montfort, the exterminator of the Albigenses; Louis XI., the astute monarch of whom we have so fearful a portrait in *Notre Dame de Paris,* but who possessed two titles to admiration. Like our rare Ben Jonson, he loved 'a nimble wit as he loved his nutriment,' and he lived for the aggrandisement and grandeur of France. Two names awaken a softer mood. To Rocamadour in 1651, came M. and Mme. Lamothe Fénelon offering a picture in gratitude for the birth of a son, that lovable bishop so scurvily treated by Louis XIV., Mme. de Maintenon, Bossuet, and also by his valet. The man who stole the manuscript of *Télémaque* and published it surreptitiously, was in reality a public benefactor. But for the theft—who can say?—posterity might have missed the prettiest book ever written by a bishop; *Télémaque* might have been lost to the world. Many of the wooden statues adorning these recesses are hideous to behold. The rock is at this end honey-combed, riddled, tunnelled

with votive chapels and grottoes, but the sight of one gives an adequate idea of all.

My own morning passed delightfully. Seated on a bench in front of a little café, I revelled in the glorious scenery around—outline, colour, and detail all surpassingly beautiful and all set off by a brilliant blue sky. The temperature was high but modified by soft winds, and now perfect quiet reigned, a great refreshment after yesterday's turmoil and an almost sleepless night. Over against me, veritable eyrie in cloudland, gleamed the tiny church crowning the highest point of Rocamadour; midway between summit and base, the façade of the bishop's palace with its hanging gardens made broad belts of light and colour against the sombre background, brightening the natural ramparts as a rainbow. Immediately under my eyes I had sweet little vignettes, ancient domestic architecture framed by picturesque old gateways: turning my back upon these I beheld the dazzlingly green valley of the Alzon, lofty escarpments hemming it round, glittering like snowy peaks against the cloudless heavens. As I rested thus, a well-dressed peasant paused to ask me a question. Perceiving that I did not understand what he said, the dear old woman keeping the restaurant, and with whom I had made friends, immediately came forward and acted as interpreter.

'That good man,' she explained to me, 'asked the way to a tobacconist's shop, but every one speaks *patois* hereabouts, and Madame, I see, is a stranger.'

It is rather a dialect that these country folks use, survival of the *Langue d'Oc*, many of a passing generation not being able to make themselves understood in France.

And as I lazily waited thus, I was reminded of the twin marvels that are bringing the wise as well as the foolish, the learned as well as the unsophisticated to Rocamadour, that wondrous underworld now accessible to all but the timorous. Family parties in waggonettes, tourists afoot passed from time to time, jauntily setting off on their tenebrous errand.

'To Padirac, to Padirac!' they shouted to this acquaintance and that, recalcitrants like myself whose spirit was willing but whose flesh was weak, who were not to be tempted into Pluto's domain.

'To Padirac, to Padirac!' reiterated the jubilant explorers till well out of hearing.

We had dropped upon Rocamadour as from a balloon, we quitted it by the excellent carriage road winding in corkscrew fashion from the gorge, at every turn looking back on magnificent perspectives. The sight of the crowded platform awakened misgivings. Hundreds of pilgrims, including the Bishop

of Tulle and his vicar, were there; it seemed impossible that the Toulouse express would find room for us all. Long we waited in the cool breezy afternoon, the peasant folk squatted on the turf taking their supper, the rest standing, for the excellent reason that there were no seats. But the multitude was disposed of as if by magic. Without the slightest turmoil, commotion, or bustle, the little army of pilgrims was seated, the platform was cleared in a twinkling, and the train rushed Paris-ward, leaving Rocamadour to drowse in quiet till summer and the pilgrims should return together.

CHAPTER V

PADIRAC

(Although I did not venture into the depths of Padirac, I add a few lines of description which may prove serviceable to others.)

Rocamadour and Padirac are two huge accidents, the one an upheaval, the other a fissure in one of those vast table-lands or plateaux of Central France called Causses; a word derived from the Provençal, in its turn derived from the Latin *calx* or *calcinum*, lime.

It is only within the last twenty-five years that this strange region has been explored by men of science and tourists. Padirac with its stalactite caves, river, and lakelets was only discovered in 1889, when a Paris lawyer, accompanied by a friend equally intrepid, ventured into the awful abyss, finding marvels that recalled Kubla Khan's vision and the stately pleasure house, where—

> 'Alph the sacred river ran
> Through caverns measureless to man,
> Down to a sunless sea.'

Aridity of soil, an arctic climate, solitude and

desolation, characterise the Causses, at their base lying fertile fields, verdant valleys, meandering streams and silvery cascades. Above, not a rill, not a beck refreshes the porous, stony soil, the showers of summer and wintry snows filtering to a depth of thousands of feet below. Another striking feature of the Caussien region is the frequently occurring *aven* or yawning chasm, subject of superstitious awe and terror among the country folk. These mysterious openings are locally known as *Trous d'enfer* (infernal holes). Alike fact and legend had increased the popular dread of the *aven.* It was known that many an unfortunate animal had fallen into some abyss never to be heard of after. More than one seigneurial Bluebeard of these regions—so ran local story—had thus widowed himself. And according to the country folk of Padirac, the devil hurrying away with a captured soul was here overtaken by St. Martin on horseback. A struggle ensued, 'Accursed saint!' cried the evil one, 'thou wilt hardly leap my ditch,' with a tap of his heel opening the rock before them, splitting it in two. But St. Martin's steed leaped it at a bound, the soul was rescued, and the prince of darkness, instead of the saint, was sent below.

The descent and exploration of Padirac is the crowning achievement of my friend, M. E. A. Martel,

Mouth of the Cave of Padirac

the Paris lawyer who has won for himself the title of the Columbus of the nether world.

When in 1889 M. Martel, accompanied by a friend adventuresome as himself, prepared for the expedition, the country folks were aghast—'You will get down easily enough, gentlemen,' they said, 'but you will never come up again.'

The curates of the neighbouring villages were equally emphatic. Nor is the general stupefaction difficult to understand, although to that day, the frightful maw, as M. Martel aptly terms the crater, had never been fenced around or in any way protected. So far, at least, familiarity had lessened traditional horrors. From time immemorial the crater-like opening, three hundred feet in circumference and a hundred feet broad, had remained without a palisade, Brobdingnagian well doubtless sucking in many a human and four-footed victim. Accustomed to the sight of that *gueule effroyable* although they were, not a single peasant could be prevailed upon to accompany the explorers. Not to be dismayed, the pair went down one at a time. When M. Martel had safely alighted on a half-way ledge the swing was drawn up for his companion.

Exactly fourteen months to a day after the first descent, a second was made, upwards of a thousand spectators looking on. The explorers, now a party of

five, had provided themselves with thirty-five yards of rope ladder, three collapsible canoes, two photographic apparatus, and electric lamp, with, of course, provisions, and indeed everything of which they might stand in need. Their experiences were breathlessly interesting. By eight o'clock in the evening M. Martel and his companions found themselves safe and sound at the bottom of the cavern. Several stages had been first alighted at and visited, the final depth being 250 feet.

A gay and hearty supper was followed by an interval of rest, and shortly after midnight the little illuminated flotilla set forth, magnesian lights and electric lamps irradiating the colossal walls of stalactite as they went. Winding in and out—now obliged to land and carry their boats and baggage, now gently gliding from lake to lake, the exhilaration of one moment making them forget the fatigue of the rest—our explorers reached the limit of the cavern, further progress being arrested by a solid mass of rock, no outlet being visible.

It was now nearly seven o'clock in the morning, but three hours elapsed before they reached the place of embarkation, three and a half more before they could tear themselves away from their photographic apparatus to luncheon. By four P.M. the party had reached the surface, overcome with fatigue and ex-

posure but enraptured with their experiences. They had navigated an underground river a mile and six furlongs in length, its meanderings forming four little lakes separated by natural weirs, all these set in a framework of glittering stalactites.

'Wonder,' writes M. Martel, 'seals our lips. One by one the four lakelets are glided over, the rocky walls on either side draped with stalactites glittering in the magnesian light like sheets of diamonds, and all reflected in the smooth, transparent water. Not a sound breaks the stillness of this hitherto unknown world but the gentle plash of our oars and the trickling of water from overhead, the hollow cavernous roof echoing the fall, making soft, penetrating rhythm. Not a living soul had preceded us on the weird voyage. We are wholly remote from the living, sunlit, familiar world. We ask ourselves, "Do we not, indeed, dream? Can the scenes around us be reality?"'

These marvels are now rendered accessible to all. After nine years of unremitting labours aided by effective co-operation, M. Martel's discovery, his region of 'antres vastes,' Tartarean lakes, and marvellous coruscations have become common property. With the aid of a few enthusiasts, a syndicate was lately formed under the name of *La Société anonyme du Puit de Padirac*; the subterranean region was

acquired at a cost of fifty thousand francs, the mouth of the chasm enclosed, and a safe and easy method of descending arranged, of this an illustration giving some idea.

A moderate fixed tariff, five francs, is charged, the entrance fee including descent, guides, exploration of galleries and cruise of lakelets and river, the entire excursion occupying a few hours only. Return tickets combining both excursions, namely, to Rocamadour and Padirac, may be obtained in Paris at the Agence Officielle des Chemins de Fer, 1 Rue d'Échelle, opposite the Tuileries Gardens. About the absolute safety of the subterranean expedition as now arranged there seems little doubt. Of course those subject to vertigo or afraid of sudden chills will enjoy the undertaking vicariously. Rocamadour and Padirac can be hurriedly visited from Limoges in a day.

'Ah, ladies,' cried a French fellow-traveller, as some days after, myself and friend awaited the Angoulême train at Limoges, 'you little know what you have missed in not visiting Padirac. It is grandiose, it is fairylike, it is unimaginable, indescribable. And only four hundred and forty steps to descend and mount—a mere trifle!'

Ladies do indeed patronise the four hundred and forty steps and collapsible boats. A young French-

woman of my acquaintance, who visited Padirac in the long vacation of last year, assured me that the excursion was comparatively easy, and that fatigue was well rewarded.

For a full account of M. Martel's subterranean explorations in France, various parts of the Continent, Majorca, Ireland and Yorkshire, I must refer readers to his works *Les Cévennes*, 1890 ; *Les Abîmes*, 1894 ; *L'Irlande*, 1896 ; also to his periodical *Spelunca*, organ of the *Société de Spéléologie.*

CHAPTER VI

BALZAC AT ANGOULÊME

It is a beautiful bit of country between Limoges and Angoulême, not very productive, but wooded, pastoral, and abounding in running water.

In *Les Deux Poètes* the background plays a much more important part than in *Le Curé du Village.* Limoges was peculiarly adapted to such a story, but it is the configuration of Angoulême that seems to have suggested the tragic history of the vain little provincial son of a poor chemist, devoured by the ambition of figuring in aristocratic and literary circles; in other words, of exchanging his native spot, the commercial quarters of the river, for the upper town above. Every incident is derived from this division of the city into upper and lower, and consequent separation of classes.

In Balzac's description of the city we discern the genesis of his novelette: 'Built on a sugar-loaf rock, Angoulême dominates the meadowland watered by the Charente. The importance of this city during the religious wars is attested by the ramparts, city

gates, and ruined fortresses. It was a position strategically of equal value to both Catholics and Huguenots, but what constituted a strength in the past is at the present day a source of weakness; the city not being capable of extension on the banks of the river is thus condemned to disastrous fixedness.'

About the time the incidents in this story occurred (1802-30) 'the Government was making an effort to add to the existing town grouped around the public buildings. But commerce has already taken the initiative. Long before the suburb l'Houmeau had sprung up like a bed of mushrooms alongside the river, this faubourg became an industrial town, a second Angoulême, a lower town emulating the upper with its prefecture, its bishopric, and aristocracy. Angoulême proper housed the noblesse and influence; l'Houmeau commerce and money; two social zones existed at perpetual variance.

'It is easy to divine how the sentiment of caste divided the two towns. Business is rich, noblesse is generally poor. The one revenges itself on the other by mutual contempt. An inhabitant of l'Houmeau, then, introduced to Madame de Bargeton of the upper town was a revolution on a small scale.'

Lucien Chardon, who arrogated to himself the title of M. de Rubempré, was that uninteresting being, a small Apollo Belvedère, that is to say,

handsome, shapely, and possessed of a gift of rhyme and inordinate vanity. Adored alike by his mother, the chemist's widow, who earned a living by midwifery, by his sister and her *fiancé*, an excellent printer, the young man is enabled to carry out his views. Owing to the most painful privations on their part he obtains the necessary outfit for presentation to Madame de Bargeton, the *bel esprit* and leading spirit of upper Angoulême.

Lucien's first evening in the charmed circle of the Ville Haute is wonderfully described. The young fop's devoted sister had bought for him with her earnings 'thin boots at the best bootmaker's of the town and a new complete suit at the most fashionable tailor's; his best shirt she had trimmed with a *jabot* or laced front, which she washed and ironed herself. With what joy she beheld him ready equipped for his visit! How proud she felt of her brother!'

The habitués of Madame de Bargeton's salon form a representative group. The provincial noblesse of the Restoration is portrayed as Balzac alone could portray it. A mortification in the midst of his triumph foreshadows Lucien's future; but as Rousseau has truly declared, vanity is a quite incurable foible. The unhappy young man, not content with ruining his sister's husband, becomes a social wreck,

his miserable career ending in self-murder. The conclusion of his story, however, takes us away from Angoulême, and fills a volume and a half of literary struggles under the title of *Un Grand Homme de Province à Paris.*

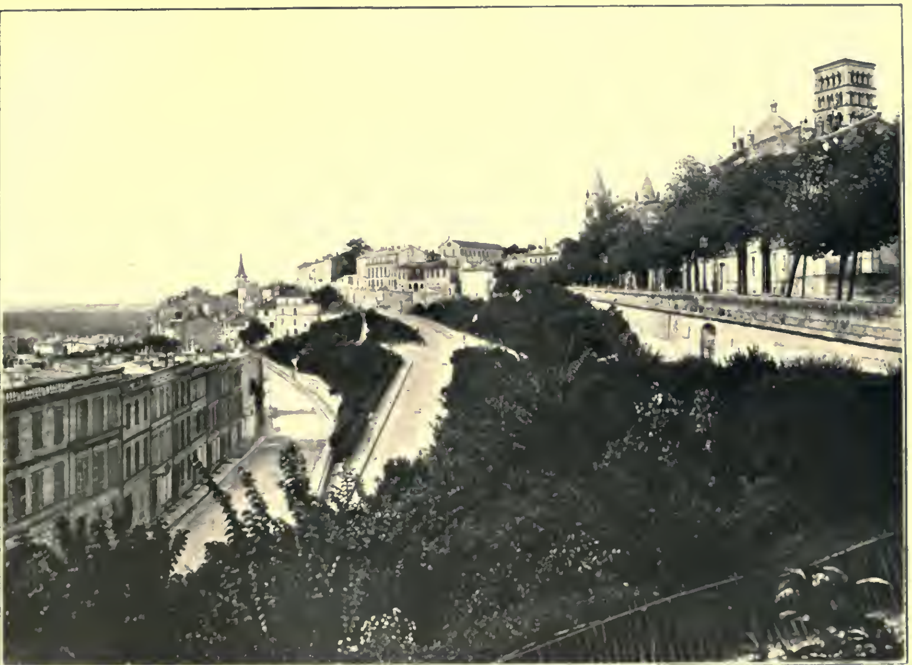
Most curious and instructive are these pages, a picture of a Parisian Grub Street, let us hope now non-existent.

The handsome capital of the department of the Charente is greatly enlarged and beautified since Balzac described it, three quarters of a century ago. On recently revisiting it, after an interval of eighteen years, I found a great many new buildings and improvements; but the essential features familiarised by a reading of *Les Deux Poètes* remain intact, and whether we survey the magnificent panorama that stretches before us on the heights of Beaulieu or stroll down to the riverside below, we think less of Coligny and the Duc d'Épernon, of another Balzac, the so-called 'restaurateur de la langue française,' of the Marguerite des Marguerites, and other historic personages whose history is interwoven with that of Angoulême, than of the poor vain poetaster, Lucien Chardon, soi-disant de Rubempré, and his divinity, Louise de Bargeton. So much more real seem the creations of genius than the heroes and heroines of tradition!

In *Eve et David*, which is a pendant to *Les Deux Poètes*, Balzac quits the topographical and social for the industrial aspect of Angoulême. 'Balzac,' observes a French writer, M. Rambaud, 'must have divined rather than observed men and things when writing his great series. A comparatively short lifetime and habits of seclusion did not admit of the close study and accurate observation suggested by these marvellous delineations.' The second story, the scene of which is laid in Angoulême, affords a striking instance of Balzac's intuitive faculty, or shall we say, deductive methods? The pathetic history of the wretched Lucien's sister and brother-in-law reveals an entire industrial phase. Not only do we realise the struggles of a poor printer, but the conditions of the printing and paper-making trade under the Restoration.

For generations Angoulême had been, as it is to-day, a seat of paper-manufacture, and at the time of which Balzac wrote, the fabrication of cheapened paper occupied many minds. After the Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, newspapers, which had been all but banished under the Empire, were multiplied, more books were written and read. The excessive dearness of paper seriously hampered commercial and literary initiative.

The subject naturally appealed to Balzac's com-



Ramparts of Angoulême

mercial instincts, and in reading *Eve et David* we might take it for a bit of biography and suppose that the novelist had served his apprenticeship in a printing office. Again, David's straitened circumstances gave scope to true Balzacian visionariness. Lucien had reduced his sister and her husband to beggary; only one thing could save them, that one thing the traditional chimera, an invention. Could the poor printer only find a substitute for cotton in the manufacture of paper, his fortune was made. Now from 1826 to 1836 a French inventor named Piette had first made paper of bark, reeds, hay, and straw. At the time Balzac wrote, experiment and discovery were in the air. It would be interesting to know how far in David's history the novelist is himself an inventor. Without possessing the psychological interest of *Les Deux Poètes,* this story is well worth reading, especially at Angoulême. As a study of the bourgeoise, Eve is worthy to stand beside the noble Mme. Birotteau. David, too, with his simple, sturdy heroism, is a fine character. The population of this great city, like the bookworm, may be said to fatten on paper. The local product is largely exported, especially to America, whilst home consumption is enormous. An age of universal education is naturally the zenith of paper-mills. The bulk consumed in French schools a decade ago

averaged two hundred millions' pound weight, double that consumed in private correspondence. Very likely the sum-total by this time has doubled. The devastations of the phylloxera twenty and odd years ago gave an immense impetus to this industry, turning their attention to trade.

Angoulême is quite gloriously placed. It stands on a veritable rock *à pic*—that is to say, the steep sides of the rocky summit on which the ancient town and ramparts were built run perpendicularly to the plain below. The city, with its noble Romanesque cathedral, clustering spire, and gleaming roofs, rises above hanging woods and gardens, a veritable coronal of greenery smiling away all savageness. Lovely beyond description is the vast plain below, the river Charente—'fairest river of my kingdom,' said the Gascon king, Henri Quatre—winding its sinuous way amid avenues of tall poplars and wide pastures, every object being reflected in its clear waters. Countless green islets, mere groves and gardens, are formed by the convolutions of the river, whilst far off are seen white villages and distant church spires dotting the vast landscape. Most beautiful is the play of light and shadow on foliage and water when the sun breaks forth; the yellow tints of autumn are not visible as yet on this September visit, all the hues are of summer. A dozen subjects for an artist

meet the eye in a single stroll, whether made in the upper town or the lower, two little worlds apart.

The great charm of the Charente is the unequalled clearness and transparency of its waters; it is this feature that lends such beauty and poetic aspect to the immediate surroundings of Angoulême and the neighbouring country. The effect from a boat is said to be magical. 'As you gently glide along,' writes one familiar with the scene, 'amid water-lilies, and removed by a few yards only from the river's bed, carpeted with dusty verdure, you must fain believe yourself to be floating in mid-air. The water disappears. You recognise its presence by the undulations of the boat and the play of light and shadow round about.' It is also said that the waters of the neighbouring Touvre, in themselves bright and clear, look dull by comparison.

To realise the fine position and picturesqueness of Angoulême the circuit must be made both above and below. The round of the ramparts is easily accomplished on foot; that of the lower city is best made in a carriage and continued for some distance on the Bordeaux road, a drive of an hour or two. Alike from the heights and the plains, the views are fine and varied. Conspicuous on all sides, the noblest feature and crowning ornament of the scene, rises the grand tower of the cathedral, compared by some to

the Tower of Pisa. The ancient fortifications have been turned to admirable account as a recreation ground for the people. In such matters French ingenuity and taste are always equal to the occasion, and this city now affords its inhabitants sunny, sheltered promenades in winter and delicious coolness in summer. A fine view of the Charente valley is obtained from the Promenade Beaulieu, a bit of Knowle Park in the heart of a bustling, lively, prosperous city. You drive all at once into a world of greenness and shadow, to emerge as suddenly on the rim of a vast, open, sunny plain and meandering river; a dozen rivers there seem to be in one, so numerous and capricious are its sinuosities.

Built in the Romanesque-Byzantine style, St. Pierre of Angoulême recalls the cathedrals of Périgueux and Poitiers. The original church dates from the beginning of the twelfth century, but it was restored in the seventeenth and partially reconstructed between 1866 and 1875. Thus, as is the case with St. Front at Périgueux, this noble cathedral has a disconcertingly new appearance.

Both without and within we are reminded of the St. Sophia of Périgord, but the resemblance is superficial. Here we have only one dome visible from the outside, that of magnificent proportions, the three domes of the interior being roofed in; the general

arrangement, too, is different. At Angoulême we do not for a moment imagine ourselves in Constantinople, Venice, or Cordova, nor are we overwhelmed as by the immensity of St. Front of Périgueux. The façade is of great elaborateness and beauty.

Angoulême possesses some noteworthy specimens of modern French architecture. The Hôtel de Ville (1886), the romanesque churches of St. Ausone and St. Martial (1854 and 1864), all these designed by M. Abadie, do great credit alike to municipal enterprise and taste. It is astounding how money is always forthcoming in France for the embellishment of towns!

The historic heroine of Angoulême is Marguerite de Valois, that gracious figure so worthily commemorated here in marble. As 'shines a good deed in a naughty world' so does her gracious personality irradiate an epoch of dark superstition and intolerance. Poet, story-teller, patroness of art and letters, stylish, we love best to think of the woman who 'disdained no one,' to quote an old historian's noble eulogium, to whom every man was a brother, every woman a sister, and whose voice was ever raised on behalf of the down-trodden and unhappy. Mother of the great queen, Jeanne d'Albret, grandmother of the greatest king who ever sat on the French throne, Marguerite d'Angoulême vindicates the theory of spiritual

heredity. In spite of bigoted protests to the contrary, the protectress of Marot and Bonaventure des Périers, there is no doubt that she died, as she had lived, a Protestant.

How came it about, one may well ask, that so sensitive and refined a lady could pen stories in the freest vein of Boccaccio? The answer is simple. Libertinage was in the air; she but caught, or rather unconsciously imbibed, the tone of the day. Politeness and moral latitude went hand in hand. As M. Henri Martin has remarked, the court of François Premier developed a new society, hitherto without precedent, witty, learned, graceful and licentious. Every one versified, courtiers, courtesans, grave magistrates, the king following suit. And some versified to good purpose. Marot called Marguerite d'Angoulême *sa sœur de poésie,* and she shone equally in verse and in sisterly devotion. When, having lost all but honour on the field of Pavia, the king was detained a prisoner in Spain, he fell dangerously ill. Epistolary literature shows nothing more touching than the letters she despatched before hastening to his side. Grave, gay, patriotic, devotional, domestic, in turn she tried every note that might inspirit and console the prisoner.

The attitude of Marguerite towards reform made her many enemies, some of whom have not hesitated

to bespatter with mud a name singularly endearing. Born at Angoulême in 1472, she died in 1549, having been twice married, first to Charles, duc d'Alençon; becoming a widow in 1525, she married Henri d'Albret, King of Navarre. *The Heptameron* is a classic, and some of her verses are poetry, not those, to quote Herbert Spencer, 'of a victim of the verse-making disorder.'

Lovers of architecture will find much to interest them in the Charente, the round arch predominating. In museums and art collections, Angoulême is exceptionally poor, indeed, it may be said, undowered. An unrivalled position, a magnificent cathedral, and abundant walks and drives make up for such deficiency.

CHAPTER VII

THE GENESIS OF EUGÉNIE GRANDET

It is now many years since I visited the home of Eugénie Grandet—can we think of Saumur without recalling Balzac's famous novel? And if I returned thither I should most likely endorse my first impressions. We may be very well sure that this most ingratiating little place, so sprightily perched on the Loire, has advanced with its neighbours' material progress and civic enterprise; then gradually changing its physiognomy.

Saumur, then, is an elegant, animated town with pretty, white, slated villas, each standing in its own garden; magnolias, oleanders, pomegranate-trees and other tropical plants here flourishing as on the Riviera.

A couple of fine bridges span the Loire, and these, during the war of 1870-1, the townsfolk intended to blow up at the first sight of the Prussians. The enemy fortunately did not arrive, and the gay, gracious little town was left intact.

Once as Protestant as Protestant could be, the

principal commerce of the place to-day is the manufacture of rosaries! Until the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, Saumur numbered 25,000 souls, the population is now just half that sum-total.

Life and bustle are afforded by the great Cavalry School, which is perhaps answerable for the saying —'Fait-on toujours l'amour à Saumur?' It looks essentially a love-making place, so smiling and coquettish are its suburban-like streets, for the country has crept in everywhere, and you can hardly lose yourself amid roofs and walls, trees and gardens.

In the steep, narrow, ill-paved street leading to the château we still find ourselves in Balzac's Saumur. Here little is changed since the novelist penned that wonderful description, an unforgettable picture in a few words. The cobble-stones only from time to time resound with the clatter of footsteps. To-day, as three quarters of a century ago, the inhabitants talk to each other of the weather as they stand on their doorsteps, 'the barometer alternately cheering, subduing, or rendering gloomy their countenances.' More than one ancient dwelling recalls the home of Eugénie Grandet, but the especial one associated with her name was pulled down some time ago.

One feature of Saumur unconnected with romance

the curious should not miss. Until 1872 the sick and aged poor of Saumur were housed in caves and grottoes after the manner of Troglodytes. Saumurois acquaintances kindly conducted me over these strange precincts, surely the strangest ever consecrated to works of pious benevolence. How the old and infirm were ever hoisted up to the rocky eminence turned into an hospital it is hard to conceive; of one thing we may be certain: once up they never got down again. In the sides of the 'tuffeau' or yellow chalky rock, doors and iron gates opened into far-stretching cavernous passages and chambers only lighted and ventilated by the door, these subterranean habitations forming the wards of the hospital! On the terrace outside, a few flowers and trees have been planted, and there the less feeble took the air on sunny days, but in their beds the patients enjoyed less light and air than prisoners of the bad old times. Under the Third Republic the premises, if they can be so called, were shut up, and a large airy hospital was erected. Most picturesque is the sight of this ironically named 'Hospice de la Providence.' You look down on the white, joyous-looking town with its flowers and greenery, and the broad clear Loire flowing amid sunny banks and fertile reaches. And beautiful is the drive of an hour and a half to Fontevrault. On one side rise the green heights

commanding Saumur, Dampierre, and Souzé, crowned by their châteaux and encircled with villas, on the other the river glides between verdant slopes and rushy, willowy banks.

The churches of Saumur are very interesting; the town possesses a museum rich in Celtic and Gallo-Roman relics, a botanical garden, theatre, and good public library, in fact the resources of a capital in miniature.

Here was born and lived that skilled Hellenist, Madame Dacier. But an unsophisticated heroine of romance has eclipsed the paragon of learning. In our wanderings here we forget the translatress of Plato and Sappho, we can only dwell upon poor little Eugénie Grandet, and the good things she contrived to smuggle for faithless cousin Charles.

I have called Eugénie Grandet the heroine of romance, but is not the very name an anachronism? Have not all heroines of romance really breathed, moved, laughed, cried like ourselves?

Recent research would seem to show that such at least was the case with one of the most pathetic figures in fictional portraiture. And almost as much time, pains, and ingenuity have been bestowed upon unravelling her origin as upon excavating Pharaoh's tomb or the palace of Minos.

It is, as we should expect, to French writers that

we are indebted for the genesis of this famous little novel. In his delightful *flâneries* or literary zigzags through France, M. André Hallays has recently given us the story.[1]

Whilst visiting the fifteenth-century château of Montreuil-Bellay, lying about half-way between Angers and Poitiers, M. Hallays was struck by the perpetual reiteration of a name:—'Monsieur Niveleau,' a former owner, 'did this, Monsieur Niveleau did that,' said his guide.

'And who was Monsieur Niveleau?' at last asked the tourist.

'You don't know?'

'Indeed no, I never heard his name before.'

'Not heard of Monsieur Niveleau! Why, he was the père Grandet and no other. It is even averred that Balzac wanted to marry his daughter, that he was sent away with a flea in his ear, and revenged himself by writing the novel. But, ask further particulars when you get to Saumur—every one knows the history of the père Niveleau.'

M. Hallays followed this advice, with the result that we have an authentic history of Balzac's old miser and usurer.

The real père Grandet — in other words, Jean Niveleau, began life at Saumur as a rag-merchant,

[1] *A travers la France en flânant*, Paris, 1903.

afterwards becoming a money-lender ; finally, having amassed an enormous fortune, he purchased the château of Montreuil-Bellay, himself in threadbare garments acting as cicerone and complacently pocketing visitors' tips! He married an apothecary's daughter, who bore him two daughters and a son, one of the former, the accredited Eugénie of romance, being locally celebrated for her beauty. Here, however, the thread connecting fact and fiction breaks off. 'La belle Niverdière,' as Mlle. Niveleau was called after one of her father's estates, in 1830 married the Baron de Grandmaison, uncle of the actual owner of Montreuil-Bellay.

In a postscript to his chapter, M. Hallays throws further light on this curious problem. Dismissing as apocryphal the story of Balzac's proposal, affront, and revenge, our author gives the following facts, which he believes to be exact:—It happened that Balzac was visiting his friend, M. de Margonne, at Sache near Azay-le-Rideau in Touraine, when one evening another guest, M. de V——, related the history of the père Niveleau. Balzac was so much struck with what he had heard that he straightway started for Saumur, and revisited the place upon several occasions, picking up all the stray information he could get about the usurer and his family. One favourite method of obtaining materials was to jaunt

hither and thither by diligence, and enter into conversation with the passengers, most of whom would naturally belong to the neighbourhood.

And if the père Grandet may be considered a real personage, may not the same be believed of his daughter? Might not Balzac have unearthed some love story anterior to the heiress's marriage with M. de Bonfons, an aspirant to the peerage—and the condition of widowhood—in other words, that he might enjoy his wife's fortune?

Be this as it may, no more moving story was ever penned than the history of Eugénie Grandet, and never was any immortal fabric fashioned out of simpler materials. An artless girl, capable, despite her simplicity, of ardent passion, is parsimoniously brought up by the wealthy parvenu, her father. In childhood and early youth, maternal devotion and the tenderness of an old woman servant suffice to fill a heart hungering for affection. But on the threshold of womanhood a quite different and deeper feeling is awakened. The arrival of her cousin Charles, a finished Parisian fop, 'who imitates the expression of Lord Byron in Chantrey's bust,' is the first, the only real, event of Eugénie's monotonous existence. For a time the tragic death of his father affects Charles's shallow nature. Maybe for a time he believed in himself, and that the secret vows exchanged under the walnut-tree would

end in marriage. 'As on a moss-grown bench of the little garden they rested till sunset, exchanging little nothings, or silent as the house itself, Charles comprehended the sanctity of love,' whilst Eugénie, surrendering herself to new delicious impressions, 'seized upon happiness as a swimmer catches hold of a willow-branch in order to alight and rest on the river's bank.'

Her lover sets sail for the Indies, and after being awaited fifteen years in vain, marries a Marquis's daughter; Eugénie, for reasons made to appear plausible, contracting a nominal marriage with a man she despises.

Not only is this acknowledged masterpiece a narrative of extremest simplicity, but, with the rest of Balzac's stories, it has no pretensions to style. 'Le style, c'est l'homme' does not indeed hold good with Shakespearian novelists, for Balzac's great forerunner, the glorious author of *The Bride of Lammermoor*, was equally careless on this head. And the two *chefs-d'œuvre* have much in common: the simplest, directest narration, nothing to be called plot, but something, everything, that arrests, fascinates, and moves a reader, touching the very roots of his nature.

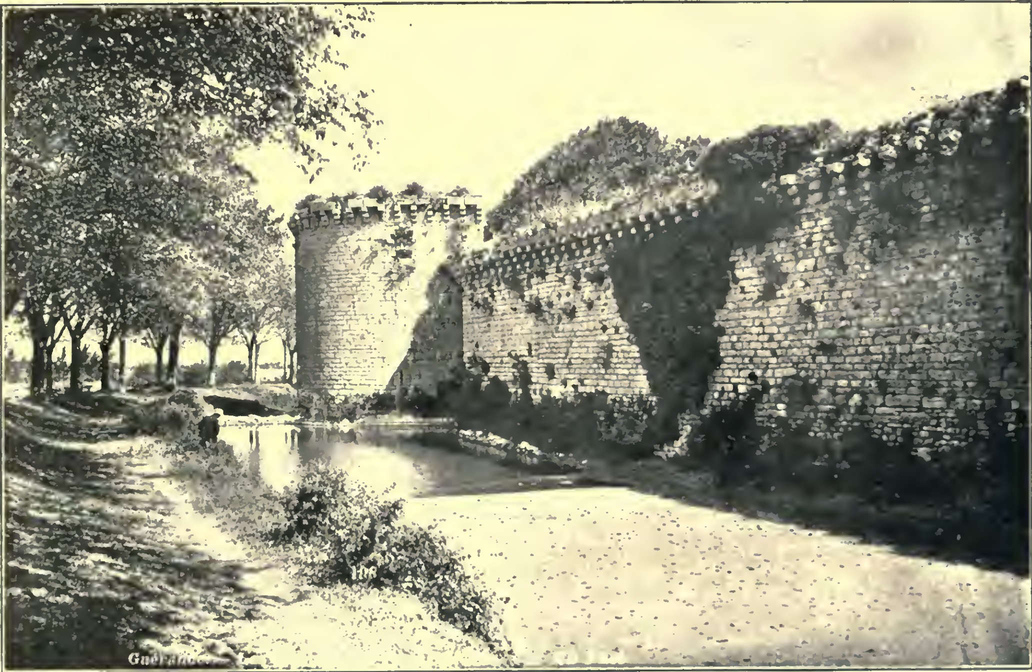
CHAPTER VIII

GUÉRANDE AND 'BÉATRIX'

Long ago also I visited the scene of *Béatrix*. At the time, I wrote that already local Haussmanns had been at work, and that modernity had invaded its antique solitudes. But the Guérande described by Balzac was there. On entering the town from Bourg de Batz, I was at once carried back to the year 1836, 'when the Du Guénic family was composed of M. and Mme. du Guénic, and of Mlle. du Guénic, eldest sister of the Baron, and of the only son of the former, Gaudebert Louis Calyste.'

A novel experience was that excursion to Guérande by way of St. Nazaire, Le Pouliguen, and Bourg de Batz.

At six o'clock on a bright Sunday morning in September, I started with friends from the little station of the Bourse, amid a crowd of holiday-makers, reaching St. Nazaire at half-past eight. No railway at that time reached Le Pouliguen, so we took a carriage, breakfasting as we drove in an open vehicle drawn by a brisk little Breton horse. Except



Guérande

for the *calvaires* or crucifixes placed at frequent intervals by the roadside, we might have fancied ourselves in Sussex, so home-like was the scenery. The autumn air was keen and invigorating, but as we got farther on the clouds grew lighter, and a brilliant sun accompanied us the greater part of the way. Turning off at Le Pouliguen, we found ourselves in scenery of wilder character, and, excepting for a solitary peasant trudging to church here and there, all was deserted. Between Le Pouliguen and Bourg de Batz lie the *marais salants* with odd, indescribable effect. The neatly divided *œillets*, or lakelets, of the vast salt marshes cut up the expanse into a small Rob Roy pattern, each little square of salt water being fenced in by a small path. On either side grow seaweeds, or sea-plants, some in rich blossom as we passed by. No words can give a just idea of this unique spectacle. To the right and to the left were fields and fields of smooth, glistening, liquid salt portioned out into myriads of tiny basins of equal size and shallowness, all silvery white in the autumn sunshine. Far off the imposing church-tower of Bourg de Batz rose high above the plain, and behind it lay the sea—to-day calm and smooth as the mimic seas around. As we slowly ascended the hill crowned by the church a more curious spectacle still awaited us. The people were

returning from mass, and to behold them it was hard to believe that we had left fashionable and cosmopolitan Nantes only a few hours before. Imagination cannot picture a more fantastic or a prettier sight than this stream of church-goers with prayer-books in hand, who looked in their inimitable costume as if they had walked straight out of the Middle Ages, instead of living in close proximity to an ironed-out, uniform, nineteenth-century civilisation. Picture to yourself, then, a crowd of village folks thus dressed: the men in hats with brims as broad as a banana-leaf gaily tasselled and braided, vests and under-vests reaching to the hips, all gaily coloured and embroidered, and lastly puffed breeches, knickerbocker trousers, pantaloons—call them what you will; certainly, leg-coverings of more piquant pattern were never invented than the balloon-like garments of creamy-white stuff, tied under the knees with long white ribbons; white stockings and white shoes completed the costume, every part of it being spick and span, as of gentlemen masqueraders going to a ball. A masquerade, indeed, this procession might have been but for the prayer-books and staves. It is impossible to convey any idea of the dignity of these tall, stalwart *paludiers*, returning home from their devotions, all utterly ignoring the inquisitive strangers who had made the journey from Nantes

on purpose to stare at them. The women were less imposing, less solemn, less unreal. Their dress was nevertheless piquant and coquettish—a transparent white lace cap or hood, worn over a black-and-white under-cap, resembling nothing so much as a plume of guinea-fowl's feathers on either side—a gay little shawl reaching to the waist, large bright-coloured apron, kilted skirt, most often of black, and having leg-of-mutton sleeves. The crowd was divided into groups, who chatted cheerfully, but with a soberness befitting the occasion. The look of manly independence in every face, the neatness and elegance of their dress, their evident piety and devotion, were touching to behold. The Brittany of Émile Souvestre has all but disappeared, and I fear that twentieth-century travellers will miss the dazzling spectacle I record.

Guérande is superbly situated, and is a most picturesque, ancient, dead-alive town. It stands on high ground, commanding a wide view, and is still fortified, having imposing gateways on either side and walls all round. Outside the fortifications is a charming walk bordered by trees, and the glimpses of the quaint old streets through the gateways, the reflection of the foliage in the moat, the open country beyond, the grey walls festooned with flowers and ivy, make up a charming picture. It

is so tiny a town that you can walk round it in a quarter of an hour or thereabouts. According to Balzac, the circular avenue of poplars is due to the municipal authorities of 1820, who at the time were much taken to task for such an innovation. Conservative of the conservative, alike in small things and in great, has ever been Brittany. As good luck would have it, the town council persisted in its tree-planting, thus deserving the thanks of successive generations.

Balzac asserts that Guérande, Vitré, and Avignon are the only French towns preserving their feudal appearance intact. He had apparently never heard of Montreuil-sur-Mer, Saumur, Provins, and Carcassonne, these by no means exhausting the list of completely walled-in towns. This, however, by the way. Balzac was not writing a treatise on French geography, but painting the background of a picture, a background almost as informed with vitality and suggestion as the characters animating his canvas.

Victor Hugo lends sympathy and intelligence to winds, waves, rocks, and trees—Balzac does not ostensibly go so far, but in his elaborate delineations of dwellings, interiors, furniture, and decoration makes us realise how surroundings seem part of an individual. Page after page is devoted to the home of the old Breton family, 'who were nothing to any-

body throughout France, a subject of pleasantry in Paris, but who represented all Brittany at Guérande. At Guérande, the Baron du Guénic was a great baron of France; higher stood only one man, the king himself.'

The minutest details are given about the various members of the household, the baron, an old Vendean who, excepting his breviary, had never read three books in his life, and who on the Restoration had received the grade of Colonel and a pension of two thousand francs yearly. Fanny, *née* O'Brien, the young Irish wife married in exile, 'one of those adorable types that only exist in England, Scotland, and Ireland.' Mlle. Zéphyrine, the baron's blind aged sister, who would not be operated upon for cataract, affecting timidity, but in reality aghast at the notion of twenty-five louis being spent upon the operation! A louis, be it remembered, at that time represented twenty francs, so that the sum was considerable, just twenty pounds of our own money, and Mlle. Zéphyrine seems to have had nothing of her own.

Madame la baronne, it must be confessed, had little of the Irishwoman about her except that she wore her hair in ringlets hanging on either cheek *à l'Anglaise*.

Just as Dickens penned lamentable caricatures when drawing a French lady's maid, so in a single

sentence Balzac here paints the typical French mother.

In contemplating her son's marriage, we are told that the very last thing entering into Fanny's calculations was the question of love. Calyste's marriage was to be essentially a French marriage, in other words a partnership based upon material consideration and the general fitness of things. The young man, spoiled darling of the household, remains a pale, uninteresting creature throughout the volume. Not so it is with Gasselin, *majordomo* and man of all work, and Mariott, cook and *femme de chambre.* Balzac is never happier than in his delineations of such faithful dependants, forming members of a family, living and dying under an employer's roof.

We are next introduced to the little society daily meeting in 'this small Faubourg St. Germain of the department.' Inimitable, Shakespearian, are these portraits, one and all etched with the strength and sureness of Rembrandt. First we have M. Grimont, the curé of Guérande, a man of fifty, 'in whom as he paced the streets the most sceptical would have recognised the sovereign of the Catholic town, but a sovereign whose spiritual supremacy yielded to the feudal sway of the Du Guénics; in their drawing-room he was as a chaplain in the company of his seigneur.'

Next to arrive for the nightly game of *mistigri*,[1] or mouche, her servant lad lighting her with a lantern, is Mlle. de Pen-Hoël, an elderly lady belonging to the first Breton nobility. She was rich, but her penuriousness was the wonder and at the same time the admiration of folks living ten leagues off. She kept a maid-of-all-work, a thousand francs sufficing for her yearly expenditure exclusive of taxes. She used the crook stick of court ladies of Marie Antoinette's time, as she walked; her keys, money, silver snuff-box, thimble, knitting-needles and other sonorous objects rattling in her capacious underpockets.

The Chevalier du Halga, another old Vendean warrior and pensioner of the Restoration, made up the quartette. A loud military knock always announces the Chevalier, who had once been of lionlike valour, was honoured with the esteem of the famous bailli de Suffren and with the friendship of the Comte de Portenduère. Of poor health, always wearing a black silk cap and a woollen spencer, or outer vest, to protect him against the sudden winds, no one would have recognised the intrepid Breton sailor of former days. Never smoking or giving way to an oath, gentle and quiet as a girl, his chief preoccupation was his pet dog Thisbe.

[1] *Jeu de cartes où le valet de trèfles entre deux cartes de même valeur l'emporte sur les autres cartes.*—Hatzfeld and Darmesteter.

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For upwards of fifteen years this little company had played *mistigri* together, one and all taking their departure on the stroke of nine.

Béatrix is no simple, direct narrative, no poignant little drama after the manner of *Eugénie Grandet.* Under fictitious names Balzac gives us portraits of George Sand, Liszt, and minor personages of his day. But these portraits hardly accord with what we have elsewhere learned of the involuntary sisters. Nor does the history of Béatrix and Calyste hold our attention or retain a place in our memories. It is for its opening pages, for its immortal reproduction of bygone types and characteristics that we take up the volume again and again. As Sainte-Beuve has written :—'Balzac lived through three epochs, and his work taken as a whole up to a certain point is a mirror of each. Who better than he has described the veterans and beauties of the Empire? Who has more delightfully sketched the duchesses and viscountesses of the Restoration? And who has given with more truthfulness the triumphant *bourgeoisie* of the July Monarchy?'

I note without surprise that in a small volume of Balzacian selections, occur two scenes from *Les deux Poètes*, one from *Eugénie Grandet*, and the opening pages of *Béatrix*.

CHAPTER IX

BRANTÔME, THE HOME OF THE 'CHRONIQUE SCANDALEUSE'

'There is nothing to see in France,' wrote Shelley three quarters of a century ago, and apparently most folks are of the same opinion to-day. Such at least is the impression conveyed by newspaper columns headed, 'Pleasure trips and conducted tours.' France does not figure among the countries now brought within reach of the most hurried travellers and most moderate purses—that is to say, France outside Normandy, Brittany, and Touraine. But this prevailing indifference accounts for the paramount charm of unfrequented French provinces. We find region after region absolutely free from cosmopolitan invasions; many 'a sweet recess' no less exempt from a foreign element than in pre-railway times.

Such a spot is the island-town of Brantôme, in the valley of the Dronne—none more idyllic to be found throughout Périgord. Here pastoral charm and historic associations are combined. Where, indeed, is historic interest absent from a French site?

The hotels at Périgueux, chief town of the department of the Dordogne, are not engaging. My travelling companion and myself were enamoured of the old city, its picturesque quays, its sweet limpid river, its Byzantine cathedral, its noble statues of that contrasted pair, Montaigne and Fénelon, its tempting bookstalls and pretty promenades. But we could not, like Falstaff, take our ease at our inn, so we steamed by tramway to Brantôme.

Very slowly and jerkily we plodded through varied tracts, now in what looked like the remnant of a primeval forest, now across barren wastes, now finding ourselves quite suddenly amid Theocritean nooks.

The sense of solitude and space was hardly interrupted. Enormous must be the area of uncultivated land throughout France. Thousands of hectares, as yet untouched by the plough, we must have passed on our way hither from Limoges. And during this two hours' slow journey we passed hundreds, even more. How often we longed to alight! For, relieving the aridity of steppe-like tracts and gloomy woods, we got glimpses of little sunlit dales, velvety swards, and purling streams, not all abandoned to Oreads and Dryads. Here and there amid patches of hemp, lucerne, and Indian corn, stood a cottage, herds grazing near, children's voices coming as a

surprise in such solitudes. The variety of foliage was a thing to remember, that most graceful and uncommon tree, dear to Alfred de Musset, the weeping-willow, being here seen to perfection.

The approach to Brantôme recalls oriental stories, the ghoul-like and fairy element being here closely associated. The limpid waters of the Dronne now reflect not only richest greenery and verdant banks, but between these lie strange dwellings, caverns hewn into habitable shape. No monsters, however, live in them; instead, the quietest, most affable peasant folk imaginable tenant these *maisons troglodytes*, fantastic suburb of a fantastic little city.

Next, a perspective of Italian aspect bursts upon the eye. To our right rises the wide façade of the ancient Benedictine abbey, above it towering a lofty and ornate clock-tower; to our left a promenade, bordered by a balustrade and flanked by two picturesque old gateways, overlooks the river, thrice-bridged silvery stream winding between old-world streets and luxuriant gardens; whilst before us lies the scattered townling with its one family hotel, framing-in the whole, wooded heights and purple hills, the glorious September sky heightening every charm.

Brantôme may be examined as a picture or a map, so compact is this island-town and its sweet environment, so closely and symmetrically does one

feature neighbour its fellow. A perfect picture it is, restful to the eye in colour and outline, yet provoking curiosity and striking the imagination with a sense of absolute novelty. Externally, Brantôme may be indeed pronounced unique. Unwillingly travellers will quit the sunshine for the purpose of archæological exploration, here antiquities yielding in attractiveness to a general view, the harmonious grouping of contrasted objects, nature and art together forming a *chef-d'œuvre.* Like Souvigny in the Allier and La Charité-sur-Loire in the Nièvre, the town has grown round an abbatial foundation, the origin of its importance and wealth being purely ecclesiastical. The monks of the olden time lived after the manner of feudal lords within their own walls and city gates, and well did they know how to choose a site. The island-town of Brantôme gave them all they wanted, a fertile soil, sheltered aspect, water in abundance, and seclusion from the world.

The grand old campanile said to date from Charlemagne's time, the abbey church and wide façade of the ancient monastery, form the principal objects in the scene before us, every other feature being subsidiary. Herein, indeed, is the history of Brantôme symbolised, in itself nothing, its ecclesiastical foundation all in all.

High above church and abbey towers the lofty and ornate clock-tower, Brantôme's crowning glory. It is separated from the church by a deep cleft in the rock or precipice, whilst the church itself appears to form part of the rock on to which it is built.

Singularity ever allied with charm characterises every feature of this strange little island-town. Thus the lofty campanile may be described as an anomaly; like the enchanted prince of the Black Isles, half stone, half man, this tower is half tower and half rock, its highly decorated stages of a hundred feet resting on a rocky base of the same height, the upper portion only being visible.

'Consummate art,' writes M. Viollet-Leduc, 'is shown in the proportions and construction of this tower.' In 1873 it was admirably repaired by an architect before-mentioned, M. Abadie.

The fine eleventh-century abbey church adjoins the wide handsome façade of the ancient Benedictine monastery now used as a mairie and museum. Both have been restored, but without destroying the original stamp, and with the campanile form a most imposing group or centre-piece to Brantôme regarded as a picture. In that light we cannot help regarding it.

Flanking all three and stretching beyond are lofty

parapets of rock, bristling with brushwood and tapestried with green; the lower portions have been caverned and adorned with quaint bas-relief and sculptures.

As I always object to making a toil of pleasure and am the most incurious traveller alive, I left these grottoes and galleries unvisited. Some future wayfarer in the Périgord will doubtless repair the omission.

Half a century ago the cloisters of the abbey existed, although fast crumbling to decay. In 1859 a French writer described this portion of the abbey as 'sombre, mysterious as death itself.' On passing within we are seized with involuntary trembling, an emotion partaking neither of fear nor horror but of secret misgiving. Alone here on a dusky evening we seem to be in a cemetery; the hoarse cries of night-birds, the mournful dripping of water from the roof add to the horror. The darkness, shadows, and wind-sounds seem to announce something supernatural. It seems as if any moment, from the depths around, ghosts might arise from their graves. So awful indeed was the gloom of those dark galleries that they are said to have suggested the operatic scenery of *Robert le Diable*, a Parisian stage manager having come hither in search of suggestions for the first representation.

Following the promenade with the palatial stone balustrade, we reach the twin gateways, worthy porticoes of this dainty little realm. Most elegant are both, but the one is so massive and sober in detail, the other so graceful, lightsome, and ornate as to suggest a sex in architecture, an idea of janitor and janitrix in the builder's mind. Just below these remains of the ancient fortification, we reach an old stone bridge, which seems suddenly to have changed its mind, out of sheer caprice darting off at a tangent. This is the *pont coudé*, or elbowed bridge, aptly so called, its configuration resembling that of a bent arm. The elbowed bridge, restored in 1775, was built by the monks in order to get at their vegetable gardens on a lower level; market gardens covering the area are still called *les jardins des Pères*.

From this part we make the circuit of the little town which at every point is suburban and at every point recalls its insularity. Here the mellow leafage of vegetables, the soft tints of blue sky and rippling stream make charming, Italian-like pictures. Indeed, from every side Brantôme reminds us of ancient little Italian towns. No trace is there here of commonplaceness or vulgarity; and the ineffable sense of repose!—only the little steam tramway, running through the town twice a day, speaks of the outer

world and of the universal modernisation going on elsewhere. For in these captivating nooks and corners of provincial France we seldom anathematise the speculative builder. At Brantôme several mediæval houses offer tempting subjects to the artist, whilst their romantic position sets them off to the best possible advantage. Perhaps, indeed, a little more enterprise in the matter of bricks and mortar would be welcomed by the most fervent æsthete. Here, for instance, the fine old parish church has been turned into a market-hall; used for the purposes of public worship until the restoration of the abbey church in 1875, it was then desecrated. One church, therefore, suffices for a population of two thousand five hundred souls, but it seems a thousand pities that marketers could not have been accommodated elsewhere, and that a building of real architectural value and interest should not be put in the category of public monuments.

If here we may fleet it carelessly as in the golden age, so here like Falstaff we may take our ease at our inn. There is only one hostelry in the place, the Grand Hotel, or Hôtel Chabrol of provincial celebrity. As far as passing travellers could judge, a most comfortable house is this big, airy, spick and span inn, its doors thrown invitingly open, its landlady buxom, blithe, and debonair, ever ready for a

chat, its exquisitely clean bedrooms and aldermanic table to be had for five francs a day. Natural products of all kinds—fish, flesh, fowl, and fruit—are superabundant in this little El Dorado. For two francs per head we fared upon trout, partridge—the month was September—and had the offer of too many dishes to remember, our hostess and her daughter seeing to our comfort in every particular.

A hundred yards from this hotel is a lovely walk by the Dronne. Under the splendid avenue of lime-trees one might spend whole summer days, so soothing the gentle ripple, so exquisite the reflection of the pellucid waves. It is wonderful how much the beauty of French scenery depends upon these small rivers. Varied in hue, each winding through a different landscape, each embellishing a little world of its own, tutelar genius of some pastoral region, these streams and their affluents lend no less charm than the great historic waterways, the '*chemins qui marchent*,' as Michelet calls them. And sweet as any are the Dronne and the Corrèze that so caressingly encircle Brantôme.

But the numerous rambles and excursions within easy reach offer very varied interest. While some spots are ideally pastoral, others are wild and even savage. Ten minutes' walk from the starting-point of the tram brings you to a dolmen, one of those

strange *pierres-levées* so-called, or table of rock resting upon columns, by no means confined to Brittany, 'the land of the Druid.' In another direction you come upon a natural parapet, lofty cliffs recalling the sublime scenery of Fontainebleau forest. Yet again, and you find yourself under the shadow of serried alder-trees, at your feet the river set with tiny wooded islets, a sylvan scene of flawless peace and beauty.

That great authority Joanne, indeed, pronounces the valley of the Dronne to be not only the prettiest in the department, but perhaps in all western France.

Brantôme, like all French towns, has historic interest, and like many is linked with the history of national literature. Returning to the promenade facing the abbey church, standing on its western point we are on the site of the vanished château in which the titular abbot of Brantôme, Pierre de Bourdeilles, penned his famous memoirs.

Brantôme, or Branthôme as some authorities[1] call him, was, as one might well suppose, a Gascon, endowed with all the traditionary loquaciousness and proneness to talk of himself. What we know about his life and character inspires liking not unmixed with respect. Prosper Mérimée has happily

[1] See Prosper Mérimée's *Portraits, Historiques et Littéraires*, 1874, to which the following pages are much indebted.

hit off his portrait in a sentence: 'Brantôme was a gentleman *(un homme comme il faut)*, or what was understood by the term in his own age. Owing to birth, position, and character,' he adds, 'he was thrown among the most noteworthy personages of his time, and his wit, high spirits, and loyalty made him a general favourite. Hence his unrivalled opportunities, and hence his authority in the manners and customs of the sixteenth century.' The term *un homme comme il faut* of course could apply in those days to the Cyrano de Bergerac, D'Artagnan, swash-buckler type as to men of a quieter order. The author of the so-called *Chronique Scandaleuse* never got adventure enough; his career, until stricken down by infirmity, was one perpetual running to and fro in search of blood and battle.

The substitution of Brantôme for his patronymic illustrates the feudal nature of the French Church at that period. Pierre de Bourdeilles was sixteen when, on the death of his brother at the siege of Hesdin, Henri II. named him *abbé commendataire*, or titular abbot, 3000 livres[1] being attached to the fief.

Henceforth we hear of him at various courts and serving under chief after chief. Strange as it may

[1] The livre Tournois was equivalent to a franc, the livre Parisis to a franc and five sous. In Brantôme's day the livre Tournois represented a purchasing power of nearly three francs in our time. See D'Avenel's *La Fortune Privée à travers sept siècles.*

seem, even in those days of civil and European wars his entire career as a free lance proved a disillusion. Ill luck dogged his footsteps. He was invariably a little too soon or a little too late for some brilliant enterprise or famous encounter. There is something more than serio-comic, there is a touch of pathos in such a story; it recalls that immortal home-coming which should have been performed on a chariot drawn in mid-air by gryphons, but which was instead a jolting over rough and familiar roads in an ox-wagon.

In 1559 the seigneur abbot of Brantôme, now a dashing soldier, figured in the brilliant Neapolitan court and was a frequenter of a no less brilliant *salon* than that of Marie d'Aragon, Marquise del Vasto, celebrated in her time alike for her wit and her beauty. A year or two later we find him in the suite of Mary Queen of Scots; he accompanied her on her ill-fated journey to Leith, and afterwards travelled to London, where he was enchanted by the beauty and lofty bearing of Elizabeth. He next attached himself to the Duke of Guise, and being an orthodox, but by no means bigoted Catholic, joined the League, distinguishing himself at the sieges of Bourges, Blois, and Rouen, and at the battle of Dreux. After the assassination of his patron he entered the service of Henri d'Orléans, later Henri III.

As a *gentilhomme du roi,* or lord in waiting, of that unworthiest of unworthy Valois kings, he received wages amounting to 600 livres yearly. In those days the pay alike of courtiers and civil magnates were called *gages,* or wages, as distinct from the *solde,* or pay, of soldiers. The highest as well as the humblest functionary received wages.

Later, Brantôme was despatched to Madrid where the French wife of Philip II. received him with effusion, overjoyed to chat with a countryman. Always agog for war, the seigneur abbot during the next few years eagerly caught at every opportunity of losing an arm, a leg, or his life. So insatiable indeed was his passion for hazard and excitement, that, finding himself in middle life sound of limb and without any military position, as he thought, commensurate with his deserts or any likelihood of being thus rewarded in the future, he meditated a perilous leap, in other words, the sacrifice of honour and nationality.

The word patriot had not as yet been invented; in its actual acceptation being first used by Voltaire.[1] With the fortunes of war, soldiers frequently changed not only their chiefs but their colours. To Brantôme as to many another of his time, provided he sniffed powder and found himself in good company, the

[1] See Hatzfeld and Darmesteter.

matter of flag was quite secondary. So embittered was his proud spirit by what he considered neglect and ingratitude, that he seems to have decided upon no less a step than that of offering secret services to the King of Spain. Fate intervened. The generous harum-scarum was saved from dishonour and literature was enriched by an accident. Whilst still in the prime of life, he had just seen his fifty-fourth birthday, he mounted a piebald, that is to say, an ill-omened horse—we are assured that even in these days the superstition remains—and was overthrown. The animal fell heavily upon him, breaking both thigh-bones. For four years he lay in bed, and to the end of his days remained a cripple and a suffering invalid, the tedium of inactivity being relieved by his pen and a succession of lawsuits. In litigation he seems to have taken as keen a delight as in battles and sieges. One feature of this long and painful confinement to his island-town throws pleasant light on family life. He is said to have been tenderly cared for by his sister-in-law, a widow of that brother killed at Hesdin just upon thirty years before. On the other hand, Prosper Mérimée mischievously insinuates that if Madame de Bourdeilles watched over her infirm relation, the seigneur abbot as keenly guarded her affairs, preventing her from contracting a second marriage and thereby keep-

ing the property together. The two positions are not, however, incompatible.

Brantôme lived to be eighty; long before his death having been forgotten by his contemporaries and the world. The celebrated memoirs were not published till almost half a century later, and then in a fragmentary condition only. Full of originality, wit, charm, also of coarseness, these chronicles faithfully mirror the times in which the writer lived. Modern research, moreover, has greatly enhanced the historic value of Brantôme's works. It has been shown by research that he relied on authentic French, Spanish, and Italian sources for his statements of facts lying outside personal experience, and despite his unblushing *gauloiseries* no student of French history can afford to pass him by.

Here are one or two extracts, rendered into English. He is describing Marguerite de Valois as she appeared in full splendour at Blois, and the peroration may almost be set beside Burke's immortal sentence on Marie Antoinette. The future Queen of Navarre had proceeded to church on the occasion of Easter—

'At sight of this procession we forgot our devotions, delighting more in the contemplation of this divine princess than of holy things, and deeming that thereby we committed no sin, since the adorer

of heavenly beauty on earth cannot surely offend the Celestial Power, its Creator.'

A high compliment is here paid to the royal ladies of his time—

'A point I have noticed, with many great personages, both men and ladies of the Court, that generally speaking, the daughters of the house of France have always excelled and still excel either in goodness, wit, grace, or generosity, and have been in all things very accomplished, and in confirmation of this, not instancing those of ancient or former times, but of those we have known or heard of from our parents or grandparents.'

In a sentence he gives the key to his own character and success as a writer of memoirs—

'I was often with him [Montluc] for he loved me greatly, and was much pleased when I put him in the humour to be questioned; I was never so young but that I had the utmost anxiety to learn. He, seeing me in that disposition, responded willingly and in choice language, for he was very eloquent' (*il avait une fort belle éloquence*).

Nor can I refrain from citing this eulogium of the great Chancellor, Michel de l'Hôpital, that anticipatoı of moral ideas to come, whose whole life was a struggle for religious liberty, and who, although a Catholic living in a time of fiercest theological conflicts,

promulgated the first edict of tolerance known in the western world.

'De l'Hôpital,' writes Brantôme, 'has been the greatest, most learned, most dignified, and most large-minded (universal) Chancellor, France ever had. In his person lived another Cato the Censor, one who knew well how to censure and correct a corrupt society. With his long white beard, his pale visage, his austere expression, he might have sat for a portrait of St. Jerome. Thus indeed some folks called him at court. To sum up; on his death his enemies could not dispute this praise, that he was the greatest man ever holding, or who will ever hold, the same position; so I have heard them say, always all the same maligning him as a Huguenot'—which indeed Catherine de Medicis' great Chancellor was not. But he was the author of the edict of Romorantin, he countenanced the Protestantism of his wife and daughter, and he had uttered the memorable speech: 'Away with those diabolical names, watchwords of partisanship and sedition, Huguenots, Lutherans, Papists; let us only keep the name of Christians!' The massacre of Saint Bartholomew broke his heart.

The island-town figured in the religious wars, and one episode in its history redounds to the honour of Coligny and also of the seigneur abbot. Although

a partisan of the Guises, Brantôme was on friendly terms with the great Huguenot Admiral. At the approach of Coligny's forces in 1569, the population trembled not only for their possessions but for their lives. Cruel reprisals and unspeakable privations on both sides had rendered the soldiers ferocious. It seemed as if the hour of doom was at hand. But Coligny enforced a truce upon his followers, who were received rather as friends than foes. Alike abbey and town were respected, and the ragged troops passed out of the place, poor as they had come. Not a loaf of bread had been taken by force. Henry of Navarre, then a lad of sixteen, was on this occasion lodged in the château.

Pleasant was a vacation holiday in this delightful spot, summer hours dreamed away amid 'places of nestling green for poets made,' no sound breaking the stillness but the notes of birds and the purling of quiet streams. Farther afield, wild, romantic sites await the hardy pedestrian, umbrageous solitudes, rocky defiles, silvery cascades. And everywhere is felt that hardly attained, enchanting sense of aloofness from everyday things, an escape from daily repetition and a world without surprises!

CHAPTER X

PÉRIGUEUX, THE SAINT SOPHIA OF CENTRAL FRANCE

As Brantôme is reached by way of Périgueux and as this city of itself is worth the journey from Paris, I add these descriptive pages. The capital of Périgord and chef-lieu of the Dordogne lies within a few hours of Limoges and Angoulême on the Orleans railway.

We rub our eyes as we get the first view of its grand cathedral, cupolas, and minarets towering above the ancient town and verdant environments. East and west suddenly brought into juxtaposition, a Saint Sophia rising in central France!

When, having quitted the railway, we stand under the shadow of that mighty dome, we almost expect to hear the Muezzin's call, 'Allah is great, praise be to Allah!' We seem to be in a second Constantinople.

How came it about that such a structure should have been raised here. By what caprice were French builders moved to raise a mosque for Catholic worshippers?

If however at first sight the St. Front recalls the

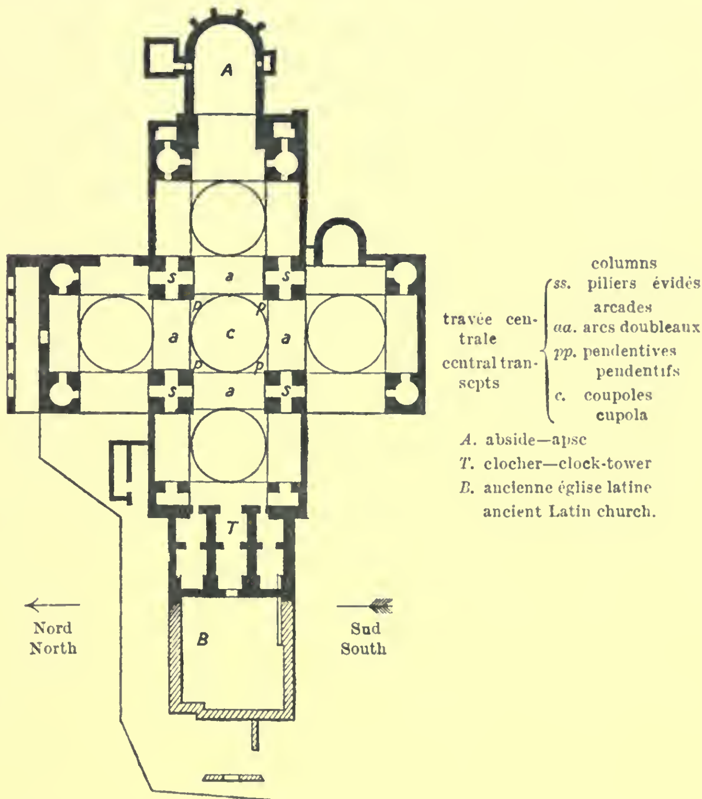
church of the Holy Wisdom, on closer examination we discern more resemblance to St. Mark's of Venice. A nearer inspection shows that this second similarity is much slighter than we at first supposed. Some authorities indeed consider the Périgourdin cathedral to be the older of the two.

The general arrangement of both suggests an unmistakable Byzantine origin. It seems moreover that St. Front and St. Mark were constructed on the plan of the church of the Holy Apostles erected by Justinian at Constantinople, and afterwards replaced by a mosque. A full description is found in Procopius and, according to authorities, the Byzantine historians, at Venice and Périgueux we have edifices raised upon a similar plan.

A French writer has pointed out that whilst in design St. Front recalls St. Mark, in construction great essential differences are found. The masonry of the latter recalls Roman methods as seen in the baths of Caracalla, walls and domes being built of rubble and cement and the outer surface surmounted with marble, gold, and mosaic. St. Front, on the contrary, is built of stone, blocks being superimposed, one on the other, with great technical skill and the undecorated surface remaining austerely simple. The two buildings differ in other respects. Following Roman tradition St. Mark has round arches and

spherical cupolas; St. Front, on the contrary, has ogive arches and ovoid domes. The exact dates are of little moment. The interesting point to note is that of Byzantine origin as suggested by the arrangement of pendentives and cupolas.[1]

[1] A French friend has kindly drawn this plan for me showing the arrangement of the naves.



The form of St. Front is a Greek cross with two naves, each having

St. Front occupies the site of a Latin basilica of the sixth or seventh century, parts of which remain. The lofty clock-tower or minaret is said to be the only one of its kind, *i.e.* pure Byzantine, in existence. Externally the cathedral looks as if quite recently built, the whole having been re-surfaced for the sake of uniformity. Within, an almost total absence of decoration immensely heightens the grandiose effect.

The influence of this cathedral in Périgord, the neighbouring province of the Angoumois, and indeed throughout France was considerable; round arches and domes being followed by great church builders.

Périgueux may be described as tripartite, even quadripartite. It possesses three distinct aspects, the Roman, the mediæval, and the modern, with traces of the Gallic.

Following a suburban road that winds leftward from the cathedral we exchange Oriental and Venetian for classic associations, thus taking a backward leap of many ages.

three transepts of similar proportions, one of these being common to the two and each surmounted by a cupola or dome. These cupolas rest on pendentives supported by arcades resting on enormous pillars and internally forming lofty slender arches. The exterior walls are of moderate thickness and have round arched windows, the hemicycle forming the primitive apse having been replaced by one of larger proportions.

Périgueux—Saint-Frond Cathedral

Before us, from the flat landscape, suddenly rises a lofty stone rotunda recalling the Tomb of Cecilia Metella. But the name of this monument commemorates an epoch anterior to the Roman occupation of Gaul. Vesuna was the ancient capital of a Gallic tribe, the Petrocorii or Petrogorici, hence Périgord. And in Celtic times Vesuna was a busy commercial city much frequented by Phœnician traders from Marseilles, thus forcibly and constantly are we re-reminded of the immense antiquity, the palimpsest upon palimpsest of French civilisation!

This *tour de Vésone* stands on what was the centre of the Gallo-Roman city. Several theories concerning it have been propounded. According to some authorities the massive circular tower was a tomb, according to others, the principal part or *cella* of a temple.

This superb monument has been rudely shattered, doubtless during the religious wars that devastated Périgueux in the sixteenth century. The walls, six feet thick, are a wonderful specimen of Roman masonry. A little farther on we reach a small beautifully kept public garden. Here amid flower-beds and shrubberies stands another Gallo-Roman ruin, the imposing remains of an amphitheatre.

Further still, we come upon a ruined sixteenth-century château which was built upon a Roman

basement, the modern portions being incorporated into Roman brickwork, the most singular travesty imaginable.

The Petrocorii were a valiant patriotic people, and had every other Gallic tribe displayed a similar spirit, Cæsar's campaign might have ended very differently. When shut up in Alesia the noble chief Vercingetorix made a final appeal to his countrymen, and the Petrocorii despatched five thousand men to his succour.

'It was a great misfortune for France and also for humanity in general,' writes a French historian,[1] 'that Gallic civilisation, naturally incomplete but so curious and original, should have thus been destroyed. Cæsar's conquest imposed upon us Latin civilisation, our ancestors being prevented from showing what they could have effected by native genius stimulated from without.'

Mediæval Périgueux, the Périgueux of Montaigne, is fully realised when, having turned our back upon the ancient Vesuna, we stroll towards the river, none sweeter in these many-river'd regions, none surely with so whimsical a name! So at least *l'Isle*, the island, sounds in our ears.

'I would rather at a venture find myself second, or third, at Périgueux,' wrote the illustrious Péri-

[1] A. Rambaud : *Histoire de la Civilisation Française.*

gourdin, 'than first in Paris,' and Montaigne showed no lack of taste. The merchant princes of this city had mansions hardly less sumptuous than that of Jacques Cœur at Bourges, and from their windows enjoyed a much fairer prospect. These mediæval burghers wisely chose the quays as a place of residence, having before their eyes the wide, clear-flowing river, alongside sunny banks, gardens, and summer-houses; beyond these, richly-cultivated open champaign, framing-in all, gentle rises, and distant hills.

This promenade is enchanting: on one side we have the ancient city walls, cathedral, and ornate dwellings of the olden time; on the other, limpid water reflecting a lovely environment, the mellow tones and delicate gradations of colour recalling Venetian scenes. Many of the splendid old houses bordering the quays have fallen into decay, but one remains which it is hoped will ere too late be classified under the head of *monument historique*, and in consequence protected. It is a sumptuous building with lofty pointed roof having richly ornamented dormer windows and, under those of the second story, a massive coping supporting a balcony. Looking like a separate dwelling but in reality a wing of the same, is a second façade with similar roof, having in front the daintiest little *piazza* imaginable, two-storied,

with slender columns and elegant balustrade, both now tapestried with creeping plants. Who held his state in this most fascinating dwelling? History is mute. The place is simply known as 'the house by the river.' From this sunny promenade, steep, gloomy little streets or rather stairs lead to the ancient quarters grouped around the cathedral and more circuitously to the modern town. Wide, airy boulevards adorned with statues, handsome public buildings and well set out shop-fronts attest the prosperity of modern Périgueux.

Neither Montaigne nor Fénelon, the gentle author of *Télémaque,* was born in the capital of Périgord, but each has his statue here. And, of course, a military hero is commemorated also—what French town is without its martial monument?—Marshal Bugeaud (1784-1849), a provincial celebrity. It would indeed be hard, perhaps impossible, to find a statueless town, no matter how insignificant. Until the Revolution such a monument remained a royal prerogative. No wonder that a veritable forest of statues has sprung up under the Third Republic!

Apparently few English tourists find their way to Périgueux. The hotel accommodation, at least such as a friend and myself found it a few years ago, sufficiently makes this fact clear. Modernisation, however, I learn, is finding this charming old town

out, and future travellers will doubtless fare better than ourselves. The department of the Dordogne abounds in historic and romantic sites and is watered by three beautiful rivers, the Dordogne, the Corrèze, and the Isle.

CHAPTER XI

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF GEORGE SAND

I

LA CHÂTRE AND NOHANT

The traveller bound direct from England to the scenery of central France may be likened to the patriarch who served too long an apprenticeship before securing the object of his aspirations. Monotonous and unsuggestive as is the stage between Calais and Paris, equally flat and unpictorial is the area traversed between the capital and Châteauroux on the Orleans railway. No sooner do we quit this unattractive town than the plain comes to an end. Instead of tract after tract of chess-board cultivation we see fields set round with tall hedges, dimpled meadows intersected by limpid streams, glimpses of glen and coppice on either side of the railway, above chestnut woods rising violet hills crowned with feudal ruins. We have reached the shores of old romance—a region glorified by genius.

The ancient province of the Berry breathes of the great woman writer whose centenary has just been

celebrated. She is its presiding genius. To how many a spot has she accorded a local habitation and a name! In our rambles hereabout how often do we encounter figures that seem familiar peasant-folk as she portrayed, some aver, idealised them in her inimitable pages! There may be some truth in this charge. George Sand preferred to dwell on the engaging side of rustic character. But her insight was unerring. She loved and comprehended the good Berrichons among whom she lived and died.

Châteauroux, with the exception of some handsome modern churches, possesses little attraction for the traveller. As I had made this town my head-quarters when studying peasant farming in the Indre many years before, myself and companion next day took the train for La Châtre on the line from Tours to Montluçon, a distance of twenty-three miles. At first, the scenery reminded us of England, but soon the aspect changed. Enclosed fields, farmhouses and cottages having little gardens, now gave way to masses of oak and chestnut wood, wide sweeps of furze and heather, and pastures animated with grazing kine. The brilliant foliage and undulating meadowland had the effect of vast parks. Mistletoe I noted in abundance, and tall poplars, plane and service-berry trees made of every high road a shady boulevard. Beneficent and graceful is this planting of the public ways

with umbrageous trees. What a boon are these interminable alleys to the wayfarer!

The month of my second, as of my first, visit to La Châtre was September; on the present occasion the weather being tropical with twilights and sunsets of great beauty. There is a luminosity of atmosphere here reminding me of certain seasons in Anjou and the Gironde, afterglows almost as illuminating as moonlight, 'the coming on of grateful evening mild,' of intense transparence and beauty.

La Châtre is a prettily placed, very noisy, not too clean little town. High above the valley rise its antiquated houses, whilst below, amid lofty poplars, and gardens, and meads, flows the Indre. 'Dear, cold, noiseless little Indre,' writes George Sand, apologising to her river for being enamoured of its sister, the sky-blue, sparkling Creuse and its 'mutinous little waves.'

On the occasion of my first visit, an old waiter at the hotel, or rather commercial inn, of St. Germain chatted to me of George Sand. 'Ah! I knew her well, a very charming woman' (*une bien charmante femme*), was the gallant old fellow's whimsical appreciation.

The lover of ancient domestic architecture will be happy here. Two houses having elaborate timber dormers and decorations are in perfect preservation,

but La Châtre, like most French towns, is trying to keep pace with progress and modern ideas. Since my first visit handsome public buildings and suburban quarters had sprung up. Should I make a third pilgrimage to this literary shrine greater changes still would certainly be in store for me. A broad, handsome boulevard leads from the station to the newer town. In the midst of a beautifully-laid-out garden, stands the noble statue of Aimé Millet. The monument is entirely due to local generosity. Every farthing of cost was defrayed by the townsfolk and residents of the department, the inauguration taking place with great pomp. It is a fine piece of work. Carved out of white Pyrenean marble, the figure somewhat larger than life, George Sand sits in an easy, contemplative attitude, pen in hand, and face uplifted. Her dress is characterised by Greek statuesqueness and simplicity, large unconventional folds suggesting no epoch. A scarf is loosely tied round her throat under the plain linen collar, the hair falling in waves from the powerful face. Intellectual force, a fearless spirit, and powerful will are admirably rendered by the sculptor. She is represented in her prime. On the pedestal are inscribed dates of birth and death and titles of her *chefs-d'œuvre*.

Especially striking was the statue as we saw it in the evening light, the white marble pencilled

against the clear heavens, the monument well set off by the dark foliage forming a background. How the little town is thereby glorified! Tourists can now reach Nohant by railway, but the three miles' drive from La Châtre is preferable, since it takes us through the scenery of *La petite Fadette*, 'the corner of Berry that I live in and nowadays seldom quit,' wrote George Sand in 1857, 'the *ensemble* of plain and valley named by me *la Vallée Noire*.' We traverse the road followed so often by the novelist and by how many illustrious guests—Balzac, Théophile Gautier, Dumas, Flaubert, a never-broken succession of kindred spirits bidden to her hospitable walls.

For a while we follow the Indre, flowing quietly between well-cultivated fields of rich loam. So rich indeed is the soil that three or four crops of lucerne are raised in the year. Hedges are few and far between, maize, potatoes, beetroot, buckwheat, and lucerne making brilliantly variegated patches. The beautiful dun-coloured cows of Berry were breaking up the fallow, every feature in the scene recalling pages from *Le Meunier d'Angibault*, *La petite Fadette*, and other idylls. The humble sparsely-scattered dwellings, often mere mud-built, white-washed cabins, and youthful herdsmen and little goose-girls recall George Sand's childhood. Many years were spent under her grandmother's roof by

the lonely little Aurore Dupin, her only playmates and companions being village children, the heroes and heroines of romances to come. Nothing delighted her so much as the *veillées*, story-telling evenings, round rustic firesides when one after another would relate horrifying encounters with ghosts, kobolds, and were-wolves. To no purpose, she tells us, did she try to waylay apparitions and enchanted animals; none appeared, but years afterwards such narratives proved a source of happiest inspiration.

On our way we pass a country house connected with the deepest joys and most poignant disillusions of George Sand. Here for some time lived that passionately loved daughter Solange, wife of Max Clésinger, the sculptor, who seems to have possessed her mother's romantic temperament, almost indeed a touch of her genius, but without her grand qualities. The correspondence of this strange pair has just been given to the world,[1] and reveals a dreary tale of alternating estrangement and reconciliation. Nor was Mme. Clésinger happier as a wife than as a daughter. When she settled within a walk of Nohant she was separated from her husband, and although she had lost an only child, the grandmother's idol, intercourse had been regulated beforehand. Solange could only be received at stipulated

[1] See *La Revue des deux Mondes*, 1905.

hours; she remained indeed on the footing of a neighbour. Tragic is the story told by these letters, many of them written at midnight, bedewed with tears, each writer by turns wounding the other, attempting to heal each other's wounds. Understanding, calm, placableness seemed impossible to both.

Half an hour's drive brings us in sight of Nohant, the house peeping from the trees. Close to the road stands an ivied summer-house, her *petit trianon*, the novelist called it, in which she spent busy hours.

On the occasion of my first visit George Sand's son with his Italian wife and their two daughters occupied the maternal château. Here let me note an interesting fact. In contradistinction to English law, no one in France can change his or her name except by marriage, when men occasionally tack on the wife's name to their own. But the Code Civil bows before genius. Maurice Dudevant was allowed to assume the pseudonym his mother had made so famous and become Maurice Sand. Similarly, although French law strictly forbids the assumption of masculine attire by women, unmolested Rosa Bonheur wore *paletot* and *pantalons*, and another Frenchwoman, Mme. Dieulafoy, the archæologist, is even allowed to appear at the Élysée thus translated.

Thinking that perhaps M. Maurice Sand would

admit an English pilgrim to this literary shrine, I sent in my card, asking the great favour of a peep at George Sand's rooms. The petition was politely refused; Monsieur was an invalid, the neat woman-servant said, but I was quite welcome to stroll about the garden at my leisure. A delightfully old-fashioned garden it is, for use rather than ornament, wide walks bordered with flowers intersecting beds of pot-herbs and vegetables. The house, which fronts this wide, open space surrounded by park-like greenery and wood, is a square plain building without any pretension to architectural elegance. Close to her beloved home George Sand is buried. A few paces from the house a bit of her own land was incorporated into the parish burial-ground, church and village lying on the other side. A plain slab of grey marble records the great writer's name, with date of birth and death.

When after an interval of some years I revisited garden and cemetery, the name of Maurice Sand had been inscribed under that of his mother. He was interred according to the Protestant rites. It is said that only out of respect for the feelings of her humble neighbours George Sand decided that her own interment should be after the Roman ritual. She loved these good country folks so well that she could not bear the thought of not being considered

one of themselves in the grave as she had been throughout life.

But, whilst loving and understanding the peasants as no other writer has done, George Sand consorted with the most brilliant intellects of the time. In her later years at Nohant she kept open house. From one end of the year to the other between the modest residence called château and La Châtre there was a perpetual going and coming of visitors. Boon companions found it difficult to tear themselves away. Little wonder that she confessed to a friend in 1869: 'I have earned a million [£40,000] in the course of my life, and have never saved a penny except twenty thousand francs [£800], which I have put by so that I may not cost my children too much if I fall ill' —with happy unconcern adding, 'And that little capital I am not sure of keeping, for it may be needed by others in greater want than myself.'

Just upon forty years earlier Balzac had visited Nohant, finding his hostess sitting alone by the fire, smoking a cigar after dinner, in semi-oriental dress, and 'not having a single white hair in spite of her terrible troubles.' He adds, 'When she reflects, her face has but little expression. With her, the eye is the entire physiognomy. For a year she has lived here working desperately, and living after my own plan turned topsy-turvy. That is to say, she goes to

bed at six in the morning, and rises at midday, whilst I retire at six in the evening, and rise at midnight.'

'For three days consecutively,' he continues, 'we chatted from five o'clock post meridiem until five o'clock in the morning, discussing the grave questions of love and human liberty with the candour, earnestness, and good faith befitting shepherds of the human flock. She is an excellent mother, and is adored by her children. She knows my opinions about her work, and thinks as I do, namely, that she has neither the gift of construction, nor pathos, nor reality, but without a knowledge of the French language she has STYLE.'

I smile as I contrast George Sand's complacency with dear Sir Walter's resentment of adverse criticism. How delicious is that letter to James Ballantyne à propos of Blackwood's suggesting that *The Black Dwarf* might be improved. He wrote, 'Tell him and his coadjutor that I belong to the Black Hussars of Literature, who neither give nor receive criticism. I'll be cursed but this is the most impudent proposal that was ever made.—W.S.'

George Sand was not a brilliant talker, and her absence of expansiveness sometimes hurt, even affronted, ardent admirers.

There is an amusing story of Théophile Gautier on this head. When most reluctantly tearing himself

from his beloved boulevards in order to visit Nohant, the poet was so much affronted by his hostess's undemonstrative, as he thought, cold manner, that he re-packed his portmanteau. But for mediation on the part of a fellow guest, he would have hastened home.

'You had not, then, told him that I was a simpleton?' (*que j'étais une bête*) was George Sand's naïve reproach to the peacemaker.

Perhaps in 1873 Flaubert no less reluctantly tore himself from his country retreat on the same errand. In company of Tourguéneff, the author of *Madame Bovary* visited his friend for many years, and was a constant correspondent at Nohant. 'The old troubadour who always sings, and will ever sing, of perfect love,' he called her, and she loved the name. For his *opus magnum*, the so-called necessary romance, she entertained no great admiration. '*Salammbô* may be magnificent,' she said, 'but the creatures of that period have no sort of interest for me.'

The literary souvenirs of Nohant would fill volumes.

On the occasion of my second visit, the château and grounds presented a dismally neglected appearance. After vainly knocking and ringing at the porter's lodge we strolled into the garden now overgrown with weeds. A troop of gipsies hovered

about the place, some of the crones and veterans perhaps remembering the *châtelaine* who loved their tribe. Very nice, *fort gentils*, she called the Berrichon gipsies.

Nohant is now in the possession of George Sand's youngest and sole surviving grandchild, daughter of Maurice Sand and his Italian wife.

The following memorials from one who knew and loved George Sand, and who more than once enjoyed the hospitality of Nohant, will fittingly conclude this sketch :—

'George Sand possessed many characteristics of the *bourgeoise.* An admirable business woman, despite her generosities and lavish expenditure, she left her affairs in perfect order, and not a single penny of debt. From the very first her life was one of struggle and pecuniary embarrassments. Married according to the *régime de la communauté*, on being divorced she bought back Nohant from her husband. Besides allowing her daughter, when in turn divorced, a handsome income, she gave largely right and left. It was impossible to her to say 'no' to necessitous fellow authors. In the time of Mme. Dupin, her grandmother, Nohant had been kept up in seigneurial style, and George Sand's housekeeping was on a very liberal scale, with a good many domestics, Berrichon maidens from the neighbourhood. There were always

guests in the house, and her theatre must have cost a good deal.

'There is one trait I should mention. At table or in general conversation George Sand would never tolerate anything in the way of an unpleasant *double entente*, or any transgression of the strictest propriety. She kept severe watch over her little *Berrichonnes*; and one visitor of the other sex, having taken a verbal familiarity with a housemaid, was never invited again.

'An amiable defect in her character must also be mentioned. She was often far too kind and encouraging to unpromising literary aspirants. The dread of wounding would lead her to foster delusions, and in the end inflict a worse blow.

'You ask me if I think she should have had her entire correspondence with de Musset published posthumously. My reply is, yes. George Sand had been so greatly maligned concerning this affair, such a step in my opinion was a necessary piece of self-justification. The originals of these letters are now in the National Library, Paris.'

CHAPTER XII

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF GEORGE SAND

II

THE VALLEY OF THE CREUSE

At Châteauroux we quit the Indre for the Creuse. 'Dear little Indre, so cold, so noiseless as you meander through our meadows,' wrote George Sand, 'you are our legitimate companion, but all of us who dwell by your umbrageous banks are lovers of the Creuse and when we have three days' liberty we forsake you to dip our fingers in the turbulent little waves of the naïad of Châteaubrun and Crozant.'

We have almost always a river in sight on our French travels. The even-flowing, quiet Indre left behind, we now see the Creuse at hide-and-seek amid hill and dale, its curls looking like flakes of sky dropped here and there.

Argenton is an ancient town pictorially terraced on the Creuse, its old-fashioned inn looking most inviting. Unfortunately we had only a day for Gargilesse and George Sand's favourite valley, a delightful day's excursion.

Being market day there was no little difficulty in obtaining a vehicle. At last the master of the inn most obligingly undertook to drive us, and off we started in high spirits. The August day if a trifle hot was perfect, the scenery charming and the realisation of a long-nurtured dream was at hand.

We soon discovered that our host's horse was a frisky young animal only partially broken in, and but indeed for our host's imperturbable collectedness we should have been uneasy indeed. To add to our discomfort the road was encumbered with country folks driving their cattle to market. It seemed as if the live stock of the entire department was being brought to Argenton. Furiously as John Gilpin, Monsieur le patron dashed along, oxen, pigs and sheep scuttling to right and left, their owners shouting, gesticulating, objurgating, himself paying no more attention to the uproar than Don Quixote to Sancho Panza's remonstrances when attacking the flock of sheep.

Impassibility indeed was forced upon him ; all his energies and muscular powers were of necessity concentrated upon his animal. Away we flew through the sweet and pastoral country, getting over the ground like competents of the race-course, raising clouds of dust and creating perpetual hubbub ; strange to say, reaching our destination without mishap.

My companion and myself had enjoyed with impunity what Victor Hugo would have described as a *frisson nouveau* (a novel shudder). A grey feudal tower with massive walls, close by, a Romanesque church and straggling village, below these a bright little river bubbling over masses of rock and overshadowed with rich foliage,—such is Gargilesse, George Sand's 'pretty, darling little Switzerland,' the retreat in which she penned the fascinating *Promenades autour d'un Village.*

It was in June 1857 that, accompanied by two friends, the novelist took up her abode here, all three being accommodated in the humble cottage still shown to strangers.

So enchanted was she with the spot, its sheltered position, pure air and mild climate, that she dreamed of nothing less than a transformation. 'An Italy exists here,' she wrote in the fervour of patriotic enthusiasm, 'of that I am certain.' Hotels, lodging-houses, improved channels of communication, were only needed, she was sure, and the English would flock thither as they did to the south, bringing prosperity in their wake. Alas! A few French artists and literary pilgrims visit Gargilesse during the autumn months, but the place can hardly be changed since George Sand's utilitarian dream of half a century ago. Unfastidious tourists could be

very happy here nevertheless, making the Hôtel Malesset their headquarters, and rambling hither and thither on the track of the romances. In every direction her genius seems to brood over the place. We are perpetually reminded of scenes, described as only her pen could describe them; the people also no less than the region recall her *chefs-d'œuvre*, those idylls which will surely last as long as the French language.

Myself and companion had not much time for the château, which was, as George Sand tells us, repaired by the government of her time, its restoration giving the place 'a seigneurial, comfortable aspect,' nor for the tomb of Guillaume de Naillac, seigneur of Gargilesse, and perhaps one of the few feudal lords who were ever venerated as a saint. Our driver was to meet us at the head of the valley two or three hours later; meantime, having brought provisions with us, we picnicked in as delightful a spot as I can remember.

Just outside the village, and between us and the gorge, lay a small, enclosed meadow. There, under wide-spreading elms, overhead a cloudless sky, to the music of twittering birds and rippling water, we feasted with the appetite of gipsies. Everything here exhilarated, the brisk air, the pastoralness, the lovely surroundings.

Fain were we to linger long in this enchanting spot, but the valley had to be traversed on foot, and our conductor would await us at its base. So, reluctantly enough we emerged from our cool recess into the blazing sunshine. And here let future worshippers at George Sand's shrine take a hint. On no account explore the valley of the Creuse under an early afternoon sun even in November.

No matter the season, this toilsome but well-repaid walk should be undertaken much earlier or later in the day.

Hardly were we on our way when we found ourselves exposed to tropical heat and glare. The valley, or rather gorge, at such times becomes a veritable burning-glass, by its conformation and structure absorbing every ray of sunshine, the parapet of mica-schist on either side assuming painful lustre and blinding whiteness. As at every step forward the well-hemmed ravine opened, the almost meridian fierceness became still more intense; yet with George Sand and her companions we could say that despite the tremendous heat of this meandering walk we could hardly regret having undertaken it. Perhaps under no other circumstances would shining cliffs threaded by silvery streams, emerald swards and pure deep blue sky have been more striking by force of contrast. Neither early morning nor sunset glow

could have afforded a more brilliant picture. And all the more blinding seemed white rocks, glittering cascades and sandy river-bed after the Theocritean nook left behind. Hardly could our tired eye-balls take in the beauty of the scene, for strangely beautiful it was, a rare combination of pastoralness and sublimity.

Thankful were we indeed to rejoin the high road where our host awaited us; his horse, or rather wild young colt, for it was nothing else, somewhat sobered by his twelve miles' gallop and perhaps a copious bait. Be that as it may, we drove back to Argenton sedately enough, again encountering streams of market-folks but not disturbing their homeward march.

The French peasant is often accused, and I fear not without reason, of hardness to his animals. Here the rule seemed to be one of excessive tenderness, farmers and farming women footing it in the heat and dust, whilst their pigs, sheep, and calves lay comfortably installed in their carts.

It was a memorable excursion. In George Sand's words we had spent 'an Arcadian day in the heart of France; as times go, who can expect more?'

Much has changed in the Berry since the novelist rendered it so famous, but the bucolic sites and character of the people have undergone little change.

From the volume devoted to Gargilesse and the valley of the Creuse, I quote a few sentences applicable to-day, as when she wrote, to the country folks she loved so well.

'What services does not this patient, laborious being, the peasant, render society, his efforts undaunted by no matter what obstacles, often pursued in solitudes disdained by his fellows! All he craves for is a bit of land; be it a rocky hillside or by a devastating torrent, there he will settle down, demanding neither roads, a handy market, shops, or other conveniences. Accustomed to privations, he lives and toils resignedly under conditions that would be repellent to most men. In rocky or mountainous regions the spade must replace plough and harrow, must solidify, and render fertile, unstable, stony patches of soil found here and there. Alike in winter and summer he combats obdurate stone and ever-encroaching torrent, his life given up to perpetual damming and digging—life of a hermit, task of a beaver. We might expect to find him a half savage; on the contrary, he is gentle, gay, and hospitable to the traveller who pauses in admiration of his labours. These remarks do not apply to the banks of the Creuse only, but to entire populations scattered on French mountain-sides, living isolated from the world, but equally deserving our sympathy.'

Elsewhere she adds—

'These sons of the soil, are they better or worse than their fellow-toilers of the town? I have never likened them to Theocritean shepherds, inheritors and continuers of the golden age. What I see and hear convinces me that in the country proper, in regions remote from suburban districts, there are fewer sources of corruption, hence a relative immunity from vice. These grown-up children among whom I live, I love them all.'

Literary fashions and standards change, but as a great prose writer George Sand holds an unassailable position. Among French classics the châtelaine of Nohant may be classed with the belle Marquise 'sans cœur mais pleine d'esprit'—Mme. de Sévigné.

Tourists bound to Limoges from this point, soon come in sight of the pale blue sierra-like range of which in her old age George Sand made so sweet a fairy-tale for her grandchildren. *Le Château de Pictordu* should be read by the way.

The bit of railway abounds in fine perspectives, heath-covered sweeps alternating with chestnut woods and acacia groves, running streams intersecting hedged-in pastures and many a grey tower crowning rocky peak. Especially striking is the distant view of Limoges.

CHAPTER XIII

III

A LAST WORD ABOUT GEORGE SAND

The magnificent if somewhat sombre pile in the Rue Richelieu, Paris, housing the oldest and, in certain respects, finest national library of Europe, also now contains some of the most impassioned love-letters ever penned.

'Posterity,' wrote the poet to the novelist, his senior by six years, 'will recall our names with those of the immortal lovers who have but one between them, with Romeo and Juliet, Héloïse and Abélard, never named except in unison.'

If this prediction has not been precisely fulfilled, the tragedy linking these most gifted, most strange, personalities imparts extra interest to both. As we read their burning utterances we think less of the magic pens to which we owe *Mauprat* and *Les Nuits* than of the mere woman and mere man, lovers blindly courting, in the one case, bitterest illusion, in the other, despair.

The history of the correspondence is as curious as

the letters themselves. Written during the years 1833-35, the entire collection was confided to friends for posthumous publication by George Sand in 1864. 'After publication,' she wrote in her literary testament, 'I desire that the letters be handed over to the Bibliothèque Impériale (now the Bibliothèque Nationale) or to some other public library, so that all persons who desire it can verify the faithfulness of the reprint.'

Not only were the wild outpourings of passion to be given to the world, two hearts for all time laid bare, but the blotted, tear-stained, feverishly indited pages were to become public property. The complete correspondence of George Sand and Alfred de Musset was published in 1904, the centenary of the great novelist's birth. And the National Library, founded by Charles v. in 1375, now contains the unique deposit, no pencilled scrap being omitted.

Admirers of George Sand may perhaps regret that she should have regarded such a step in the light of obligatory self-justification. Might it not have been better for her own reputation and for her descendants to let the unhappy episode fade from public memory? Events warranted her action. Calumniated during her life, one-sided judgments have done her injustice down to the present time. She has been regarded by

some as the evil genius of a young poet's life, the unhappy cause of his moral downfall and early death. But no one can read these letters without coming to an opposite conclusion. Already, at twenty-three, de Musset's being was saturated with morbidness, and he was a prey to the self-indulgence that ruined his career socially and shortened his days.

On the contrary, George Sand's nature was robust, practical by comparison with de Musset's, and widely sympathetic. Life meant much more to her than the passing capture of passionate love. The poet's initiatory blunder lay in his belief that he could absorb such a nature; and for the time being, perhaps, if she did not nurse, at least she did not check the illusion. It were hard to say which suffered more, although here, as in most cases, the axiom holds good—

> 'Oh! well for him whose will is strong,
> He suffers, but he will not suffer long.'

De Musset died at the age of forty-seven, the victim of early dissipation and melancholia; George Sand survived him by twenty years, delighting the world with her exquisite prose to the last, in her old age writing plays for the sake of dowering her little granddaughter.

It was after a very brief acquaintance that de Musset wrote to the already famous author of *Indiana* and *Lélia*:—'My dear George, I have something

foolish and ridiculous to tell you. You will laugh in my face, you will show me the door, and you will not believe that I am speaking the truth. I am in love with you! I have been in love with you from the first moment I crossed your threshold.'

Aurore Dudevant, *née* Dupin, whose *nom-de-plume* of George Sand has attained world-wide fame, was now thirty. Married at sixteen to a man with whom she had absolutely nothing in common, after the birth of two children a separation was mutually agreed upon and literature adopted as a career. Appended to the letters are several rough sketches of her by de Musset. In one of these she is seated pensively on a sofa, her strongly marked features in repose, her hands crossed over an open book.

The beauty of George Sand's face was, however, the beauty of character and intellect. De Musset, on the contrary, judging from the portrait affixed to Arvêde Barine's volume (Hachette) was a youthful Apollo; 'très dandy' had been George Sand's first description of him. Already recognised as a poet, he was a victim to the literary phase called 'le byronisme,' and from Byronism in its worst sense he never freed himself.

That hint of awakening passion was soon followed by open declaration, lovers' transports and lovers'

quarrels. From the outset George Sand combated her feelings. She evidently foresaw that only harm could thereby come to both. But infatuation prevailed, and on the 22nd of December the pair embarked from Marseilles for Italy together. The very first days of foreign travel and romance were marred by misunderstanding and recrimination, and in February of the following year de Musset fell dangerously ill, owing his life to the devotion of George Sand and of a young Italian doctor named Pagello.

A new element of discord was now introduced into this strange romance. Pagello, to quote Arvède Barine, had also succumbed to the fascination of the novelist's 'grands yeux noirs.' But to Pagello, de Musset felt that in great part he owed his restoration to health. What happened between the trio will never be quite known. If, as the writer just quoted, de Musset sacrificed passion to the sentiment of gratitude, it was not without bitter conflicts and stormy scenes, as the following extracts will show.

'Adieu, my child,' he writes to her at Venice, himself on the point of going to Milan. 'No matter what may be your hatred or your indifference, if yesterday's kiss is the last I ever give you, know that I quitted your dwelling with the thought of having lost you for ever and of having merited such a fate.'

In motherly strain she writes to him at Milan. 'Be prudent, be wise, be good, as you have promised. May heaven protect you and bring you back safely to Venice if I am still here. In any case I shall see you in the holidays. And with what joy! How dearly we shall love each other! Adieu mon petit oiseau. Aime toujours ton pauvre vieux George.'

From Paris he writes in April of the same year—

'Visit the Tyrol, Venice, Constantinople; follow your inclination; weep, laugh as the humour takes you, but some day when you find yourself sad and alone, remember that there exists one being in the world whose first and last love you have been.'

The same note of reckless passion and despair runs throughout de Musset's letters to the last. George Sand meanwhile was overwhelmed with anxieties apart from those of wounded sensibilities and lover's jealousy. It is small wonder that she sometimes talked of suicide. The following passage shows her cruel position.

'A week ago I received a notification from Buloz (proprietor of the *Revue des deux Mondes*) that I should get 500 francs from Boucoiran; he is either neglectful or in love, for nothing has come. Pagello has pawned my poor belongings. I owe Rebizzo 200 francs and am determined to borrow no more. Next week, unless the money comes, I shall have to

go short of food (économiser sur mon estomac), for I am absolutely penniless and it is odious to have to depend upon others.'

To this de Musset, still despairing but calmer, replies:—'I entreat you, pocket your pride and borrow of Rebizzo. You are sure, whatever happens, of being able to pay him, and should Buloz refuse to give you a halfpenny, I have only to ask and I could get anything I like, a thousand, two thousand francs, from my mother. My life belongs to you, and to ask a service of me is to render one.' That reliance on his mother's liberality seems to have been ill-founded, as we shall see.

In her next letter George Sand congratulates him on his chastened mood. In language of great eloquence and beauty she urges him to throw off the trammels of the past, to love another, to work, to live indeed. 'Love is a temple built by him who loves in honour of one more or less deserving such adoration. The idol is shattered, the lovely shrine remains, a sublime retreat wherein the heart is again steeped in the eternal flame, reimbued with the power of loving, of recreating a divinity. Which is the fairer of the two epochs of inner life, that of tearful hope or lyric rapture? Perhaps the first. Take courage then. Before you is a rude, painful, upward path, but it reaches lofty heights. You were born

to realise your destiny in this upper region, and to find your best happiness in the noblest exercise of your intellectual faculties. Go on, hope that your career will be as beautiful as your poetic ideals.'

But de Musset was utterly incapable of sprinkling cool patience on the heat of his distemper. His next missive is frenzied in its self-surrender and vehemence.

'Best beloved, sole beloved,' he writes, 'if the sacrifice of my life could secure you a single year's happiness, I would joyfully throw myself from a precipice to-morrow. Think what it is to be alone without a friend, without a dog, *without a sou*,[1] without a hope, during three months perpetually in tears, a prey to constant *ennui*, a being empty as night. I love you, I will love only you till I die!'

The following year George Sand returned to Paris, Pagello accompanying her. The poet and his 'Georgette,' his 'grand George,' met once more, with consequences easily foreseen. All de Musset's infatuation, mixed with jealousy, again took possession of him. Unable to remain near her he quitted home, writing from Baden:—

'A week has passed since I left Paris and I have not yet written to you, waiting for the calmer mood which has not come. Ah, George, what love was

[1] That affirmation of his mother's liberality was evidently unfounded.

that, our love! Never man loved as I love you still, do you realise it? I am drowned in passion, overwhelmed, and know not if I live, eat, sleep, walk, breathe, articulate, and only know that I love. I love you, I am dying of love that is nameless, eternal, insensate, fatal. No, no, I shall never be cured, I shall not make an effort to live, I prefer to die, to die loving you is better than to live. I know it well enough. I am dying, but I love, I love, I love!'

The winter of 1834-35 brought the pair together again, and this terrible history to a close. In her turn George Sand falls under the former spell, allowed herself to be drawn into the vortex of passion. Her letters at this period are no less fervid and self-abandoned than his own. 'Can anything be harder to me than what I endure now?' she writes. 'You hope you will come out of the struggle victorious, you say, or perish utterly. But you are young, a poet, in the full force of youth and beauty. Try, then. As for me, I shall die. Adieu, adieu. I cannot give you up, I cannot accept your love, I can do nothing but throw myself on the ground and weep. My only love, my life, my second self, leave me, but not alive,' and in a later note occurs the desperate sentence—'Shall we go to Franchart and there blow our brains out in company? That were an easy matter enough.'

The marvel is that some such course was not taken or that they did not both lose mental balance. Again and again George Sand implores him to leave her, endeavours to convince him that happiness is impossible, that his mad jealousy renders further intimacy a mutual torture, and again and again, although convinced that it is so, he hesitates. But the final rupture soon came. Unable any longer to endure an existence, every moment of which was tempestuous, she fled in March to Nohant, in the Indre, the maternal château which afterwards became her home.

The generosity of her nature is evidenced in a letter written a week later to her man of business, Boucoiran. 'My friend, do not speak disparagingly to me of Alfred. To be brought to despise those we have loved is more painful than to lose them.' The final pages of the volume relate the return of letters, ending with the following line from George Sand, of which we have a fac-simile—

'Adieu, mon enfant, Dieu soit avec toi.—G.'

But the pair did not wholly lose sight of each other. Three years later they occasionally met in Paris, and in 1848 they corresponded at length as to the final destination of the letters now safely housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Their last interview took place in 1848. Ten years later, a

wreck alike physically and mentally, but rich in fame and honours, de Musset died at the age of forty-seven. The following exquisite verses bespeaking a chastened frame of mind, of which I have endeavoured to convey the spirit, are almost hymn-like in their solemnity.

TRISTESSE

I

My life is wasted, strength is spent,
  My friends have vanished one by one.
Light-heartedness and proud content,
  The poet's faith in self is gone!

II

Truth once I looked on as a friend,
  She smiled responsive for a day,
Cruel I found her in the end,
  And turned my head another way.

III

Eternal all the same is Truth,
  Let any that great fact ignore,
And witless as in cradled youth
  They fall asleep to wake no more.

IV

God speaks and we must make reply,
  Though hearkening with reluctant ears.
The little left me till I die,
  I owe unto a few sad tears!

His life's work as a poet did not in some senses

belie his own idea as touched upon in the Impromptu of which I also give a rendering—

Building verse to eternize
Momentary phantasies,
Wooing beauty, goodness, truth,
Never parting with his youth,
By haphazard, grave or gay,
Laughing, weeping, on his way,
Little nothings as he goes
All sufficing for his muse,
Into pearls transmuting tears,
Thus the poet spends his years.
Such the passion and the dream
That the poet best beseem.

And here is yet another attempt at a rendering.

BARBERINE'S SONG

I

O knight resplendent, off to wars afar,
Why must you roam,
Remote from home?
Note yon dark sky without a single star.
And snares o'erlay
The wanderer's way.

II

Could you believe the love you left behind
An hour ago
Was fickle too?
Vain seekers of renown, 'tis yours to find
That glories pass
As breath on glass.

III

O knight resplendent, why must you be gone,
With lance and shield
To battlefield ?
Whilst I, what can I do but weep alone,
Who charmed erewhile
With careless smile ?

George Sand lived to see the consolidation of the Third Republic, retaining her power of expression and wealth of imagination to the last. When for the first time visiting Nohant twenty years ago, I chatted with village folks about their 'bonne dame' whom they loved so well. If she idealised the peasant in her matchless idylls, the author of *La petite Fadette* understood them as no other French novelist has done. And if it is the fashion to regard her novels slightingly, as a trifle out of date, time will assuredly vindicate her claims as one of the greatest prose-writers of nineteenth-century France. In the unhappy story just outlined, it is impossible to arrive at the conclusion that either of the lovers was more sinned against than sinning. Both were in some measure *enfants du siècle*, victims of an epoch; and, brave in the face of calumny during her lifetime, George Sand has fearlessly challenged the verdict of posterity.

CHAPTER XIV

ST. GEORGES DE DIDONNE, MICHELET'S HOLIDAY HAUNT

It is strange how some descriptions of places fascinate us, dwell in the memory, make us long to visit them, till at last our dream is realised too often with disenchantment.

Such a spell was cast upon me many years ago by the perusal of Michelet's prose poem 'La Mer.' Towards the middle of the last century the historian discovered a forest nook by the shore of the Atlantic, St. Georges de Didonne. The mixed rural and seafaring life, the sturdy, artless character of the inhabitants—a handful of Protestants—the singular flora of the downs, the vast stretches of forest and perpetual sights and sounds of the sea held him captive. Enchanted by so much primitiveness and natural beauty, here he remained six months, in his humble retreat penning pages as exquisite as any in the French language.

'La Mer' had doubtless much to do with the material fortunes of St. Georges de Didonne. Readers

of the book and followers in Michelet's footsteps nowadays will find a great difference between his descriptions and the reality. The lapse of time must also be taken into account. When Michelet settled in this seaside nook it was a mere fishing village. To-day the charming little bay is studded with villas, piecemeal the noble forests overlooking the shore have disappeared, the bathing season brings its visitors by the thousand, and a railway runs along the once solitary coast. Already when I spent a summer holiday at St. Georges some years since, the transformation had begun in good earnest. On the smooth, velvety sands croquet was played by day and quadrille parties were held by moonlight. Family groups took their sea-baths or *promenades en mer* at low tide, and the one or two villas, hotels, and boarding-houses were full. Elsewhere we found almost undisturbed solitude.

Grandiose is the site of this tiny port: the broad, bright Gironde here flowing from Bordeaux to lose itself in the Atlantic; towering loftily from mid-ocean, Cordouan, 'the oldest lighthouse in Europe,' avers Michelet, and he adds, 'for six months our perpetual subject of contemplation and our society.'

And how delicious were those inland rambles amid remnants of ancient ilex forests and plantations of young pine, dark and waxen green foliage sharply

contrasted, overhead a warm, southern sky, ever in our ears the sound of sea waves rippling with most musical cadence! Large white and coloured butterflies sported about the undergrowth, whilst every spot was fragrant with wild carnations, thyme, and aromatic immortelles.

Along the shore, even in September, we found plenty of flowers, the evening primrose scenting the air, the silvery green sea-holly, the delicate heathlike sea-lavender, the handsome sea-poppy, the *limosiris vulgaris*, with its mass of little gold tufts, and many others. Turning our backs upon the bits of pine-forest we would climb the downs, following a zigzag path, between us and the sea rising lofty cliffs of yellow tufa, fantastically hollowed and riddled, in which are found oysters in all stages of growth. On the lee-side are tamarisks in rosy bloom; contrasted with these, ilexes bordering tiny vineyards, cornfields, or potato-beds growing high above the shore.

At the time of which I write, a vast expanse in patches brought under cultivation stretched before us, whilst tall hedges draped with luscious blackberries bordered our path. Every shifting scene was full of quiet stately charm, wide flowery downs, tamarisk and ilex groves on the edge of the cliffs; below, smooth brown sands and placid sea; in the distance lying Royan with its spires and bay and

far-away river meeting ocean, the grand pyramidal tower of Cordouan conspicuous in the scene as the sun in the heavens.

Leaving the white-washed walls of St. Georges with their trellised vines and patriarchal fig-trees behind us, we find a cool enchanting world of greenery. In and out we wander, now following woodland paths, now losing ourselves in a fragment of venerable forest, now crossing little glades through which purls a crystal-clear rivulet, next we exchange such umbrageous seclusion for sunny cornfields, vineyards, and beds of Indian corn. A variety of trees—ilex, oak, chestnut, elm, beech, birch, alder, acacia, and aspen—flourish side by side and in close proximity to the sea.

The ilexes and aspens are—or were—magnificent; I use the past tense, for much I fear I should find few bits of forest left at St. Georges to-day. Not only in the walks just described, but farther afield we would come upon what looked like silvery clouds dropped upon the dark masses of forest. It was the aspen, mingling its pale yet resplendent tints with darker foliage. Especially marked was the contrast afforded by the sombre, motionless ilex and ever rippling, ever murmuring, whispering aspen, summer and winter, hand in hand.

And if the silvery ripple of the *tremble*, as this

tree is poetically called in France, looks lovelier than ever under the azure heavens, equally is the leafage of the ilex thereby beautified. How much do trees, their changes, varied foliage, and sounds contribute to our delight in the different seasons!

Poetic as St. Georges appeared in its early stage of modernisation, the fishing village Michelet discovered must have been romantic indeed. I will endeavour to give the spirit of his opening page; the seduction of such French as his naturally eludes the translator.

A storm of exceptional length and fierceness had raged along the west coast of France during the close of October 1859. Michelet writes—

'This storm was observed by me from a spot where one might least have expected it, so peaceful and caressing is the little port of St. Georges de Didonne, near Royan, at the mouth of the Gironde. I had there spent five months in great tranquillity, reviewing my ideas, interrogating my heart, seeking an atmosphere for subject so delicate, so solemn. The place, the book assimilated agreeably. Could I have written this work elsewhere? I know not. Thus much I do know, that the rustic fragrance of the district, its austere loveliness, the stimulating aroma of the woodlands, the flora of the wastes and of the shore count for much in my pages, of all they will always breathe.

'The population harmonised with nature. Here no vulgarity, no grossness. Peasants of grave disposition and sober lives, sailors whose business is pilotage, a little Protestant race which has survived persecution.

'A primitive probity reigns (locks and bolts were not as yet in vogue throughout the village). No turbulence. Among these seafaring men existed tact and discretion not always found in the most elevated ranks of society. Received as a friend, regarding them as a friend, the solitude necessary for my work was never intruded upon by my neighbours. All the more did I interest myself in their daily perils. Silently my prayers followed them in their heroic calling.

'Before the great storm I had felt uneasiness, as I observed the dangerous conformation of the coast, wondering if this quiet and beautiful sea had not cruel deceptions in store for us. The scene so fraught with hazard is not at all sad.

'Every morning from my window I beheld the sails of countless merchantmen just flushed with auroral rose awaiting a breeze to raise anchor. The Gironde is here three leagues in breadth. With the solemnity of great American rivers it has all the gaiety of Bordeaux.'

Royan is a pleasure resort, patronised by Gascons

from far and wide. From the shores of Royan and St. Georges, we can enjoy a gratuitous spectacle, the sight of porpoises and their frolics. In their playful leaps they will throw themselves five or six feet above the water. Well enough they seem to understand that no one dreams of disturbing them. The business of pilotage leaves no leisure for catching porpoises.

To this gaiety of the sea add the unique and beautiful harmony of the coasts. The luxuriant vineyards of the Médoc face the harvests and varied crops of the Saintonge. The heavens have not the fixed, at times monotonous, brilliance of the Mediterranean. Here they are very variable. From the mingled currents, salt and fresh, rise iridescent clouds reflecting in their native mirror the strangest coloured clouds, bright green, rose, and violet. Fantastic shapes people the piled-up monuments of cloud formation, bold arcades, lofty bridges, triumphal arches, the portals of ocean, for a moment visible then lost to sight.

The two semi-circular shores of Royan and St. Georges with their fine sands, offer a smooth promenade to the most fastidious feet, the fragrance of young pines scenting the way. The promontories separating the coasts and wastes emit health-giving fragrance, medicinal is the honeyed odour of *immor-*

telles, in their flowers being concentrated the warmth of sun and sands.

Inland flourish astringent plants, their odours stimulating the brain and reviving the spirits—thyme, mint, sage, and above all, the wild pink, odorous as the choicest oriental spices. It always seemed to me that the birds sang better on these wastes than elsewhere. Never did I hear a lark carol as did one in July on the heights of Vallière. She rose from amid the flowers, mounting, gilded by the setting sun. Her voice so high above, perhaps a thousand feet from the soil, despite its sonorousness was none the less sweet and artless. It was evidently to the nest, the humble furrow, that she addressed her rustic yet sublime song, thus interpreting the glory through which she modestly winged her way, encouraging her young to follow, enticing them with the cry, 'Follow, my little ones, follow.'

For Michelet's fine description of the storm I refer readers to the volume itself; I only note one very interesting remark. Throughout the five days' turmoil, winds and waves working woful devastation around, he tells us that his mind remained active; mistress of itself, he observed, he wrote. 'But,' he adds, 'fatigue and sleeplessness robbed me of one faculty that I held, the most delicate a writer can possess. I lost the sense of rhythm. My sentences

wanted harmony. This, the first chord of my instrument, was broken.'

A lighthouse appeals strangely to the imaginative. For several weeks Cordouan was my own daily contemplation also, and how I longed to visit it as Scott had visited the Bell Rock almost a century before! What a charming page in his yachting diary is that devoted to the great northern beacon, its neat sleeping chamber, saloon, parlour, and the entertainment enjoyed within its walls.

No experience so unique was to be my own. The eight miles' sail from Royan to Cordouan is at all times difficult, often very risky, and only under exceptional circumstances are strangers permitted to undertake it. Regretfully I quitted St. Georges with no nearer acquaintance of 'the white phantom' of Michelet's fanciful apostrophe.

St. Georges is mainly a Protestant community. Touching is the story of *Le Pasteur du Désert*, narrative of eighteenth-century persecutions and endurance. Jarosseau, the subject of those pages and the historic pastor of St. Georges, was compelled to gather his flock together in forest depths, or with the little congregation put out to sea, holding service in a boat. At night his bedroom was a walled-up cupboard approached by a secret stair. Unable to endure such a state of things, at last he set off for

Paris, and after many difficulties and rebuffs obtained an interview with Louis XVI. On his knees he demanded permission to celebrate Protestant worship in his village. The boon was granted and a few years later the Revolution proclaimed liberty of conscience throughout France, and Protestants obtained full civic rights.

The little Sunday congregation is an interesting sight. These matrons in the long black cloaks of their Huguenot ancestresses, these sunburnt peasants and seafaring patriarchs neatly dressed in black, have all strongly-marked, suggestive features. We read on each countenance inherited convictions and powers of endurance, a humble yet heroic pedigree!

St. Georges de Didonne is reached by way of Niort and Royan (Orleans Railway) and is just upon three hundred and fifty-five miles from Paris. During the summer months, steamers make the journey from Royan to Bordeaux every other day, a pleasant two hours' sea-trip.

CHAPTER XV

CHANTILLY AND MME. DE SÉVIGNÉ

Chantilly only needed the Duke d'Aumale's magnificent legacy to become one of the most attractive holiday resorts near Paris. The graceful palace erected since the war of 1870-1 had already embellished the place, but its art treasures were not as yet accessible to the general public. To tourists, nevertheless, Chantilly offered many charms. The clean, quiet, friendly little town in the valley of the Nonette possesses individual engagingness. Folks are sociable hereabouts. If you stand lost in admiration of their long, beautifully-kept gardens, open to the road, they do not frown you away. There are pretty walks by river and canal, and no matter in which direction you go, no one says you nay, no board marked 'Private; trespassers will be prosecuted' hinders advance.

Then there is the perpetual sight of that fairy-like pleasure-house. Its stately gardens and park lie open, whilst beyond you have between six and seven thousand acres of forest in which to roam at will.

During the hottest summer days delicious coolness is to be had close to the town; when the weather is breezy, sunny swards are equally within reach.

Here a little English colony of horse-trainers and jockeys lives on the best possible terms with its French neighbours. On Sunday mornings may be seen troops of our little country-people flocking to the Wesleyan Sunday-school; here and there a boy—presumably of Scotch parentage—proudly wearing kilt and bonnet, a tiny dirk, of course, in his Rob Roy stocking.

'The explanation of horse-training as an English speciality,' observed a French friend to me as we strolled together by the exercise grounds, 'I take to be this: your compatriots are more patient with their animals than my own and other men following the trade.'

What Chantilly may be like during the racing season I cannot say. Certainly at other times, and I have often spent days and even weeks here, I can give the town a very quiet, orderly character.

It was in 1875 that the Duke d'Aumale began to build a modern château on the foundations of the old. The Chantilly of the Montmorencys and the Condés, of Mme. de Sévigné—and Vatel the cook!—disappeared during the Revolution. When, in 1789, the Bourbon princes headed the general emigration,

the populace became incensed. In 1792 the château was used as a prison, and in 1794 it was rased by order of the Convention, on the ground of being a fortress. The magnificent stables, with stabling for nearly two hundred horses, remain intact.

The Duke, if not his own architect, entered into every detail, both within and without, attempting a reconstruction of the historic palace. No *chef-d'œuvre* of light, graceful architecture had more suitable surroundings. The château with its pinnacles and turrets of the elegant Valois period stands sideways on the canal watered by the Nonette, and on clear days are obtained lovely effects of light and shadow, a reflected palace as beautiful as the solid reality being given by the limpid waves. In front as behind stretch the quaint old gardens laid out by the famous Le Nôtre in the time of Louis XIV., marble terraces, orangeries, fountains, and statuary harmonising with the gleaming whiteness of the building.

Oddly enough, as I gazed on Chantilly, my mind recalled a pleasure-house on the Baltic, the famous Putbus palace in the island of Rügen. Just as dainty a picture as that Italian structure doubled in its lake is the Duke d'Aumale's Chantilly, to-day the property of the French Academy. Such a comparison holds good with regard to picturesqueness

and artistic interest only. Putbus is without historic interest, whilst Chantilly is connected with dazzling pages of French story. To have its records at the fingers' ends is to know more than one goodly chapter. Most of us have read Mme. de Sévigné, and of the fabulous entertainment given by the great Condé to the Sun King, when Vatel, the cook, threw himself on his sword because the fish had not arrived for dinner. But here a little court had been held by the greatest of the Montmorencys a century and a half before. A statue of the fierce old warrior, Anne de Montmorency,—never man having a feminine name was more devoid of womanly softness—now stands in front of the new château; as the creator of its precursor, he deserves such a place. This pitiless foe of Protestantism was not only a patron of the fine arts, but a connoisseur. To him we are indebted for the treasures contained in the chapel, exquisite stained glass, carved altar-piece, panels in carved wood, and other gems.

Let us first visit the château. Wisely have its new owners ordained that visitors may wander at will through these sumptuous galleries. Here no cicerone drives us like a flock of sheep from one place to another, barely allowing us time for the most cursory inspection. Officials are at hand, but only to keep order and answer inquiries. Emulating

the generosity of its donor, the Institute throws open the Musée Condé, as Chantilly is called, on Thursdays and Sundays free of charge during six months of the year. Large numbers of visitors, all country folks, and during my last visit I noticed among the crowd several Breton women wearing native costume.

In French art Chantilly is particularly rich. Fine works by Greuze, Ingres, Decamps, Delacroix, Meissonier, Gérome, and, coming down to our own time, Daubigny and De Neuville are kept here. Among Italian masters figures the famous Raphael purchased of the Earl of Dudley for £25,000, a bagatelle to an Orleans prince. Da Vincis, Titians, Vandycks, and Rembrandts, and interesting drawings by Ingres and other famous French artists enrich these galleries. Beauvais and Gobelins tapestries, enamels, engraved gems, antique jewellery and plate, *faïence* in great variety form of themselves a rich museum, whilst the library deserves the same name. The Duke was not only an accomplished writer and art collector, but a bibliophile, adding rare old editions in choicest bindings to his magnificent collection of books. The arrangement of the library is very convenient and elegant, upper shelves being reached by light galleries.

The Salle de la Smalah recalls an earlier and quite opposite phase of the Duke's life. Here we see the

glittering loot taken from the tents of Abd-el-Kader, weapons having jewelled handles, gorgeous stuffs and embroideries, rich horse-trappings, and vessels. The Duke's portrait here represents him as the slim young soldier of 1842, a striking contrast to the portly, infirm septuagenarian some of us remember. As was only natural in reconstructing Chantilly, the glory of the Condés was uppermost in his mind. The chapel and Galerie de Monsieur le Prince commemorate the head of the Montmorencys and the Grand Condé; in these indeed two distinct phases are realised by portraiture and artistic memorials. The chapel contains a series of portraits in stained glass, those of the great Constable, Anne de Montmorency, his spouse, Madeleine of Savoy, their four sons and four of their daughters, with John the Baptist and Saint Agatha keeping them company. The entire family of the pair numbered twelve. By a freak of fortune the foremost figure was deprived of his head. For the portrait substituted we are indebted to other likenesses, notably, the medallion in wax at the Louvre, and the famous enamel of Léonard Limousin. Anne de Montmorency also figures as the god Mars in the enamel after Raphael by the same artist, 'Le Banquet des Dieux,' which belonged to the Fountaine collection and fetched seven thousand guineas. The finish of these

portraits on glass is remarkable, and every detail of costume is given with minute exactitude.

The altar-piece is an elaborate work of finely grained marble, ornamented with bas-reliefs. Both stained glass and altar-piece were formerly at Écouen, another appanage of the Montmorencys. The Constable was a friend of the worthless Henri II., and highly suggestive here are the bow, arrows, and crescent recalling Diane de Poitiers. These emblems of the king's mistress appear on the panels in stained wood adorning the chapel. The panels are exquisitely carved; they remind us of the perfection attained by the decorative arts during the Valois *régime*, also of Schiller's remark. Truly has the German poet declared that there is no connection between art and morality.

As a château, Chantilly possesses all the magnificence of a royal residence, and here for a few years its owner held his state. Here but for dynastic intrigues he might have remained. The exile of the Pretenders twenty years ago could have surprised no one acquainted with French affairs.

When, childless, a widower, and in failing health, the Duke was invited to return by M. Carnot's government, all had changed. The heir of the Condés could read the writing on the wall, he knew well enough that his house was doomed. Partly

perhaps out of gratitude, partly from a feeling that an *amende honorable* was due, he bequeathed Chantilly to the Institute.

In the moment of their country's direst fortunes, immediately after Sedan, the Orleanist princes claimed the millions that had been confiscated by Napoleon III. In doing so, did they realise that like Esau they sold their birthright for a mess of pottage? Be this as it may, the Third Republic in at once satisfying the claim might well congratulate itself on an excellent bargain. From that moment the fate of the Bourbons was sealed.

Such considerations, however, do not in the least detract from the Duke's act of magnanimity. It is gratifying to think that he spent the last years of his life in the stately pleasure-house he loved so well. But all this time we have forgotten Mme. de Sévigné and Vatel the cook, two figures perhaps more humanly interesting than any others memorialised at Chantilly.

No one indeed must visit the place without a volume of the immortal letters, or without a re-reading of that dated April 26, 1674.

The 'belle marquise sans cœur mais avec beaucoup d'esprit,' thus has she been described, had just returned from Chantilly, where the king had been fêted with extraordinary splendour.

'The King arrived on Thursday evening. The

hunt, illuminations, walks, collation on a bit of turf blooming with jonquils, all went off well. Then came supper. Extra tables had to be set and at these the roast joint was wanting. Vatel was overcome. Again and again he said, "Honour is lost, I shall never be able to endure this mortification." At four o'clock next morning he rose and wandered about, all the household being asleep. At last came a fishmonger with two loads of fish. "Is that all?" asked Vatel. "Yes, Monsieur," was the reply, the man not knowing that Vatel had sent for fish to all the nearest seaports. Vatel waited a little while. No fishmonger came. "Monsieur," he said to Gourville, "I shall never survive this mortification. My honour, my reputation are at stake." The other treated the matter as a jest, but Vatel went straight to his bedchamber and threw himself on his sword. He fell dead, and shortly afterwards supplies of fish arrived from the different seaports. . . . The King reproached Monsieur le Prince (le Grand Condé), telling him that he should only supply two dinner-tables, but it was too late to save poor Vatel!' who, however, has been immortalised, will live as long as the French language!

CHAPTER XVI

CARCASSONNE, ITS POET AND POETISER

'Mon Dieu! que je mourrais content,
Après avoir vu Carcassonne!'

One of the first questions I have ever asked when reaching any unknown town or village in France, has been what illustrious name is connected with it, to what historic personage has it given birth? Persons are so much more interesting than places! or to put the thesis less positively, any human mind must have so much more in common with any other mind than with natural accidents, or piled-up bricks and mortar. Mountains, lakes, and waterfalls awaken perhaps a deeper feeling than that of mere mortal fellowship. Stately piles and other monuments raised by collective genius impress us with a vague sense of personality. More nearly comes home to us the inseparableness of a name and its surroundings, the eternal impress of mind and character on inanimate scenes. Here nature not seldom plays curious pranks. Some magnificent places are absolutely wanting in a *genius loci*, others not so naturally

favoured, on the contrary, are veritable Walhallas, whilst others have brought forth exactly the opposite of what might have been looked for.

Before relating how Carcassonne has fared in this respect, let me describe the *chef-lieu* of the Aude or rather attempt to give some faint idea of the indescribable. There is only one way of realising the wonderful little city in the clouds, and that is to follow the long Toulouse railway and so behold for oneself what a vast, variegated bit of map is traversed between Paris and the ancient Carcaso, how many regions, diverse as so many kingdoms, are passed through before we catch a glimpse of the Pyrenees! Cornland, vineyards, olive-groves, pine-forests, mountains, rivers, valleys, each zone having its special climate, from one transformation scene to another we are whirled through in rapid succession, the last outshining all.

A far-off sight of Carcassonne recalls some magic city in Arabian story. Enchanted, intangible, no edifice reared by human hands seems that airy pile of pearl, opal, and amethyst, lifted high above the common world, its battlements dimly outlined against the golden heavens. Almost a vision can we fancy the exquisite picture, and as we gaze we should hardly be surprised to see it melt away, dissolving with cloud pageantry like Prospero's airy palaces,

leaving no wrack behind. France numbers many walled-in towns, none are so perfect or so beautifully placed as this little acropolis in mid-heaven. Above verdant plain, winding river, and scattered villages, towers mediæval Carcassonne, its prosaic twin, the busy little Carcassonne of the work-a-day world lying below.

Quitting the modern town which is given up to the pacific manufacture of capsules and retorts, crossing two bridges, and climbing steep, grass-grown streets and tumbling, deserted tenements we reach the ramparts, here enclosing an oval, not a rectangular, space as is the case at Aigues-Mortes.

Toy-like were the proportions of the ancient city compared with its fortifications, Lilliputian capital hemmed round with Brobdingnagian defences. The prodigious masonry before us rests on foundations laid by the Visigoths, and well had those fierce warriors chosen their site. These limestone heights must have seemed to them arisen for the purpose, sprung from the plain with the object of domination, enthroned for ever and only awaiting a crown. The outworks that successfully resisted that ruthless devastator of Languedoc, the Black Prince, are now silent but for the occasional tread of guide and tourists, and, elevated as we are above the plain, no sound reaches us from the cheerful, bustling world at

our feet. Through the archers' loop-holes we obtain scenes of varying beauty, each clear-cut, brilliant in hues as a mosaic or a bit of Palissy ware. At a depth of several hundred feet below, the Aude meanders by suburban villas and gardens, rich pastures, as far as we can see, the vast southward expanse being broken by gleams of shining water. Intersecting the landscape are white threads bordered with greenery, those splendid roads or rather continuous boulevards that run through every part of France. Sixty miles of yonder expanse divide us from the Pyrenees and a wayfarer footing it would have umbrageous shadow all the way.

I think the glorious little round of the citadel was accomplished in twenty minutes or less, but the unimaginable and the indescribable are not to be measured by inches or minutes, and no traveller in France should miss Carcassonne.

The name evokes that of two poets, but the poetiser of Carcassonne, the author of a song which will live as long as the French language, was no native. Gustave Nadaud belonged to the north, lived and died amid the ceaseless hum of machinery and never-extinguished smoke of factory chimneys. Did he ever find his way hither from Roubaix? History does not say, and when in 1894 I visited the interesting but unidyllic town, Nadaud was on his

deathbed. Had I paid an earlier visit I might have been privileged with an interview, and perhaps have learned the genesis of his famous poem. As a book written for English readers should be in English, I have attempted a rendering.

Never has the quintessential characteristic of the French peasant been more subtly pressed into a ballad. Not the bent and worn vintager of Limoux, but thousands of his compeers, we may be sure, have similarly sighed for some little distraction to which prudence has perpetually said 'No.'

CARCASSONNE

I

I 'm growing old, just threescore years,
  In wet and dry, in dust and mire,
I 've sweated, never getting near
  Fulfilment of my heart's desire.
Ah, well I see that bliss below,
  'Tis Heaven's will to grant to none,
Harvest and vintage come and go,
  I 've never got to Carcassonne!

II

The town I 've glanced at many a day,
  You see it from yon mountain chain
But five long leagues it lies away,
  That 's ten leagues there and back again.
Ah, if the vintage promised fair
  But grapes won't ripen without sun,
Without soft showers to make them swell.
  I shall not get to Carcassonne!

III

You'd think 'twas always Sunday there,
  So fine, they say, are folks bedight,
Silk hats, frock coats, the bourgeois wear,
  Their demoiselles walk out in white.
Two generals with their stars you see,
  And towers outdoing Babylon,
A bishop too—ah me! ah me!
  I've never got to Carcassonne!

IV

Yes, truly did our curé call
  Pride, the besetting sin of man,
Ambition brought on Adam's fall,
  And soaring wishes are my bane.
Yet could I only steal away
  Before the winter has begun,
I'd die contented any day,
  If once I'd been to Carcassonne!

V

Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, forgive my prayer
  I'm but a poor presumptuous fool,
We build fine castles in the air,
  When old, as when we went to school.
My wife, with our first-born Aighan,
  Has made the journey to Narbonne,
My godson has seen Perpignan
  I've never been to Carcassonne.

VI

So sighed a peasant of Limoux,
  A worthy neighbour bent and worn,
Ho, friend, quoth I, I'll go with you,
  We'll sally forth to-morrow morn!

And true enough away we hied
  But when our goal was almost won,
God rest his soul, the good man died,
  He never got to Carcassonne!

It is astonishing to find not only the idiosyncrasy but the life history of the French peasant hit off by a citizen, a Roubaisien above all others.

And strange to say Nadaud wrote that poem without having seen Carcassonne, like Balzac being in ignorance of one of the most perfect things to be found throughout France. Carcassonne meant to him what any other third-rate town or little bishopric might have meant to the untravelled peasant of former days. Such are the paradoxes of literary history!

As strange is the contradiction afforded by Carcassonne's poet. I have shown elsewhere that the Revolution was pre-eminently a lyric period, in no other epoch of French history is seen so general and spontaneous an outburst of song.

'I can never hear, *Il pleut, bergère, il pleut*, without emotion,' wrote Renan in his old age, and doubtless many a Frenchman could say the same. That naïve little song familiar to every man, woman, and child in France, with Nadaud's *Carcassonne* incorporated into French literature, was the improvisation of a whimsical revolutionary known to the

world by a flowery pseudonym only. Philippe-François-Nazaire Fabre, otherwise Fabre d'Églantine, first saw the light at Carcassonne on December the 28th, 1755. When a mere boy he carried off the so-called *Prix d'églantine* in the famous poetic contests of Toulouse, and from that time adopted his title of honour. Comedian and playwright, his early years were one unbroken series of successes. Play quickly followed play, each being enthusiastically received, one and all as completely forgotten now as if they had never been written. Revolution interrupted this dazzling career. The popular caterer for the stage threw himself heart and soul into the great upheaval. He became Danton's secretary, sat as deputy for Paris in the Convention, and ranged himself on the side of the Montagne. With his great leader and their friends, he mounted the fatal tumbril in April 1794.

Fabre d'Églantine's innumerable comedies, like so many other works popular in their day, are buried in oblivion. But at some time or other he had improvised an artless song which, having a heart in it and reaching all French hearts, has become imperishable, will no more slip out of the language than the verb *aimer*, to love. For, just as the poetiser of Carcassonne had crystallised peasant psychology in a ballad, so Carcassonne's poet put into a few simple verses all

that makes peasant life what it is, an existence, laborious, circumscribed, unprogressive, it may be, but beautified, elevated by domestic ties and love of home. Here indeed and for once and for all is falsified Zola's indictment of the French peasant in *La Terre*. And the picture presented by the poet is one we may meet with on French soil any day. As when Fabre d'Églantine wrote, so under the Third Republic, family life and family honour are held sacred by the humblest.

The little idyll is of the simplest. A youth overtakes a maiden keeping her little flock and surprised by a thunderstorm. Urging upon her the necessity of seeking shelter, and taking care to remove any scruples she might feel at following a stranger, he points out his mother's farm—she is evidently a widow—in the distance. Helping her to keep her sheep together amid deluging rain, thunder and lightning, they reach the rustic homestead where she is confided to maternal and sisterly care. The tempest over, she is persuaded to remain, her lover, for lover he has become, folding her sheep and betaking himself to his shake-down in neat-house or stable,[1] there like the maiden dreaming happy dreams till morning comes, when with his

[1] On rich farmeries in France to-day the stockman sleeps on a shake-down of straw adjoining his animals.

mother he will conduct their guest home, asking her hand in marriage. Here is the best rendering I can give of this truly Theocritean pastoral—

IL PLEUT, BERGÈRE, IL PLEUT

('It rains, shepherdess, it rains')

I

The rain is falling, shepherd maid,
  A storm is coming fast,
Let 's hasten to some friendly shade
  And shelter till 'tis past.

II

Hark how the big drops patter down,
  The water runs in streams,
Whilst from yon clouds that darkly frown,
  Fiercely the lightning gleams.

III

The thunder growls, my shepherd maid,
  Delay not, take my arm,
Gather your sheep, be not afraid,
  We 're near my mother's farm.

IV

Ah ! there she stands, the housewife dear
  And with her, sister Anne,
See both, a visitor is here,
  Beguile her as you can.

V

With sister Anne, sit down, *ma mie*,
  The peat shall soon burn bright,
Your little flock shall cared for be,
  And folded for the night.

VI

Good night, good night, my shepherd maid,
The storm has passed away,
But sister makes your little bed,
There sweetly dream till day.

VII

To-morrow, with my mother, I,
—May fortune us betide—
Unto your father we will hie,
And ask you for my bride.

Another highly poetic creation of Fabre d'Églantine was the floral calendar which the late Mr. Hamerton, with, may be, some others, greatly regretted. Certainly the calendar adopted in 1792 and abolished by Napoleon in 1805 had much to recommend it, alike on the score of novelty, taste, and accurate delineation, each name nicely indicating the month for which it stands, each poetically recalling nature's shifting scenes. Germinal and Floréal at once bring before us 'the sight of vernal bloom and summer's rose,' whilst Pluviôse and Ventôse as unmistakably remind us of February Filldyke and the month that comes in like a lion. But these ingenious and beautiful names, like everything else connected with the first short-lived Republic, stunk in the nostrils of the Corsican liberticide. Fabre d'Églantine's charming invention has only survived a historic curiosity, and

is seldom mentioned in connection with its author. And, indeed, but for his song of the shepherd-maiden and her humble but chivalrous lover, the winner of the wild-rose crown would be forgotten, even at the place which gave him birth. An ardent revolutionary and champion of freedom, in noble company he fell a victim to his aspirations. His short political career was not, alas! one of those sure sooner or later to be commemorated in marble. Danton's statue adorns his native town on the banks of the silvery Aube. No such honour has been paid to his secretary and companion on the scaffold.

A volume might well be devoted to the numerous little walled-in towns of France, Carcassonne holding the supreme place. Each is unlike the other, each has some peculiar charm of its own — Guérande, scene of Balzac's *Béatrix* is one, Saumur in upper Burgundy is another. With its walls, watch-towers, and donjons intact this little town of the Auxois must look much as it did in the days of Charles the Bold. Provins, capital and court of the Counts of Champagne, is a third. Here Thibault VI., song-writer and art-patron, held his state, and here in the days of the Crusaders was introduced the rich red rose erroneously by ourselves styled the Provence rose. Many others I could name, but

as far as my own experience goes none equal that constellated oval towering so regally yet with such poetic charm over plain and river, moss-green, limitless level through which winds a stream of mazarine blue.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BRITTANY OF ÉMILE SOUVESTRE

To visit Brittany unimbued with the spirit of Émile Souvestre is to travel in Scotland without the literature of Scott and Burns or to traverse Spain without having read Don Quixote. For the author of *Les derniers Bretons* was himself the last of the Bretons; in his person was embodied the genius of 'that ancient Druidess baptized by St. Paul,' which he found fast disappearing three quarters of a century ago, and which his magic pen has resuscitated for all time. Not only did Émile discover a world of fable, poetry, and romance awaiting a chronicler, but one and all touched a secret and hitherto silent chord, as he tells us, awakening his real self and true vocation. Having unsuccessfully tried his fortunes in Paris he retraced his steps, Brittany henceforth proving alike his inspiration and his theme.

Others had as assiduously wooed the same muse. It was reserved for Émile Souvestre to discover the talking bird, the singing tree, and the golden water. What does not charm is dead, wrote Goethe, and

who but the most patriotic Breton nowadays reads Brizeux's interminable idylls? The sentiment, the poetic feeling is there, but not the spell. Another great German has written—'a genius is known by what he leaves out.' Unfortunately Brizeux did not leave out enough. Hence, whilst his *Marie* and the rest are only turned to by the curious, *Le Foyer Breton* is not only a popular book but a classic. Émile Souvestre indeed was a true artist and a master of easy, graceful style.

The Brittany of the past lives in his pages, a Brittany little resembling that of preconceived notions. With austereness, profound religious belief, we here find charming bonhomie, humour in no small degree and imaginativeness of a high order.

We must indeed go to the fountain head of fairy-tale, to the *Arabian Nights* and to the Norse tales collected by Mr. Dasent, for narratives as full of charm, character, and piquancy as those related to Émile Souvestre during his wanderings. In order that the letter as well as the spirit of the originals should be preserved, each story was first put to paper in Breton, afterwards being translated. The original stamp was thus preserved, the naïve, simple, and picturesque language adding greatly to the charm of the stories.

Travellers must hardly look for so much as a

vestige of our author's Brittany in the much frequented holiday ground of to-day. The grand coast scenery remains, but the face of the country has been gradually modified, picturesqueness yielding to material improvement. Railways now intersect the various departments in every direction. Costume has all but disappeared. The time-honoured Pardon is replaced by enormous pilgrimages to Lourdes, and, as if to complete the disenchantment, instead of inspiring idyllic episodes, Breton scenes and character are studied *à la Zola*.

One of the most popular novelists of the day, M. René Bazin, has lately given us a novel of Breton life with a purpose, the sordid history of a young matron who goes to Paris as a wet-nurse, there ending her career in degradation and ruin. Certainly the Breton wet-nurse was unknown in Émile Souvestre's days.

It is now over a quarter of a century since I spent twelve months in Brittany, a few years back revisiting familiar scenes. Many regions, when I first knew them, had to be traversed by carriage or diligence. On the occasion of my second visit railways had been laid down in all directions.

Take Quiberon for instance. Never shall I forget that solitary ride from Auray to Quiberon during my first visit.

I was travelling alone. How matters may be now, I know not; a generation ago a young Englishwoman wearing watch, chain, and carrying money, could safely traverse lonely wastes unaccompanied, her vehicle an old-fashioned calèche, or cart without springs, her driver a Breton peasant, his bare feet thrust in sabots. The age of these drivers might vary. Neither young, old, nor middle-aged would vouchsafe an unnecessary word to their fare. Sometimes one of these would offer a wayfarer a lift beside him, chatting with the new-comer. Never through the score and odd lonely drives of many miles that I thus made had I the least complaint to make of my conductors. This especial drive I remember as unusually lonely. Through poor villages we passed, before every hovel standing a heap of manure and pool of liquid; ragged, gipsyish children running after the carriage vociferating in broken French: 'A sou, a sou, if you please,' here and there wild-looking women looking up from their little flocks of burnt-sienna-coloured sheep, and before, behind, and around lying stretches of brown moor ribbed by the action of the sea and tinged with the gold of gorse and moss. Gloomy knots of pine broke the steppe-like monotony, and as we approached Fort Penthièvre, greyish blue sea hemmed us in on either side. At the fort I alighted and, not encountering a soul, wandered on the cliffs, perfumed with

wild carnations and gorgeous with purple and orange seaweed.

On the way home all was silent and solitary as the desert, and the deepening shades of autumn twilight added new mysteriousness and poetry to the wintered waste, sombre pine-groves, and purpling sea and sky.

Twenty years later, making the same journey by rail, I found the waste in many places brought under cultivation and on all sides signs of material progress. Instead of an unspeakably wild and poetic drive I jogged along pleasantly, but after humdrum fashion by railway. And pleasant it was on this Sunday afternoon to see artisans and peasants with their families taking advantage of the cheap return tickets.

The approach to Quiberon—tomb of the Vendean War—is exquisitely beautiful, not less so the bay of smoothest, finest silvery sand hemming a turquoise sea.

Until the construction of the railway a few years ago, Quiberon was a mere fishing village, occasionally visited by tourists on account of its historic interest. Here the *ancien régime* may be said to have yielded up the ghost, and its most determined opponents cannot resist the pathos of such a tragedy. The place itself is no longer in keeping with associations so dreary. A lively, fashionable little resort has

sprung up with mushroom swiftness. At the station you are beset by clamouring representatives of the big new hotels now grouped around the shore; villa and cottage *orné* keep them company; a casino is not wanting; for two or three months in the year Quiberon is a miniature Étretat!

The 'lazy Laurence' of travel, not seldom the wisest, will leave the gimcrack of a town behind him and dream away delicious hours on the shore—a shore most gracefully curved, coast, sea, and sky lovely as any that inspired Shelley's Italian poems. Towards the close of the bathing season, that is to say, after the second week in September, we may have Quiberon and most French watering-places wholly to ourselves.

During those early travels I still seemed within reach of Émile Souvestre's Brittany. The figures I encountered on my long drives across country, in rustic inns or by the seashore, were every whit as picturesque as those of his story-tellers, chance-met hosts to whom he owed his store of fairy-tale and legend. But it was not only native taciturnity and reserve that now sealed their lips. A generation ago, as Jules Simon has shown, village schools were all but non-existent in Brittany. These peasants and seafaring folks could not carry on even an ordinary chat in French.

Costume as well as physiognomy would often recall the figures familiar to us in *Le Foyer Breton.*

Here is an incident that remains fresh in my memory as if it had happened yesterday. I had driven from Brest to Plougastel, a mile of winding road bringing us from the ferry to the dingy, unattractive little town. It was market day and the narrow ill-paved streets were so encumbered with cattle and their drovers that it was very difficult to make one's way. The women here all wore high coifs, and the men looked picturesque enough in their Spanish-like dress, but on a sudden my guide exclaimed—

'See yonder lad, let us ask him whence he comes.'

The boy, wearing scarlet trousers, green jacket, and broad hat with coloured streamers, proved to be no Merry Andrew, but a wedding guest, and his mother, who was also very gaily dressed, informed us that a double wedding had just taken place and offered to introduce me to the brides. My guide, the driver hired at Brest, acted as interpreter, the good people knowing no French beyond a word or two.

We followed the pair to a very dirty and crowded little inn, myself waiting outside whilst toasts were being drunk.

Then, all on a sudden out they trooped, brides, bridegrooms, and wedding guests, and surely no

ceremonies in the olden time, no court pageantries or carnival, ever made up a stranger, more gorgeous spectacle! The dingy little street blazed with the dazzling colours, which, whilst bright as dyes could make them and belonging to garments of fancifullest pattern, were without a touch of vulgarity or grotesqueness.

The two brides, who were young, fresh-complexioned, and pretty, were dressed precisely alike. They wore, what from time immemorial has been the head-dress of the Plougastel matron, a high cap with lappets, recalling that of Egyptian priestesses, to-day these caps being of finest cambric. Coquettish little jackets of soft, gold-green cloth showed undervests of dark blue cloth, with white muslin sleeves and chemisette. Skirts and petticoats were numerous, and so worn as to show different hems and rims of colours, red, yellow, and violet predominating. Scarlet and gold morocco slippers were worn inside the wooden sabots. Sleeves, vests, and skirts were elaborately and tastefully trimmed with silk and gold braid. The dress of the elder women was soberer, vest and petticoat being of dark violet cloth with orange and crimson border, dark green vest, open sleeves, and large white collar covering the chest like a cuirass.

The men wore broad-brimmed felt hats, perhaps

three quarters of a yard in circumference, and trimmed with braids and tassels of different colours, green cloth jackets embroidered in red, yellow, or blue, crimson waist-sashes, and full black trousers.

I add that the bridal party insisted upon the English lady re-entering the unsavoury little hostelry with them and drinking their health. Indeed one agreeable feature of those early Breton wanderings was the prevailing cordiality with which I was received. Not only, as I say, did I undertake long drives and difficult—even perilous—expeditions in the utmost safety and comfort, but upon no single occasion was I subjected to extortion or incivility, but was instead the object of attention.

Here is another remembrance of Brittany as I first knew it. I was staying at St. Pol de Léon, a place at that time strangely somnolent, melancholy, unpeopled. Those grass-grown, solitary streets indeed recalled the enchanted city of Arabian story; one almost hesitated to enter the cathedral lest the sacristan should be found turned to stone like the Prince of the Black Isles. I shall never forget the eerie sound of my own footsteps on the pavement.

St. Pol de Léon fascinates all the same, and I was very happy in the ramshackle old inn despite the rats gambolling about and the primitiveness of the arrangements. The time was November, but we

were enjoying a temperature of summer. From my windows I looked upon a garden still full of chrysanthemums and lilies; far beyond, a group of sea-pines breaking the outlines of sea and low-lying coast.

At Roscoff I had a friend's friend, a learned Breton doctor.

'You should cross over to the Île de Batz to-morrow in time for vespers and see the Druidesses,' he said to me one Saturday afternoon. 'These people are quite unlike any other in Brittany; they go to mass and are called Catholics, but their real religion is still the purest Druidism.'

So to see the Druidesses I went.

Next day was soft, bright, and beautiful, the very day for a little cruise. As I drove to Roscoff we met numbers of pedestrians trudging to St. Pol in time for mass, all saluting us with grave politeness. My driver, who could speak very little French, carried his Sunday clothes with him, which he put on when arriving, presenting as smart an appearance at church as any. Before putting to, in the afternoon he again entered the church for a prayer. What perfect type of the Léonnais was this peasant—taciturn, dignified, courteous. The crossing to the Île de Batz on a calm, sunny day is a trifle, but at low tide when you have to wade for a quarter of a mile across the wet sands it is not easy. To be on the sea to-day was

delicious, and the unclouded blue sky, deep purple waves, and burnt-sienna-coloured rocks made up a glowing picture. In the little mail-boat were about a dozen passengers, all talking Breton as fast as they could. Among them was one of the so-called 'Druidesses,' or women of the Île de Batz, a very young woman—though she wore a wedding-ring—who now very modestly put on the shoes and stockings she had wisely taken off to get down to the boat. She was a pretty brunette, and her look of physical strength and animal spirits was delightful to see. Her dress was severely simple and dignified: skirt of the softest, finest black French merino made with a plain skirt, scrupulously white linen habit-shirt with embroidered collar and sleeves, and a hood of creamy white cashmere, so spotless, soft, and graceful that a duchess might have put it on to go to the opera. Arrived at the island, we saw crowds of women and children in this costume, and men, whose looks betokened their seafaring life—all are sailors here, whilst the women cultivate the soil—hastening to vespers, the former loitering outside the church till the last moment, as is the fashion in English country places. Inside, the congregation presented so strange an appearance that it was difficult to believe we were not assisting at some solemn ceremony instead of an ordinary Sunday

service. There was not a bit of colour in the church except a gay baby's hood, the assemblage of black-robed, white-hooded women looking more like a concourse of nuns than ordinary country folks; and the black dress of the men when they entered did not relieve the monotony.

When Émile Souvestre traversed the country in search of folklore it was on horseback, by-roads being few and far between. Twenty-five years ago the solitude and silence of Breton travel formed a crowning charm. If in these days of added railways, cosmopolitan hotels, and other innovations travellers fare better with regard to creature comforts, they lose much, above all the coming in direct contact with the people.

Here is another experience of the Brittany I first knew. I dare say if I returned to Pont l'Abbé I should find a smart hotel, German house-porters in livery, and a service of motor cars to Penmarck.

After a breakfast at the little auberge, which would have satisfied a Roman epicure, and for which was charged the modest sum of two francs, I started for Penmarck. The sky, which had clouded over for a time, brightened, and for the rest of the day we had a warm west wind, driving light rain-clouds across a pale blue sky, with breaks of sunshine and occasional rainbows, and rain drifting down on the

distant fields. As we went on, the scenery grew wilder and wilder; hills and woods were left behind, and we were now in a wide, dreary, monotonous plain, only broken by occasional farmsteads, some solitary dolmen or menhir rising with weird effect from amid brown waste or rudely-tilled fields.

As we drew near, the stately church of the once flourishing city of Penmarck loomed in the distance. More like a château than a church, with its fantastic congeries of towers and turrets, this and the neighbouring ruin of St. Guenole, with a scattered population of two thousand inhabitants, are all that now remain of what, in the sixteenth century was a large and busy maritime town, rivalling in importance Nantes itself, able to send three thousand archers to the fight, and possessing seven hundred fishing-vessels! The dukes of Brittany held it to be one of the richest communities in their duchy, and it was not till the discovery of the great cod-fisheries of America that its prosperity declined. Now, nothing can be drearier or more dead-alive than these village streets, where you meet no one but wild-looking, shaggy peasants, with broad-brimmed hats slouched over their heads, carting away seaweed for manure, and unkempt, gipsylike children, who gaze at the stranger in amazement. When we approach the sea, which for miles before had glinted and gleamed

above the dips in the sombre marsh around, we heard the roar of the waves beating furiously against the rock. Three wild little natives take charge of the horse whilst we alight, and my guide leads me to the edge of the steep, storm-beaten promontory, along which we wander, now climbing, now descending the masses of rock heaped together, with many a fault, as geologists would say; now piled one on the top of the other as carelessly as the dolmens; now forming shelves and staircases only to be reached on hands and knees; now a rocky rampart, steep and unapproachable, against which the blue waves dash almost tempestuously even on this mild autumn day. The distant sea was calm almost as a lake, yet columns of spray were sent up from the purple depths below us with a deep continuous murmur. What a spectacle must be here on a wild wintry day!

Penmarck is the scene of one of Émile Souvestre's most striking episodes. Here is yet another sketch of former experiences, the account of a drive from the sweet little town of Lannion to Ploumanach:—

'The November day was exquisite—I should say November is the most charming month for Breton travel—light clouds floated across the azure sky, and lovely lights and shadows played about the mellowing woods and hedges. As we drove on, the smiling

landscape was gradually exchanged for wild scenery. The fishing village of Ploumanach is a collection of hovels, built *pêle-mêle* among the masses of rich granite flung about the shore, as if Titans had here been playing ninepins and suddenly left off the game. The view from the hill overlooking the village and sea is magnificent—intense blue waves smooth as a lake, pale purple islands beyond; and nearer, lying under our feet, houses and rocks huddled confusedly together; huge fragments, here piled one on the top of the other, like a child's tower of bricks, there so closely wedged together as if even an earthquake could not separate them. Sometimes an enormous slab would be perched, dolmen-like, on the narrowest point of columnar supports, looking as if a child's finger could tip it over; at others you might see a grand monolith, standing alone like some solitary menhir, whilst all around, near and far, the ground was covered with blocks, cones, pyramids, every fantastic form that granite can take, making up an indescribably strange and fantastic scene. The village—if village it can be called—is very dirty, and to reach the coast you have to go through a succession of little alleys, wading ankle-deep through pools of liquid manure. These fisher-folks might, without any trouble worth mentioning and no expense, have the best thresholds and stepping-stones

in the world, not to speak of pavements; but they do not so much as lay down a few blocks in front of their habitations so as to bridge over the invariable black stream through which they must wade whenever going out or coming in.

But what matters all this? We are soon far too enraptured at the prospect before us to think of the slough of despond through which we have passed in order to reach it. A little way off lay the seven islands or islet rocks, now amethystine between a turquoise sky and lapis lazuli sea. Not a breath is stirring this soft summer day—it is the 3rd of November! Yet the waves here are never at rest, and dash with perpetual murmur against the glowing sea-walls. As we wandered along the edge of the cliffs the full splendour and weirdness of the scene became apparent, the scattered fishing village looking like a collection of pigmy dwellings amid the gigantic rocks scattered about; turning seaward, the piled-up masses of fiery red granite forming ramparts, chasms, precipices innumerable against the purple, white-crested waves breaking below. Wild geese, sea-ducks, and seagulls were flying overhead, a few fishing-boats were out at sea, whilst landward the only living things in sight were odd little black sheep, mere tufts of wool, as it seemed, browsing on the brown hills above Ploumanach. Which of those

lovely little islands is Avalon, 'where falls not rain, nor hail, nor any snow, nor ever wind blows loudly,' my guide does not know, but thinks it is Tomé ; and the old keeper of the lighthouse, when I made him understand what I wanted, for he was very deaf, shook his head, and said, 'Le roi Arthur? Il n'est pas de ce pays.'

Should I revisit these spots with *Le Foyer Breton* in my pocket, I fear the journey would be a succession of disenchantments. Better, perhaps, to live over again such experiences in fancy, and to feel thankful—at a distance—that material well-being has changed the face of the Brittany of my youth. And if the Brittany of poetry and legend has disappeared also, it lives again in the pages of Émile Souvestre and of his great compatriot, Ernest Renan. Like the Breton fabled city, the Ville d'Is is lying at the bottom of the sea, whose church bells fishermen hear in still weather; the voice of the ancient Armorica reaches us; its music is audible in the hum of these busier days.

CHAPTER XVIII

AMIENS AND 'VERT-VERT'

How many happy hours have I spent in that delightfullest of French hotels at Amiens with the umbrageous garden and the storks! The storks, alas! perished during a severe winter some years ago, but pretty foreign ducks sport in the basin, and the hotel is still a very haven of rest with the thermometer at ninety degrees, a breathable, almost cool retreat.

During the heat wave of the present year (August 1906) I betook myself with a friend to the capital of the Somme, not bent upon again revelling in its treasures, revisiting its matchless cathedral with Ruskin for guide, not minded even to stroll through its magnificent museums, historic collections, and art schools. My errand was to visit the tomb of its one, its unique poet.

For *Vert-Vert* stands absolutely alone in French literature. Nothing like it, or approaching to it, is to be found throughout the successive stages of that vast treasure-house. The history of the parrot, every line of which produces our unreluctant smile, has

secured for its author an imperishable niche in the national Valhalla, and, for the bustling, prosperous, industrial city of his birth and residence, poetic lustre.

That quiet, shady hotel garden was not to be quitted last August during the day, but as the sun declined we exchanged its comparative refreshingness and shadow for the cathedral. Here all was greyness and a temperature requiring discarded wraps. The tropical climate of the streets was left completely behind!

Only two or three worshippers knelt here and there in the vast space; but, as is always the case, a priest with breviary in hand slowly paced backwards and forwards, keeping, I presume, an eye upon intruders. When I ventured to ask him the *local* of Gresset's tomb, to my surprise he replied in very good English.

'Yonder,' he said with an affable smile as he pointed to a tablet on one of the side pillars, 'is the monument; the Latin inscription is short, but very'—hesitating, he finished with a French word—'very *spirituel*.'

'Very witty,' I added, giving the first synonym that entered my head. 'Elegant,' I think, were the better word. The inscription is to the effect that Gresset, a son of Amiens and splendid follower of

the Muses, born in 1709, died on the 16th June 1777, was interred elsewhere, and re-interred here on the 16th of August 1811. A verse from the 118th Psalm followed the figures.

Poor Gresset! How happy would he have been could he have known that his memory would be thus gloriously perpetuated, generation after generation of the devout having this tribute before their eyes, the commemorative tablet forming part of the cathedral itself!

And of perverse necessity the poet would have prided himself more on the monument than the works to which he owed it. Like Pascal, Gresset could not overcome the dogmatic teachings of early youth. In his later years he repudiated all claims to literary fame. His story shows how persistently and how remorselessly theological narrowness here waged war against intellectual originality. There is not a line in *Vert-Vert*, nor even in the little *jeu d'esprit, Le Lutrin Vivant* (The Live Lectern), that can be twisted into real disrespect to religion or the Church. But unfortunately Gresset had exercised wit and pleasantry in dealing with ecclesiastical objects and formulas, and but for tardy recantation he would doubtless have died under clerical ban.

When only twenty-four, Jean Baptiste Louis Gresset, at that time a student of the Jesuit College

of Louis le Grand, Paris, composed *Vert-Vert.* The poem, handed about in manuscript, took the public by storm ; the clerical world was scandalised, and the young author was sent in disgrace to the Jesuit College of La Flèche in the Sarthe. Soon after, he threw up alike theology and seminarist's garb, cast in his lot with letters, established himself in Paris, and wrote play after play, a series of successes culminating in that of *Le Méchant*, a piece that to this day holds its own in the repertory of the Comédie Française.

Gresset, then in the prime of life, returned to Amiens in 1749, there, with the royal permission, founding a literary academy. Unfortunately for his peace of mind, he was of a vacillating nature, and falling under the influence of Lamotte, Bishop of Amiens, was induced to burn all his unpublished manuscripts, and publicly repudiate his entire works.

But the bishop's action only damaged himself and his unfortunate pupil. Gresset died a morbid, deluded, self-deluding devotee. *Vert-Vert* will delight the world as long as the tongue survives in which it is penned. Did leisure permit, and did the task look at all feasible, how delightful were it to translate into English the serio-comic story of the immortal parrot who travelled from Nevers to Nantes, falling into bad company on the way, and,

as will happen to mortals, thereby losing all the good habits acquired in early youth.

Vert-Vert, then, was a parrot, young, splendid to behold, vivacious, and the most insatiable picker-up of unconsidered trifles; in other words, imitating every syllable that fell upon his ears. But as he was the cherished darling of a convent, that of the Visitandines, he could of course learn only what was good and seemly; hence his reputation. Indeed, so far did his fame spread that the abbess of a sister-convent at Nantes insisted upon having a visit from him. So, amid tears and kisses of his friends, and heaps of *bonbons* being supplied for his journey, *Vert-Vert* was put on board a barge bound for the city on the Loire, among the passengers being three dragoons, two Gascons, with others not likely to be choice in their topics or words. So, when poor *Vert-Vert* reached his destination, what was the horror of the pious sisters when, instead of deferentially repeating the *Benedicite*, the *Oremus*, and canticles, he broke forth into terrible oaths and expletives never before profaning such walls. The novices, as they well might, thought the bird was speaking Greek! Bundled back to Nevers with a flea in his ear, *Vert-Vert* underwent a term of seclusion and bread and water, and when it came to an end, over-joy and an overdose of sugar-plums causing his

death, all his faults were straightway forgiven. He was buried with every mark of grief, and an epitaph was composed by the nuns, ending thus—

'Here lies *Vert-Vert*; here lie all our hearts.'

There is a lilt, an irresistible engagingness, about *Vert-Vert* that impels the reader to go on from start to finish without a halt. And every line has a frolicsome turn. The only kind of frolicsomeness worth having, spontaneity and sparkle, characterises the poem, as they do the twin *jeu d'esprit*, *The Live Lectern*.

Le Méchant is an admirable play, and, amid many good things, in a single line focusses French idiosyncrasy. The excellent Géronte has been told by his niece's maid Lisette that he is a good man.

'I a good man? I am no such thing. What folly!' he exclaimed with an air of positive affront.

A sermon on French character might be preached from this text. The dread of appearing hypocritical is a perfect nightmare to our neighbours.

Gresset as a stylist is well worth attention. As one of his own critics has written: 'The great merit of *Le Méchant* consists in its style and versification. The piece abounds in verses so well turned, so witty, so concise, so perfect that as we read we cannot imagine them being expressed in any other way. So easy are these verses that the ear retains them with-

out an effort ; so concise are they that, like the best sayings of Boileau, they became minted, proverbial from the first.'

In his satire, *Le Pauvre Diable*, Voltaire pretty severely castigates Gresset for his self-pillorying, and also hits upon the cardinal fault of *Le Méchant*, namely, its want of action. Nevertheless a representation at the Français would be a treat of the first water.

There are bits of French scenery that take hold of the memory we hardly know why, coming back to us again and again, when grandiose sites and natural marvels are only recalled by an effort. And thus it happened with an afternoon drive I took from Amiens upon another occasion and a little later in the year. That familiar city so richly dowered in other respects is unblessed in the matter of climate. Rain falls at Amiens in the maximum proportion, and the enormous number of factory chimneys render the atmosphere smoky. Despite its cathedral and noble art collections, the capital of the Somme can only be fitly enjoyed in fine weather. Fine weather is also needed for the little excursion I am about to describe.

The great manufacturing city has a double girdle of verdure, first its handsome boulevards, next its market-gardens, wide belt of variegated greenery

reaching far into the country. Beyond these, stretch vast sweeps of picturesque but unprofitable country, meres and marshland, reminding us that at a remote period in cosmical history Amiens was almost a seaport. Within comparatively recent times the region now forming the two departments of the Pas de Calais and the Somme have undergone great changes owing to the retrogression of the sea, or rather the encroachment of the land. For a most interesting account of these transformations, see the papers of M. Charles Lartherie, *Revue des deux Mondes,* 1902.

Silent, desolate, without a vestige of cultivation, without a dwelling in sight, the scenery possesses a weird fascination. On this brilliant afternoon the succession of watercourses and lakelets set round with sallows lost all dreariness and gained an ethereal, fairy-like aspect. Every tiny stream, every mere caught the tints of burning blue sky, silvery cumuli, and sea-green willows. And it was hard to say which picture was the lovelier, the real or its double, as we passed stage after stage of amphibious landscape, haunt surely of will-o'-the-wisps and water fays! An hour and a half bring us to the trim little town of Boves, where a ruined château recalls the siege of Amiens in 1597 and the sojourn of Henri Quatre, accompanied of course in war as

in peace by the Belle Gabrielle. A little further and my destination is reached.

The school is reached by way of a lovely little gorge or ravine, a clear rivulet gleaming through the thick fringes of poplar and acacia. Here, on the site of an ancient monastery, waste lands and reedy marsh have been cleared, and within the last few years rendered cultivable and productive. In the absence of the Director, his representative most courteously shows us over the premises, explaining everything. The school accommodates fifty students, the cost of board and instruction being adapted to the purse of the small peasant owner, namely, four hundred francs yearly. Nine professors constitute the teaching staff, each school of this kind costing the State at least twenty thousand francs yearly. The curriculum extends over three years. Our informant explained to us that the chief difficulty to contend with is that of obtaining pupils. It is not so much the money that the peasant farmer grudges but the time, three years of his son's labour lost to him, added to the three years of military service. But little by little the minds of the more intelligent are being opened to the ultimate gain of such loss. The teaching is both practical and scientific. Farming generally, stock-breeding, dairying, bee-keeping, fish-rearing, market-gardening, are

all taught by the most approved methods and with the aid, regardless of cost, of the most approved machinery. In the class-rooms the pupils acquire the theoretic training necessary for a farmer—chemistry, land-surveying, geometry, etc. Students belonging to different classes of society share precisely the same accommodation. Four ample meals a day are allowed, the diet being liberal and indeed luxurious compared with that of the recruit going through his military service. The school is well worth a visit.

Most picturesque is the homeward drive through this amphibious region on a September afternoon, at first the little lake-like mere, flooded with ruddy gold,—wood, water, and sky a blaze of crimson and amber,—gradually every feature of the scene subdued to quiet tints, in keeping with the silvery sallows and soft grey heavens.

CHAPTER XIX

IN THE MORVAN

I

THE HISTORIAN OF VÉZELAY

THERE is no more delightful little journey in France than a zigzag through the Morvan, that is to say from Auxerre to Avallon, from Avallon to Autun, thence making the excursion to Château Chinon. Here indeed is still to be found the romance of travel, whilst every spot is historically interesting.

Striking is the abbey church of Vézelay, from its mountain-top so majestically overlooking the two departments of the Yonne and the Nièvre. I say mountain-top, for so indeed the pyramidally formed vine-clad hill appears by contrast with the vast panorama spread at its feet: the sombre Morvan, all wood and river and valley, the Yonne, country of vines and tillage. Far and wide we see Vézelay, and whether we approach it from the Nièvre by Clamecy, or from the Yonne by Avallon, alike the distant and the nearer aspects are equally grandiose.

Almost fairy-like in the distance is the aspect of the two tall towers and long roof rising conspicuously above the ancient fortifications, and towering above the neighbouring hills and crags. Most beautiful is this aspect of Vézelay, the old-world town with its mellow walls, green shuttered cottages, and festooned vines giving it an Italian look; the crowning glory of the place, its abbey church, stretching as it seems from one end of the broad platform to the other. The hill seems made indeed for the church, as a pedestal for a statue, not the church for the hill. But for its red tiles this look of Vézelay would remind us of St. Albans, the enormous length of the nave at first appearing almost unsymmetrical. But here we have no sober greys, no cloudy heavens of our own Midlands; the rich red of the tiles, the glittering whiteness of the stone towers, the soft blue sky, the waxen green foliage of the vines beneath and around, the warm sunshine tingling through all, remind us that we are in France and not in England. Rich as is Vézelay in outward effect, for its *façade*, in spite of mutilations, retains much of its former splendour, it is chiefly the interior which archæologists come to see and to admire. The general impression is one of coldness, arising from the absence of colour or any kind of relief in the way of decoration, and the extraordinary length of

the building. The church is only exceeded in length by two or three cathedrals of France; but here we have not a pane of coloured glass, not a column of coloured marble, absolutely nothing to break the monotony. The delicate grey of the stone, alternated with the white, and the exquisite proportions of the whole, in part atone for this monotony. Nevertheless, the eye cannot rest long at a time on the interior without fatigue.

The prominent feature of Vézelay is its famous narthex, on which all the imaginative wealth of the builders was lavished. It is shut off from the nave, and the doors are only thrown wide open on occasions of solemn processions; but the sacristan admits strangers both within and to the lofty tribune above. On the occasion of my visit all was confusion, owing to casts being made of the rich sculpture adorning the narthex for the museum of the Trocadéro, Paris; but enough was visible to give an idea of its magnificence. I was led up the narrow stone staircase into the open gallery, whence is surveyed the whole interior—a vast and wonderful perspective, arch upon arch, column upon column, as if indeed it were one cathedral opening into another as vast as itself. The amazing extent of Vézelay is here realised, and under a most beautiful aspect, the dazzling whiteness adding greatly to its beauty.

There is, however, no balustrade, and from the giddy height it is pleasant to turn and wander round the little museum, so called, at the back. A great number of beautiful things, all more or less fragmentary, are collected here, many of which, as well as the sculptures of the portico and the narthex, may now be seen in plaster at the Trocadéro. The entire building has undergone restoration under the supervision of the late Viollet-Le-Duc. Poverty, if not neglect, has fallen upon the once puissant abbey of Vézelay. It does not even possess an organ, the poor little tones of a harmonium alone being heard throughout its vast aisles. On the other hand, a superabundance of wealth has not been the means of spoiling the interior by means of meretricious decorations. A few bouquets of natural flowers and a statuette or two make up all the offerings of the pious here.

At the foot of the hill on which Vézelay stands, rising from a narrow, squalid village street, and evidently placed on low ground in order that its details might be seen to advantage, is another famous church, that of St. Père-sous-Vézelay. This is of the thirteenth century, while Vézelay belongs to an earlier period. In the abbey church we have the rounded arch, here the pointed, while in the interior of St. Père-sous-Vézelay we have studied simplicity and

Abbey-church of Vezelay

absence of detail, the exterior is of a richness, sumptuousness, and grace, all the more striking perhaps because so close to our eyes. The church stands indeed by the wayside, and we come suddenly upon its tower, one story springing magically from the other, as in Antwerp Cathedral, the blue sky shining through its delicate apertures, an extraordinary lightness being obtained in combination with great splendour and solidity. The architect seems to have begun his work without any precise notion of the ending, and the result is a gorgeous and fanciful whole, of which it is difficult to give any idea. The façade, unhappily much defaced, is marvellously rich in sculpture and design, while above it, in much better condition, rises, wing-like, a kind of aerial porch as sumptuous in ornamentation. High above this the pinnacles of the tower show figures, statuettes, and ornamentation in great lavishness, all in deep sober grey, not white and cold as is the exterior of Vézelay. Enormous flying buttresses gird the church, giving it a look of wonderful strength, although not perhaps improving the general effect. The surprise that this church is to us, as we come upon it so suddenly, and the contrast it presents to the poverty of its surroundings, will not easily be forgotten. Fine as Vézelay is itself, planted fortress-like on its airy height, St. Père-sous-Vézelay is

hardly less impressive—an architectural pearl flung upon a dung-heap. The one strikes us by force of its glorious position, the other by inadequateness of site. Yet doubtless in both cases the position had significance, and the architects of the later church lavished so much wealth upon it designedly. Vézelay, rising proudly above the ancient Nivernais, signified that the church was for the puissant and the rich. The exquisite church at its feet might well symbolise that the poorest had contributed to such splendour, many a peasant hardly emerged from serfdom contributing to such erections.

From an especial point of view the history of Vézelay is very instructive. In the twelfth century this village, for town it was not, enjoyed the prestige and prosperity of a miniature Lourdes, certain relics of Mary Magdalen attracting enormous crowds at the annual festival of the saint. Vézelay had grown to be as important as a city, and the inhabitants, although serfs of the abbey, had contrived to amass wealth and shake off some shackles of servitude. Whilst still compelled to grind their corn and bake their bread at the abbey mills and ovens, they enjoyed the privilege of bequeathing their prosperity to their children—a privilege indeed in those days! The church and relics had been placed by their possessor, Gerard de Roussillon, three centuries

earlier, under the jurisdiction of Rome, both thereby constituting an appendage of the holy see, and being quite independent of feudal suzerainty. As was only to be expected, such accumulated wealth of spiritual lords aroused the jealousy of their temporal rivals, the counts of Nevers, and at the same time the people, with increased well-being, aspired to an extension of their personal liberties. Hence arose a triple struggle, sacerdotal tyranny represented by the seigneur-abbé named Pons, seigneurial cupidity by Count Guillaume of Nevers, and popular ambition by Hugues de St. Pierre, a skilled mechanician or worker in iron, and possessed of considerable wealth.

The contest was waged with excessive bitterness on all sides, the leading part being played by the great artisan, for great he was indeed, one of those industrial heroes whose names deserve to live in history. Hugues de St. Pierre was moved to generous as well as individual ambition by his contrasted means and position, his state with that of his fellows being one of servitude. Mingled with commiseration for others was a desire for personal aggrandisement. He dreamed not only of civic rights for all, but of a commune of which he himself should be chief magistrate, a noble dream, and one which at one time seemed on the point of being realised.

Partly, it must be believed, from generous motives also, Count Guillaume fostered this popular movement, and after a fruitless endeavour at compromise with his adversary the Abbé Pons, he thus harangued its leaders and participants :—

'Courageous, dignified, and prudent men, who have laboriously accumulated goods and money whilst in reality being possessors of nothing, deprived of the natural liberties of man . . . my dear friends, form a league of deliverance among yourselves, and I promise to aid you to the utmost.'

At a popular assembly summoned somewhat later, all allegiance to the seigneur-abbé was repudiated, a veritable commune was formed, the elected magistrates being called consuls,[1] and in a day the serfs of Vézelay had declared themselves free men and citizens endowed with full municipal rights. As might be expected somewhat exaggerated confidence was raised by this bold initiative, a revolution in miniature.

No sooner had the commune of Vézelay been proclaimed than the principal citizens set about building fortified dwellings after the manner of those in Provençal and Italian towns. In 1226 Avignon

[1] A good deal of commercial intercourse existed between Vézelay and the maritime cities of the South, in which the heads of municipalities were thus called.

possessed no fewer than three hundred houses having walls and a tower.

The first to erect this symbol of defiance was one Simon, a rich money-changer, and next in importance to Hugues St. Pierre among the burghers. But, alas! this gleam of better days, this realisation of manly hopes proved transitory. The stout-hearted citizens of Vézelay were powerless against a tyrannic church and armed, autocratic power. The king interfered. Dastardly reprisals followed the breaking up of the commune and the suppression of civic rights. St. Pierre's house, mills, and other buildings were pillaged and pulled down, and an armed troop was despatched by the seigneur-abbé Pons to demolish Simon's tower, 'finding the money-changer stolid as an ancient Roman seated by his fireside with wife and children.' It was not until the 4th of August 1789 that Vézelay was freed from feudal servitude, its three years of municipal liberty fought for six centuries previously forming a memorable epoch in provincial history. Augustin Thierry, the historian of the Norman Conquest, gives the story in his interesting *Lettres sur l'Histoire de France*, an excellent travelling companion in these regions.

It is to Prosper Mérimée that France and the world owes the preservation of Vézelay.

CHAPTER XX

IN THE MORVAN

II

THE POET OF THE BEEVES AND MR. HAMERTON ON MONT BEUVRAY

Château Chinon may be reached by various post roads, but that from Autun is the most picturesque, a five hours' ascent through the very heart of the Morvan. From the *coupé* of the cumbersome old diligence we get an excellent view of the country, at every turn coming upon wider and more magnificent prospects; on either side brilliant green pastures watered by little rivers clear as crystal, lofty alders fringing their banks, and the beautiful white cattle of these regions pasturing peacefully here and there; beyond these gracious scenes rise wooded hills or masses of rock—the Morvan is called 'le pays de granit' (country of granite)—while, higher up, are gained tremendous panoramas of the same scenery with a background of violet hills. These hills are by local usage designated as mountains, and are

nearly of equal height with the Cumberland range; the highest peak in the Morvan being about that of Skiddaw. Far away the effect is of a mountainous country; and the famous Mont Beuvray, the Bibracte of Cæsar's *Commentaries*, which lies about half-way between Autun and Château Chinon, is a grand outline, to-day dark and frowning under a cold, grey sky. There are wild crags to climb in plenty about the Morvan, and romantic sites approaching to sublimity, but its chief beauty lies in a quiet, caressing grace of smiling pastoralness. Nothing in a quiet way can be more delightful than these rivers and rivulets, each bordered by the graceful alder; such alders I have never before seen in France, nor anywhere more beautiful pastures or winding lanes. The dominating characteristic of the scenery is, however, forest; the department of La Nièvre being one of the most wooded in France, and so abundant in firewood that the poor never need buy any. They can pick up enough and to spare.

The country is wonderfully solitary; excepting little children keeping geese and goats here and there we hardly meet a creature. Farther away on this September day are women getting in potatoes, but little else of farming work is going on. The greater part of the country is given up to pasturage,

and its wealth consists in cattle-rearing. We pass one or two straggling villages of old-world appearance, but there is one sign of progress and animation. We know without asking what mean the new or half-finished buildings here and there. Throughout every nook and corner of France schools were being built as fast as masons and bricklayers could carry on the work, and ere long there will not be a single commune throughout the length and breadth of France without its new school. Meantime driver and passengers alight while our steady horses climb one tremendous ascent after another; as we wind about them we catch sight of villages perched on airy crests, reminding us of that African Switzerland with its castellated hamlets, Kabylia; and after a five hours' climb, all accomplished by the same pair of horses, we at last come within sight of the ancient capital of the little Celtic Morvan. Once an important stronghold, it is now the quietest, obscurest of country towns, with nothing attractive to the stranger but its position. The whole Morvan lies at our feet; and although the weather is dull we have atmosphere enough to make out the chief features of the country as if we had it delineated before us on a map. Alternating with pasture and cornland, glen and dale, mountain stream, tossing river, and glistening cascade are the sterner and grander features of Morvan land-

scape, dark forests stretching over vast spaces, bare granite peaks, wild sweeps of moorland. Little villages and townlings are seen scattered about, while curling around the mountain-sides are splendid roads, mere threads in the distance. The whole scene is strangely primitive and pastoral. No railways, no chimneys of manufactories, no hideous steam-engines mar the naturalness and freshness of the Morvan. All is quiet, rustic, and unspoiled as yet by civilisation.

Château Chinon has a history. Built on the site of a Gallo-Roman camp, it was strongly fortified in the Middle Ages, and has seen several sieges. The warlike little capital, towering so royally over the country, now does a peaceful trade in hides and wine, and, excepting commercial travellers, seldom any one ever finds his way thither. An English tourist has an outlandish look in the eye of the inhabitants, who wonder what in the world can have brought him so far. These good Morvandais have a character of their own, and are said to be of pure Celtic type: you may still see a peasant with the short cloak or Gallic sagum thrown over his blue blouse; and their patois is unintelligible to strangers. Life is exceedingly laborious here, and little is produced by the soil except buckwheat and potatoes, the latter being grown for the fattening of pigs.

I think it must have been in the Morvan that Pierre Dupont wrote his famous song, 'Mes Bœufs.' Beautiful as are French oxen generally, in the Burgundian Highlands they are especially endearing. Sleek, creamy white, and gentle-eyed, they people sylvan scenes, or, one might fancy, with a sense of pride and fellowship, are seen crossing and recrossing the fallow.

As in my rendering of the equally famous 'Carcassonne' I have only endeavoured to give the spirit and meaning of its rival in popularity.

MY BEEVES

I

Two oxen have I in my shed,
  Milk-white with spots of ruddy hue.
'Tis by their toil the plough is sped,
  Thro' winter's slough and summer's dew.
'Tis thanks to them, with golden store
  My barns are piled from year to year,
In one week's time they gain me more
  Than what they first cost at the fair.

Dear is my good wife Jeanne, her death I should deplore,
But dearer are my beeves, their loss would grieve me more.

II

When grown up is our Coralie,
  And likely suitors come to woo,
No niggard will I prove, pardie!
  Gold shall she have and farmstock too.

Should any ask my beeves beside,
  Straightforward would the answer be,
My daughter quits me as a bride,
  The oxen will remain with me.

Dear is my good wife Jeanne, her death I should deplore,
But dearer are my beeves, their loss would grieve me more.

III

Aye! eye them well, a goodly sight,
  As snorting loud they stand abreast,
Upon their horns the birds alight,
  Where'er they stop to drink or rest.
Each year when Mardi Gras falls due,
  The Paris butchers come to buy;
But see my beeves decked out for view,
  Then sold for slaughter?—no, not I!

Dear is my good wife Jeanne, her death I should deplore,
But dearer are my beeves, their loss would grieve me more.

Good pedestrians should climb the magnificent foreland of Mont Beuvray, taking with them Mr. Hamerton's inspiring little book, *The Mount*. 'On the western side of the valley or basin of Autun,' wrote this exact yet enthusiastic devotee of Mont Beuvray, 'rises a massive hill 1800 feet above the plain and 2700 above the sea-level. It plays a great part in all effects of sunset, being remote enough to take fine blue or purple colour in certain conditions of the atmosphere.' And he adds: 'Mont Beuvray has not the grandeur of my old friend Ben Cruachan, and as for height its whole elevation is but the *difference*

between Mont Blanc and the Aiguille Verte, yet the impression that Ben Cruachan leaves is evidently what you will receive after climbing several other Highland mountains, and the exploration of glaciers on Mont Blanc has just the same kind of interest as the exploration of glaciers in other regions of the Alps. Every one who knows the Beuvray remembers it as one remembers some very original human beings, for there are not two Beuvrays either in France or elsewhere.'

This charming little book contains amongst other good things the account of a most curious psychological experience. I give it in the author's own words—

'The Antiquary' [the French host of his bivouac on the Mount] 'had heard me speak of Rossetti's poems, a copy of which I happened to have with me, and he begged me one evening to translate one of them. Now in ordinary circumstances I could not extemporise a French translation of an English poem that would be worth hearing, but something told me that night that a power of this kind was temporarily in my possession, so I opened the book and began. The effect on myself and everybody present was remarkable. I felt transported into the highest realm of poetry and became for that single hour a French poet endowed with Rossetti's genius, which

passed through me as electricity passes through a conductor. In this way I translated—if such spontaneous utterance is to be called translation—'The Blessed Damozel,' 'Sister Helen,' 'Stratton Water,' and both I and every one present were in a state of intense emotion the whole time—indeed, as for the audience, I never saw an audience so moved by poetry in my life, and the next day, when prosaic reason returned to us, we were all very much astonished at the enchanted evening we had spent together. When I look over these poems to-day, they seem to me utterly untranslatable, and I cannot conceive through what medium of equivalents the power of them reached my hearers; yet it did reach them.'

CHAPTER XXI

MILLEVOYE AND ABBEVILLE

Thrice happy that poet who has written one poem, no matter how short, that the world will not willingly let die!

Such was the lot of Abbeville's poet. Few readers of these pages have probably heard his name—a little lyric in itself—fewer still have read the score and odd lines without which no French anthology is complete.

Millevoye's elegies, narrative pieces, *Dizains et Huitains*, ballads, romances, epigrams, translations, and imitations from Greek writers, are clean forgotten; *La Chute des Feuilles* remains a classic. The grace, tenderness, and harmony of that little poem have assured its author's fame.

Sainte-Beuve, whose lynx-eyed vision discerned a grain of gold no matter how deeply embedded in ore, tells a curious story about Millevoye's one masterpiece. In 1837 he wrote (see his *Portraits Littéraires*, vol. i.): 'I was lately informed that the *Chute des Feuilles* translated into Russian had been re-translated

from that version into English by Sir John Bowring, and that the second rendering had been quoted in France and held up as a specimen of the dreamy, sombre northern muse. The poor poem had travelled far and wide, Millevoye's name being lost on the way!'

And the critic of critics adds: 'No matter how far his verses may travel, the name of Millevoye can never in reality be separated from them. Their author unexpectedly and immediately attained the good fortune which lately made a less happy aspirant exclaim to me, "Oh, could I only write a little story, a little poem, a work of art no matter how trifling, that should be for ever remembered! Could I only add the tiniest gold piece marked with my name, to the accumulated treasure of ages." Then cried the ambitious poet—"Only a second Gray's *Elegy*, a *Jeune Captive*, a *Chute des Feuilles*."'

Millevoye was born at Abbeville on the eve of the French Revolution, and seems to have led an easy, uneventful life, dividing his time between Paris and his native town and by turns exchanging dissipation and the world for literary seclusion *à la* Balzac. In 1813 he married, and three years later lost his life through one of those freaks to which he had ever been addicted. Entertaining some friends to dinner in his country house at Épagnette near Abbeville, a discussion arose as to a certain steeple just visible in

the distance. Some of the party affirmed that the spire belonged to the village of Pont-Remy, others that it was that of its neighbour called Long. Unable to resist a sudden impulse, he ordered his horse to be saddled, and quitting the company set out for the disputed steeple. He could not rest without settling the matter in dispute. But hardly was he on the high road than his animal, which he had not used for some time, reared and overthrew him, breaking a thigh-bone. He died in Paris in August 1816, being just thirty-four. 'His memory,' writes Sainte-Beuve, 'remains dear and interesting; the brilliant train following in his wake has not effaced Millevoye's name.'

Yet, or rather as might be looked for, making all French hearts kin is of the simplest, the touch of nature. I give Sir John Bowring's translation.

MILONOV

(*Specimens of Russian Poets*, vol. ii. pp. 223-226, 1823).

THE FALL OF THE LEAF

Th' autumnal winds had stripp'd the field
Of all its foliage, all its green;
The winter's harbinger had still'd
That soul of song which cheer'd the scene.

With visage pale, and tottering gait,
As one who hears his parting knell,
I saw a youth disconsolate;—
He came to breathe his last farewell.

'Thou grove! how dark thy gloom to me,
Thy glories riven by autumn's breath;
In every falling leaf I see
A threatening messenger of death.

'O Æsculapius! on my ear,
Thy melancholy warnings chime:
Fond youth! bethink thee, thou art here
A wanderer—for the last—last time.

'Thy spring will winter's gloom o'ershade
Ere yet the fields are white with snow:
Ere yet the latest flowerets fade,
Thou in thy grave wilt sleep below.

'I hear a hollow murmuring,
The cold wind rolling o'er the plain—
Alas! the brightest days of spring
How swift, how sorrowful, how vain.

'O wave, ye dancing boughs, O wave!
Perchance to-morrow's dawn may see
My mother weeping on my grave—
Then consecrate my memory.

'I see, with loose, dishevell'd hair,
Covering her snowy bosom, come
The angel of my childhood there,
To dew with tears my early tomb.

'Then in the autumn's silent eve,
With fluttering wing, and gentlest tread,
My spirit its calm bed shall leave,
And hover o'er the mourner's head.'

Then he was silent—faint and slow
His steps retreated;—he came no more:
The last leaf trembled on the bough—
And his last pang of grief was o'er.

Beneath the aged oaks he sleeps;—
The angel of his childhood there
No watch around his tombstone keeps;
But when the evening stars appear,

The woodman, to his cottage bound,
Close to that grave is wont to tread,
But his rude footsteps, echo'd round,
Break not the silence of the dead.

Abbeville has named a street after its poet, but, strange to say, has raised no monument to his memory. A simple statue or commemorative fountain might well replace the unsightly rococo monument defacing what would otherwise be a majestic scene. Over against the grand cathedral, thus designated, although Abbeville is no bishopric, rises a mass of white marble, the florid sculptures being surmounted by the figure of Admiral Courtet. Nothing could present a greater and more disconcerting contrast than this pile of tasteless, glaring white, and the grandiose edifice of sombre grey rising so stately above. Seldom in France does taste receive such a shock. How delightfully unprogressive are some regions of provincial France! Could Arthur Young revisit Abbeville after the interval of

a hundred and twenty years, he would find the principal hotel hardly changed. On asking for tea he would be served with what tastes like nothing so much as a decoction of hay, and accompanied by boiling milk and tablespoons. Rough, unkempt men now as then would make his bed and sweep his room, and the rest is of a piece, modernity slowly filtering in by drops.

Scores of times had I myself passed through this delightful little town, without halting even for a night, and that Anglo-Saxons seldom make it their headquarters banking-houses as well as inns betoken.

In Italy and Switzerland and also in many French towns, cheques on London banks are readily changed or received as payment. Let no tourist flatter himself that even if furnished with a passport he will be able to pass his cheques at Abbeville, and on changing our Bank of England notes at a money-changer's we were mulcted at the rate of a franc upon every five pounds.

These are however the merest bagatelles. French of the French, Abbeville is wholly delightful, a town rich in artistic resources and possessing a lovely environment. Far and wide falls on our ears the majestic boom of its cathedral bell, by comparison that of Amiens is but a tinkle; here the deep, rich,

resounding note striking the hours reminded me of the famous *bourdon* I had heard years before at Reims announcing President Faure's interment. And as I think of the tremendous notes and the exquisite pleasure of drinking them in, I recall Wordsworth's picture of the gentle dalesman—

> 'From whom in early childhood was withdrawn
> The precious gift of hearing. He grew up
> From year to year in loneliness of soul;
> And this deep mountain valley was to him
> Soundless with all its streams.
>
> The bird of dawn
> Did never rouse this cottager from sleep
> With startling summons; not for his delight
> The vernal cuckoo shouted, not for him
> Murmured the labouring bee. When stormy winds
> Were working the broad bosom of the lake
> Into a thousand thousand sparkling waves,
> Rocking the trees, or driving cloud on cloud
> Along the sharp edge of yon lofty crags,
> The agitated scene before his eyes
> Was silent as a picture.'

To have missed the boom of French cathedral bells is a deprivation indeed. After visiting and revisiting that magnificent grey pile without a blemish, the traveller has his choice of two museums, that of the municipality and that called after its too generous donor, Boucher de Perthes. I say 'its too generous donor,' because like many another collector this en-

richer of his native town forgot the admirable adage that the half is better than the whole. Here, palatially housed in charmingly laid-out grounds, are collections as multifarious and bewildering as those almost crazing the Paris municipality some years since and now placed in the Petit Palais. Just as the district museum has too much of everything, so the late collector of Abbeville spent a long life and an ample fortune in laying his hands upon everything not bought and sold for daily needs.

Of the acres upon acres of crowded space I only remember one speciality, namely a most rare and curious set of paintings on Cordovan leather, the only thing of the kind I have ever seen. The subjects represented are hunting scenes, alike drawing and colouring being crude but animated and highly pictorial. Porcelain, pottery, enamels, pictures, engravings and historic portraits, old furniture, inlaid cabinets, engraved gems, mediæval bindings, prehistoric implements. All these could only be hastily and, I fear, unprofitably glanced at. The town museum is still more magnificently housed, and contains amongst other treasures a good portrait of the lovely Madame Tallien and many beautiful engravings. Both museums are under feminine control and a pleasing memory did I bring away from the last-named.

Having broken my fast at seven o'clock, by eleven I felt in need of refreshment. On asking our cicerone, a bright little maiden, for a slice of bread, she smilingly brought me a plateful of delicious bread and butter and a little glass jar of strawberry jam. Both tasted better for the donor and for the fact of being degustated in the beautiful garden.

The environs of Abbeville are very pretty, and in a drive of an hour or two we obtain highly characteristic views of French scenery, richly shaded walks by canal and river, here and there bits of old-world architecture peeping through the trees or vistas of varied crops, brilliantly contrasted crimsons, purples, and greens, amid these being rustic groups at work, figures recalling Millet. The sudden sight of shipping comes as a surprise. One is apt to forget that, as M. Lenthéric tells us, Abbeville was once a port of considerable importance, indeed at a remote period almost to be called a seaboard town. The extensive quays show little animation at the present time, but fifty years ago they presented a bustling aspect, and double rows of vessels might be seen there at anchor.

Abbeville must nevertheless be a very prosperous and thrifty place. Not a sign of vagrancy, not a down-at-heel, out-at-elbow man, woman, or child do you meet in its clean, quiet streets and well-built

suburbs. The manufacture of carpets and other industries evidently more than compensate for maritime importance.

And if the whimsical unprogressiveness I have alluded to hath charms, nowadays when in every little general shop throughout Brittany you see the *New York Herald*, when at out-of-the-way stations German house-porters meet you in smart uniform, when from June till October not only Brittany but Normandy and Touraine are crowded with English and American trippers, how refreshing to find a corner of France as exclusively French as in the days of our youth!

Little discomforts are soon got over. The old-world hotel, the courtyard set round with oleanders and pomegranates in tubs, the geraniums adorning the balcony, the buxom landlady with napkin swung across her shoulder, serving her guests, one and all evidently old acquaintances—all these things take us back to the France we first knew and charm a stay at Millevoye's birthplace.

CHAPTER XXII

PROSPER MÉRIMÉE AND COMPIÈGNE

There are many reasons why the author of *Colomba* should interest English readers perhaps more than any other nineteenth-century French man of letters.

In the first place Prosper Mérimée loved England, and indeed adopted it as a second home. Again he is one of the few French writers who have introduced English types into fiction without travesty or caricature, one of the fewer still whose masterpiece has become a text-book for our boys and girls preparing for local examinations. In the zenith of his fame he frequently sojourned among us, honoured guest of foremost statesmen, and the devotion of English friends cheered his old age and declining health, and—surely English influences are discernible therein?—by a special codicil of his will, a Protestant pastor it was who officiated at his grave.

Prosper Mérimée, the only child of artistic and highly honourable parents, was born in Paris in 1803. Among the many fairy-gifts heaped upon him as he lay in his cradle, one had been withheld. Personal

beauty, even the ordinary measure of comeliness, were lacking. A survivor of the brilliant circle in which he shone has described him to me as a witty, ingratiating Silenus. We have only to glance at his portrait to convince ourselves that the comparison was not exaggerated. But what mattered personal appearance to a Prosper Mérimée? Doubtless in no single instance did such plainness affect either his happiness, worldly prospects, or peace of mind. From beginning to end he enjoyed good fortune.

His friends were legion, he travelled, lived at ease, loved, without 'loving unwisely or too well': if like many another genius he ofttimes plied the muckrake instead of accepting the golden crown, in other words, wilfully mistook his literary vocation, he nevertheless added two masterpieces to native literature. *Colomba* and the incomparable *Lettres à une Inconnue* are classics. Among the numerous volumes which occupied his so-called Tacitean pen throughout half a century, here and there one or two may be occasionally taken down from the student's bookshelf. But the two *chefs-d'œuvre* written in early life alone constitute his title-deeds to fame.

Just as twenty years separate *Comus* and *Paradise Lost*, so to compare the lesser with the greater, two decades divide the author of *Colomba* from his latest stories. But whilst after such an interval our 'mighty

orb of song' burst out with renewed and blinding splendour, when Mérimée the historian again reverted to romance he found that his wand was broken. Vainly did he try to recall the old charm; *Colomba* remains alone.

It would be tedious and unprofitable to follow this most versatile writer through the various stages of his literary career. Critic, dramatist, historian, archæologist *inter alia*, had he never written that perfect little story, nor ever penned those delightful letters to 'an unknown one,' we might almost be disposed to apply Johnson's famous eulogium on Goldsmith. But great as were his historic gifts, they were generally thrown away on unattractive subjects, and the very volume of his miscellaneous writings acts as a deterrent. I will therefore say something of his life and his connection with Compiègne.

It was in 1833 that he met the Comtesse de Montijo, mother of the future Empress, and of whom he wrote to his friend Stendhal—'In her I have found an excellent friend, but there has never been any question of any other feeling but friendship between us.' Her daughter Eugénie, present ex-Empress, was at that time a child of four, and it was on Mérimée's knees that she learned her letters. When seventeen years later he learned that his beautiful pupil, for so she had continued to be during

the interval, was to become his sovereign, his initiative was highly characteristic.

Straightway he offered her his life-long homage, promising that he would never under any circumstances ask her good offices on behalf of outsiders or seek to influence her opinion. And he kept his word.

Henceforth Mérimée's existence was changed, and in a certain sense to the end of his days[1] he remained a courtier. If we regret that the romancer now forsook fiction for archæology and the semi-intellectual amusement of the most frivolous court in Europe, we must on one account regard the change as fortunate. But for the *Lettres à une Inconnue* we should perhaps have no imperishable picture of society under the Third Empire.[2] Other records exist in plenty, but no *habitué* of Compiègne wielded Mérimée's pen.

The manners were of a piece with the morals of that period. The paternally affectionate knight-errant, the senator, the fastidious man of letters, was not disposed to exaggerate matters. I subjoin in a footnote a passage from the famous letters.[3] If

[1] I am, of course, much indebted here to M. Filon's admirable monograph. (*Hachette.*)

[2] See *Histoire du Second Empire*, par H. Magen; *Mémoires d'un bourgeois de Paris*, de Véron; *Mémoires secrets du* XIXme *siècle*, de Beaumont-Vassy.

[3] 'Nous avons ici Mlle. X——, qui est un beau brin de jeune fille, de cinq pieds quatre pouces. On paraissait craindre que la seconde partie d'une charade ne répondît pas au commencement. Cela ira bien,

Prosper Mérimée wasted some of his best years in supplying and superintending court comediettas and charades, as archæologist in the pay of the State, he accomplished measures of lasting and immense value. To his efforts is due the preservation of the abbey church of Vézelay, this instance being one of many in point. One of the last acts of Mérimée's life did more credit to his heart than his head.

When 'deep in ruin and in guilt' the Third Empire fell, an aged, suffering, worn-out man, with indeed the hand of death upon him, he dragged himself to Paris for the sake of seeing M. Thiers, trying to induce that old man eloquent to throw patriotism to the winds and risk civil war on behalf of the beautiful but misguided woman who had been

dit-elle, nous montrerons nos jambes dans le ballet et ils seront contents.' Elsewhere he writes: 'A la Cour on y était décolleté d'une manière outrageuse, par en haut et par en bas aussi: une demoiselle était en nymphe Dryade avec une robe qui aurait laissé toute la gorge à découvert si on n'y eût remédié par un maillot, ce qui semblait aussi vif que le décolletage de la maman, dont on pénétrait tout l'estomac d'un coup d'œil.'

That matters were worse still before the Emperor's marriage the following extract from another writer shows—

'When blind-man's buff was over, the ladies gathered round the Emperor, who, from a baize bag, at a signal, scattered on the floor all kinds of trinkets to be scrambled for: brooches, necklets, earrings, glittering with pearls and diamonds. The pleasure of the Imperial donor consisted in watching the indecorous scrambles of the ladies as they disputed the spoil on hands and knees.'

This pastime was called, 'La curée des dames.'

mainly instrumental in bringing about Sedan and its consequences. But Thiers was immovable, and the ex-Empress's advocate returned to Cannes to die. His death, occurring amid such a cataclysmal upheaval, created no noise, and, as has been already stated, to the astoundment, not to say scandal, of his Catholic friends, a minister of the Reformed faith performed the last religious rites.

Mérimée, his biographer tells us, was fond of all animals, but passionately so of cats. The sensitiveness, elegance, and disdain of cats attracted him. He could not see a cat without wanting to make it happy, and upon one occasion, for several days running, he trudged several miles in order to feed a poor puss inhumanly left behind after its owners' removal. For the matter of that, a love of cats is especially a French trait. I well remember when inspecting a historic old church near Dijon, with M. Paul Sabatier, how he immediately took up and caressed the sacristan's pet who had come purring after us.

Compiègne is a delightful little place to halt at when the thermometer does not mark ninety-nine Fahrenheit in the shade. This was my experience on a recent visit, but of course, is wholly exceptional.

The magnificent forest, so unlike those of Rambouillet, the fine old gardens, the château—an object-

lesson in upholstery and decoration of the First Empire—the quiet beauty of the Oise, the rustic pictures to be gained farther afield, render this aristocratic townling a most agreeable *villégiature.* For Compiègne is essentially aristocratic. The population is divided into three classes, each holding as completely aloof from each other as French and Germans in Alsace and Lorraine. *Noblesse,* here chiefly Imperialist, bourgeois, and the work-a-day world hold no kind of intercourse. Apart they remain, as do their châteaux, villas, and modest cottages. For it must never be forgotten that in democratic France there is much less fusion of classes than in aristocratic Albion.

But the general impression of Compiègne is one of urbanity, not too ostentatious wealth, whether inherited or *parvenu,* and universal well-being. Cheerfullest of the cheerful, of Compiègne it may also be said that there we can take our ease at our inn.

It is not Jeanne d'Arc or the Corsican Cæsar and his pinchbeck imitator that the English *flâneur* will have uppermost in his mind here. Instead he will think of the brilliant Frenchman whose heart in early life went out to England, who remained a half-Englishman to the end, who, moreover, unique among French writers, has given in his flawless little

romance true and dignified portraiture of English character, and who, when his long, prosperous, and honourable career was drawing to a close, found support and solace in English friendship and devotion.

THE END

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