GENIUS LOCI

VERNON LEE

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GENIUS LOCI

NOTES ON PLACES

By VERNON LEE

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MDCCCXCIX

TO
THE CYPRESSES OF VINCIGLIATA
&
THE OAKWOODS OF ABBEY LEIX
I DEDICATE THIS LITTLE BOOK

VERY GRATEFULLY

MAIANO, NEAR FLORENCE
NOVEMBER 1898

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INTRODUCTION

Saget, Steine, mir an; o sprecht, ihr hohen Paläste;
Strassen, redet ein Wort! Genius, regst du dich nicht?

Röm: Eleg: I.

INTRODUCTION

IT had rained heavily, that last day at Verona, and cleared up in the afternoon. I bought a bunch of lavender for remembrance; and had some coffee, before starting, in Piazza dei Signori. The stones were still wet, but the sky clear. Moist clouds were sailing above the towers; the town pigeons pecking on the pavement and flying into the palace crannies; swallows screaming; the sun, invisible behind roofs, was setting. 'Tis at this hour, to the sound of bells, that the genius of old cities seems to gather himself up and overcome one's heart.

To certain among us, undeniably, places, localities (I can find no reverent and tender enough expression for them in our practical, personal language) become objects of intense and most intimate feeling. Quite irrespective of their inhabitants, and virtually of their written history, they can touch us like living creatures; and one can have with them

friendship of the deepest and most satisfying sort.

To say this may seem nonsense if we think of friendship as what it largely is, a mere practical and in the main accidental relation, wherein exchange of ideas and good offices, fetching and carrying for one another, and toiling and moiling in company, plays the principal part. But there are other possibilities, surely, in friendship, its very best portion; and such may exist in our relations with places. Indeed, when I try to define the greatest good which human creatures can do us, good far transcending any practical help or intellectual guidance, it seems to express itself quite naturally in vague metaphors borrowed from those other friends who are not human beings: for it is the good of charming us, of raising our spirits, of subduing our feelings into serenity and happiness; of singing in our memory like melodies; and bringing out, even as melodies do when we hear or remember them, whatever small twitter of music there may be in our soul. These are the highest gifts of our human affections; and surely we receive them equally, nay, sometimes even better, from the impersonal reality

whom I call, for want of a better name, and from a lurking wish to bring some thanksgiving, the Genius Loci.

Genius Loci. A divinity, certainly, great or small as the case may be, and deserving of some silent worship. But, for mercy's sake, not a personification; not a man or woman with mural crown and attributes, and detestable definite history, like the dreadful ladies who sit round the Place de la Concorde. To think of a place or a country in human shape is, for all the practice of rhetoricians, not to think of it at all. No, no. The Genius Loci, like all worthy divinities, is of the substance of our heart and mind, a spiritual reality. And as for visible embodiment, why that is the place itself, or the country; and the features and speech are the lie of the land, pitch of the streets, sound of bells or of weirs; above all, perhaps, that strangely impressive combination, noted by Virgil, of "rivers washing round old city walls":

Fluminaque antiquos subterlabentia muros—

That line of Virgil, in a passage which, like so many of Dante's, shows the deep power of localities over the Latin mind, must naturally suggest the Adige; and bring me back to

those solitary days at Verona, when I found myself returning continually to watch the great reddish swirls of the river, with the big floating mills rocked on their surface. And this reminds me that, although what I call the Genius Loci can never be personified, we may yet feel him nearer and more potent, in some individual monument or feature of the landscape. He is immanent very often, and subduing our hearts most deeply, at a given turn of a road; or a path cut in terraces in a hillside, with view of great distant mountains; or, again, in a church like Classe, near Ravenna; most of all, perhaps, in the meeting-place of streams, or the mouth of a river, both of which draw our feet and thoughts time after time, we know not why or wherefore. The genius of places lurks there; or, more strictly, *he is it.*

I have compared the feelings we can have for places with the feelings awakened in us by certain of our friends—feelings of love and gratitude, but not of prosaic familiarity or wish for community of commonplace. But as there are, or at least may be, some human relationships which constitute the bulk of life, and yet remain its poetry, so there are one

or two places for every individual, where he may live habitually, yet never lose the sense of delight, wonder, and gratitude. Certain river districts, no doubt, in England; and, for the present writer, the Tuscan valleys and stony hillsides.

The type of all such places is, however, Rome. Its legendary power over our heart cannot be fathomed even by those of its most devoted lovers, who have known it only for its own sake, and on purpose to enjoy, as a holiday, its Genius Loci. It takes months and years of prosaic residence to really appreciate the extraordinary fashion in which the troubles and trivialities of life, so far from diminishing this imaginative power, are subdued into proper insignificance; lost in Rome's seriousness and serenity, and in that assurance which Rome tacitly gives, like some rare human beings, that life, though short, is worthy of being lived with earnestness and grace.

But it was not of such an exceptional, nay unique, case, that I was thinking when I entered on the subject of our friendship with places; not of the love unflagging and for ever, but rather of mere *amours de voyage* (in the most worthy sense) where, though the

remembrance may be long, the actual moment of meeting ("now we have met we are safe," as Whitman says) is necessarily very brief.

Trifling incidents, standing in these matters like a book read together or a flower given in more human relationships, sometimes have the effect of turning a locality from a geographical expression into something of one's very own; indeed, one charm of fishing or shooting, for meditative persons, is undoubtedly that it brings a more intimate connection between places and oneself. In the same manner I have a feeling as of something like a troth plighted, or a religious rite accomplished, binding the place and me together, from having drunk once from a spring which spirted across the remote, "back of beyond" road between Subiaco and Tivoli, one March day that the dust was rising in whirlpools. Nay, I feel sometimes as if I should like not to drink, but to pour a libation or hang up a garland in honour of the Genius Loci, indeed . . .

But enough. I suppose it was some silly sentiment of this kind which, when I had been three or four times to look at the floating mills of the Adige, made me buy

that bunch of lavender in the market-place of Verona, when the sun was setting, and the swallows whirring, and the bells beginning to ring the presence of the divinity of places.

AUGSBURG

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I HAVE not often been happier (though I am frequently happy in the same way, else life would not be worth living) than when seated that morning on one of the benches of the Graben, where the good city of Augsburg must originally have come to an end. A swift canal separates the backs of the gabled houses from their little flowery gardens, each with its little bridge; great lime-trees, making the air delicious, are set all along the former ramparts, and under one of these I sat a long time, rejoicing that I had found again the Germany which I loved. The Germany I am speaking of is not the one which colonises or makes cheap goods, or frightens the rest of the world in various ways; but the Germany which invented Christmas-trees, and Grimm's Fairy Tales, and Bach, and Mozart, and which seems to be vouched for in a good many works of classic literature: Jean Paul's

"Siebenkäs," for instance, and Goethe's memoirs, and those of Jung Stilling. Had it, perhaps, never existed outside their pages, this delightful country of quaintly compounded well-to-do prose and tender romance? My faith in it had a little revived when, coming along in the train, I had seen in a green field, O Germany! a stork. And now, at Augsburg, I found the object of my dreams.

I had spent all the morning strolling about the streets and bicycling round the ramparts. The town is built mainly on a mound, the walls gone; but a swift, jade-green arm of the Lech (the others traverse the town, turning mills) moats it round on three sides. Here and there among the splendid trees and green grass stick up towers and gateways, delightful things come straight out of a toy-box; and among them, of course, places where you drink beer, which the immense brewers' drays seem creeping round all day to replenish. These ramparts of Augsburg are the place for the Feiertag in *Faust*. But Faust of a less crabbed, less mediæval sort; Faust of fine, free, Vandyck manners, dressed in black, the

dignified burgess of this town of wide, clean-swept streets, with bronze mythologic fountains, and gabled houses, frescoed and stuccoed in imitation of Italy, with which we trade.

Sitting on the bench in the Graben, and rejoicing at having found the Germany which I love, I became aware of the fact that this particular Germany, of which so little is said to remain within the frontiers of the Empire, is safely spread far beyond: so far from not knowing it, I had known it intimately for years. For much of Switzerland is merely a part of this Germany. The dear little town of Thun, where I spent much of my childhood, is but a microscopic and squalid Augsburg, as Bâle is a little more modern one, and Lucerne, and particularly Fribourg, are more romantic ones. The fact had dawned upon me, oddly and absurdly enough, on meeting in these gabled Augsburg streets the indefinable smell of the arcades and terraces of Thun: a smell of vague groceries and stale beer and old woodwork, which I knew so well in Switzerland, and had found even in the Engadine. For the Engadine even, despite

its language, is Mediæval Germany; those Samaden houses, high-pitched roofs, and iron scroll-work and all, come from this side of the Alps; those churches also, with the bulb towers, covered with charming greenish tiling or metal. Dürer's woodcuts, Bach's Passion Music, the humour of Jean Paul, the romanticalness of Wilhelm Meister, the letters of the Mozart family, are all equally natural in all these places; in all places, I suspect, where you meet with that peculiar smell of vague groceries and beer and old wood which means South Germany.

Perhaps one of the things which unites all these places is that even if they are not Alpine, the Alps are never far off. Here at Augsburg, on its green flat tableland, you see, at the end of the streets, in the gaps of the towers, the distant newly-fallen snow. The immensely high-pitched roofs of houses and church seem to tell of tremendous storms rushing down from the mountains; and the little mill canals in the back streets, with their high timber mill-houses, career along white and curdled like glacier streams. Comfort and prosperity, rich meadows and fine trees, and houses to keep warm in;

but winds and snows and mountain peaks not merely to clear and brace the air, but to bring unaccountable poetry and romance also into the well-fed burgher soul.

With that goes a certain piety, which is essentially an old-world German way of taking their religion, not officially, or festively, or gregariously, like the English or Italian or French, but as a quiet individual matter. In the cathedral, at afternoon service, the seated congregation was too much engrossed to notice a stranger; and the peasant women, with turban-like kerchiefs and rows of silver buttons, wandered about undisturbed saying their prayers, rosaries in their hands, and the fingers extended against each other. In another church were remains of a festivity, little birch trees leaning against the pillars in wooden pails, and crowns and festoons of green hung about. A cross draught swept through the half-withered branches, filling the church with a scent of fir, of forests, and Christmas-trees. Forests and Christmas-trees, the two symbols of German sentiment and fancy, at bottom the same thing, representing almost wild romance and

altogether childlike fancy. It was quite right I should have been reminded of them at Augsburg; and before leaving this dear old city, and plunging once more into the other Germany—the one I do *not* love—let me mention a mysterious profession exercised by some of its inhabitants, male and female, particularly female. They proclaim it on boards which are almost as common as the fine gilt iron swords and grapes over inn doors, particularly in the narrow little town within town called the *Fuggerei*. The profession is that of Hochzeits-und-Leiche Bitterin. I prefer the feminine form; and wonder whether in one of the innumerable novels of Jean Paul there is not the grandmother or maiden aunt of some fine romantical creature of 1790 duly exercising at Augsburg the profession of Wedding-and-Funeral-Inviteress?

HOLY WEEK IN TUSCANY

HOLY WEEK IN TUSCANY

OF those two bitter days of Holy Week at Arezzo, the wind sweeping down from the snows of Falterona, there has remained with me, rather than recollections of Pier della Francesca's frescoes, an impression of very charming piety. Turning from those stony, dreary, bleak streets into the churches (a silent, muffled crowd streaming in and out) was like looking suddenly into a soul where one had noticed only a rather sordid body.

The churches were radiant, for it was the evening of the illumination of the Sepulchre. On one of the altars a blazing pyramid of tapers, silvery and pale golden, and on the floor of the church, in front of the altar steps, round a mysterious gilt cradle-like object, were set the little sepulchral gardens. Little gardens of Adonis, historically considered, handed over to Christianity by Paganism, and hence down the pions

centuries; lights and sepulchres and mustard-and-cress, and pots of sprouting wheat; but none the less pious, rather the contrary, for tracing their origin to long-forgotten forms of piety. I wonder did Paganism also admit thus reverently among its splendours the gifts of the poor in purse and the humble in spirit? Here at Arezzo, under the splendid professional illuminations of the altar, were rows of lights which shone brighter to the eyes of the spirit; long-stemmed brass kitchen *lucerne*, with hanging snuffers, and plebeian modern porcelain petroleum lamps, and night-lights on floats, with name and address on a label, lent for the occasion; a loan to the dear, Holy Entombed One, which meant groping up black stairs and going to bed by the spurt of a match. And similarly, between the lights, and alternating with fine bushes of green and luxuriant pots of carefully-grown mustard-and-cress, were set poor little pansies and geraniums in handleless earthenware braziers, and even in empty, emblazoned preserve-tins.

At the cathedral that morning, for the "Washing of the Feet," I had had a similar impression of delightful piety. I am fond of

pious pageants, and have seen many, ever since my childhood in the days of Pio Nono's gorgeous Pontifical Masses. But it is only in Tuscany, and particularly in the country and in impoverished places like Arezzo, that I have felt the solemn satisfactoriness of these Church festivals being alike for rich and poor, and no work of ostentation or object of luxury. The people whose feet were to be washed were really poor; a bench full of very old paupers, inmates of an almshouse; but very beautifully dressed in the white gown of some confraternity, and one with a mother-of-pearl badge. Several were blind, and most of them so infirm that they had to be helped to their place up the altar steps. They sat there quite impassive, their old feet on a delicate rug of faded carnation colour, waiting for the magnificent priests in copes of plum and greengage and gold, to bring them each a drink of yellow *vin santo*; and for the radiant bishop to divest himself of his peacock-like dalmatic and mitre and kneel down to wash their feet. While they thus waited the parish priests of Arezzo came one by one (and two venerable bearded monks among them), all in gold copes, and

solemnly blessed a great silver flagon of oil on the high altar, blowing the sign of the Cross over it as children blow a kiss; the oil which was to anoint the dying, rich and poor alike. Meanwhile the crowd of peasants and small towns-folk shuffled silently about the nave, down on their knees and up again, looking their fill at all the glory with familiar respect.

The culminating impression of this kind was not, however, at Arezzo, but in the hills near Florence, at the Gesù Morto procession of Good Friday. The sun had set before we got into the Ema valley, its twisting stream faintly marked by budding poplars, and the green corn and the fruit blossom had taken a spectral vividness as the light died away in the hollows. We were late. The procession had started from the little church on the hill, only the Madonna's halo, seen from behind, still visible, as it receded, a thin silver hoop against the blue of the evening. Our best plan was to meet it halfway on its circuit through the fields. We scrambled along the furrow, and waited among some poplars opposite the bridge which it must cross. It emerged from a hill and came towards us, distant points of

light moving through the valley, with a sound of muffled drums and funeral march; and, when that ceased, a strange, archaic hymn, sung by guttural men's voices. Then the first torches appeared on the bridge, casting red reflections on the water, and golden showers of sparks, as they were snuffed against the parapet. In this smoky light, horses glided over the bridge, with men in scarlet cloaks and Roman helmets touched with high lights, and after a little, between the rows of spectators lining the road (the farther a red line of vague illuminated faces, the nearer a mere dark line), came the uncertain swaying of the canopy over the invisible figure of the Dead Christ. The procession had now to pass through the village; so, determined to meet it full face, we scrambled back again over the fields to the church. One could see in the gaps of the village street pieces of house-fronts suddenly lit up by the passing tapers and torches; the great wheels of sparks also, every time a torch was snuffed against a wall. And in the intervals between the drums and the march, and the strange unison hymn, the voices of the people selling hazel-nuts and

biscuits in the square. The procession began to climb the hill towards where we stood by the church; the red cloaks of the Roman soldiers, the white smocks of a confraternity drew near in the smoky light; then the dark canopy, swaying and widening and narrowing as it swayed, till we could see, between rows of tapers, the livid, outstretched Figure, with helpless, hanging hands; while at the bottom of the hill, as the muffled drums stopped and the melancholy guttural hymn was resumed, the Madonna appeared on high, carried by black-veiled women—a black-veiled figure, with her silver halo against the sky. The procession entered — the torches, one after another, put out among showers of sparks, at the church door; the Roman soldiers and the band waiting outside, with a final clang of cymbals and rumbling of drums. Now that it was all dark again, one noticed, along the road which the procession had taken, the illuminated farms and cottages, Aladdin's palaces of yellow spots of light in the dark fields, under the sky hanging full of brightest stars. As we drove home, the moon arose, turning everything into a suffused pale blueness, cypresses, white houses. . . .

For how many thousands of years has the procession wound through that valley? Surely long before Christ was born; in the days of Pales and Vertumnus, who knows of what gentle gods of the fields, before the days of Rome or Etruria.

IN TOURAINE

IN TOURAINE

I

'TIS a pleasure with quite a special flavour in it to feel myself back in the Loire country. This mitigated and rational south, with none of the real south's subtle appeals and imperious fascinations, is singularly accessible to the everyday heart and everyday fancy of northern people: Touraine, of judicious suavity, with its delicate lines of sunny hill, neither too low nor too steep; its cool, poplared rivers and fine grey stone, finely carved in copings and turrets; and that general powdering over with charming pale colours which makes its sunsets silvery instead of golden.

This happy land grows nothing for the soul as such: neither forests of fir, nor tracts of heather, nor clumps of cypress; nothing that is not destined sooner or later for the table,

as corn, vines, melons, and beautiful wall fruit; but it has, perhaps for this reason, to the very highest extent, that especially French genius for turning into a kind of poetry the peaceful sensual needs of life.

The feeling of this stole over me yesterday when my friends of the Commanderie took me to see some people near Vouvray, in the mellow afternoon, along the big Loire, with yellow sands and yellowing *côteaux* embowering silvery slate roofs. We sat in an old-fashioned garden, terraced and flowery, above the great river; there were two charming courteous old men who did all the talking; and they gave us exquisite white wine, breadlike cake, and greengages all splitting with ripeness.

It is impossible to speak adequately of Touraine, to recall its charm at all adequately (indeed, it was a true instinct which caused me to describe that charm by the word "flavour") without mentioning things to eat and drink. I confess to not thinking much about my dinner in other countries, save as one of the inevitable bothers of life; but I think about it a great deal, and as a permeating essence of life, in Touraine. It has

a right to permeate, because, as I have said, this land has turned it into a poetry. The *déjeuner à la fourchette* at the inn of Saumur was as essential a part of that old town's charm as the discreet Balzac *portes-cochères*, overhung by creepers, and the lovely turreted house built by King René for his daughter. I remember, and shall remember, the beautiful long loaves of bread, like blond cactuses, off which one cut colossal hunks, as well as anything else, at Langeais. And as to the Château de St Avry, it sums up all the special poetic prose of the Loire-side in a draught—a draught out of a silver wine-taster's mug—of ten-year-old Vin de Chinon.

That name of St Avry is not the real one; I have very ingeniously manufactured it on purpose, because if other persons should have different impressions of the place I do not wish to hear about them. My own adventure there was like a page—but one of the frankly pleasant ones—out of "The Sentimental Journey"; though with the difference, which would have surprised Yorick, that, instead of riding genteelly in a chaise, I arrived at St Avry pushing a bicycle uphill.

It was in August, two years ago, an after-

noon of immense, beneficent southern heat, the dusty roads smelling of full-blown sun-scorched clematis. The towers and ruined walls of St Avry had attracted me, half-hidden among the orchards; also the fact that it was the scene of one of the dullest historical novels on record. The castle had been turned into a farm, but a farm all whose inmates appeared to be asleep, all save a yapping dog who did not prevent my entrance. At last, among the terraced vines and espaliered peach-trees appeared the farmer, visibly not in the best humour. A glance, however, showed me it was a case for rhetoric. I like the French for liking rhetoric; and when I am in France can become most genuinely rhetorical myself. In less than a minute the farmer was mollified; in less than two he was amiable and communicative; in less than five we were standing among the apples and pears drying on mats, the sulphur bellows and demijohns of the circular tower chamber of the castle, vying with another in eloquence and distinction of soul. It is surely to a nation's credit that it should not merely care for such qualities itself, but elicit them, by mere contact, from others; and as to me, I

always feel a genuine pride, on such occasions, in answering the Gallic compliments, with the information that I also was born in France; foreseeing the inevitable remark (which at that moment is perfectly correct) that then, of course, I must be French at heart.

The round tower is all that remains intact of the castle of St Avry, which Richelieu, as stated in the historical novel I have referred to, destroyed after the famous conspiracy. The farmer showed me the magnificent view over the poplared Loire, with Tours gleaming in the distance; and pointed out, in various directions, the towers of Luynes and Langeais. I found him full of odd stories of the ruin of the châteaux of Touraine, so few of which (in fact, I think only one) have remained in the original families. His father, a large miller, used to buy old tapestries to cover his mules and to make tents for the extra hands at the vintage; old tapestries from out of royal châteaux! And as to the tapestries of Chambord, that was a complicated story, worthy of Balzac. In this way we came to talk of agriculture and wine-making; and, seeing that I knew a little about the latter subject (sufficiently at least not to inquire, like a

friend of mine, "at what stage the water is added"), he insisted on taking me to the cellar. On our way thither, among the herbs and autumn flowers, appeared a stately woman in a sun-bonnet, with a basket on her arm, to whom he did me the honour to introduce me. "My wife," he said, "is one of the most industrious of women"—in deprecation of her silent bow and of the single finger she held out, because she had been picking potatoes. "And one of those of most distinguished exterior," I answered, when she was gone; for I wished him to appreciate that good fortune also. But his nimble wits were off the subject long ago, and he was already in an eloquent tirade on the decay of France, the disadvantage of sub-division of property, the growth of l'Egoïsme Bourgeois, and the depopulation of the country; all of which I scarcely know whether he regretted more as a patriot or enjoyed more keenly as an *Esprit Eclairé*. "Nous disparaîtrons, madame; nous disparaîtrons sûrement," he concluded, with sombre satisfaction; nor could any amount of deprecatory "Oh, mais, monsieur," on my part, make him forego the lucidity of his reasoning or the eloquence of

his conclusion. "But," I said, "reflect, monsieur, on the fact that Europe cannot do without French people; that if you all disappeared the rest of the nations would die of *ennui*."

"Ah, pour cela, madame, je ne garantirais pas le contraire," he admitted, radiant, and turned the key in the cellar door. The cellar was in the root, so to speak, of one of the burned-down towers, surrounded by trees and wreathing clematis, a place, on that August day, of coolest, most fragrant darkness. He fetched a flat silver mug like a spoon, enough to hold about two mouthfuls, and made me taste his own vintage, expounding it the while. His enthusiasm grew with his words, until, finally, he must needs make me taste the finest wine in the country—the real Vin de Chinon, ten years old.

"And now you may say," remarked the farmer of St Avry, "that you have tasted the finest wine in all Touraine, if not in all France. And most welcome thereto," he added, when I thanked him warmly and prepared to depart, "for the visit of an intelligence as cultivated and as enlightened as yours breaks the monotony and raises the tone of my rustic existence."

Feeling that he ought to have the final and prettiest speech, and that, indeed, I could not vie with him in courtesy and grace of expression, I thanked him *à l'anglaise*, took my bicycle, and made for the direction of the glassy river Cher, beyond which lies, among the sunniest vineyards and melon gardens, the hospitable Commanderie.

That was my adventure of St Avry nearly two years ago. This kind of impression of the Loire country remains unchanged; and a few days ago it was personified to me while I was rambling among these high-lying vineyards and pumpkin fields and flowery, low, grey-roofed cottages, with their warm, dusty scent of clematis, dry kedlock, and drying clover. I met an old man, rather like a tidy satyr, with a tub of sulphate of copper and a vine-syringe; his neat cotton clothes and his own old person all dyed an exquisite bluish verdigris green; a bronze *genius loci* of prosperous old-world Touraine.

IN TOURAINE

IN TOURAINE

II

TOURAINE and the Loire country have another side also, as well as that charming prosaic sweetness which I spoke of. The Past of this delicate prosperous district is, even for France, melancholy and gruesome. Except that ruined hall of the Castle of Chinon, scarcely distinguishable from the yellowish cliffs of the vineyards, where Joan of Arc first met the Dauphin, I can think of no historic castle or house whose memories are worth preserving. Yet I am not sure about that terrible fortress of Loches, whose towers, shaped like a ship's prow, rise out of the loveliest garden of pink hollyhocks, and apricots, and vines, the delicate wild sweet-william growing in tufts among the ashlar. For it is good, perhaps, occasionally to dispel one's illusions about

the Past, to shake its dust from off one's feet, and breathe gratefully, in this decent, humdrum Present. Perhaps I have been wrong ever since my childhood in refusing to be shown historical prisons at Venice, Ferrara, Mont St Michel, and elsewhere; and, on the whole, I am glad I stumbled almost by accident into those of Loches.

Horrible prisons, grottoes almost, with viewless loophole windows; the poor villainous Duke of Milan's scrawled over with childish patterns and huge inscriptions, which wring one's heart: "Celui qui n'est pas content" and so forth. Worse still, the prisons of certain rebellious bishops, with the holes they scooped in the yellow stone for altar and chemins de la croix; the tragic holes scooped by climbing to the windows without view; and, on the boarded landing outside, some wooden gratings, said to be human cages of La Balue pattern. One leaves the castle and wanders through the dear old town, with its flowers and fruit trees, simply choking with horror and indignation at the stupid heartlessness of those days. For prisons like these are not elaborate devices for torture, but casual results of mere dense

indifference. People were thrust into such places, allowed to get paralysed and rot for no more active reason than a half-crushed toad or grasshopper is thrown aside by a child; living creatures treated as we treat vegetable refuse; no realisation, one would think, that there was in them power of suffering. Quite recently, at Loches, in opening up a passage beneath the castle, a tattered, half-decayed book had been unearthed in one of the dry moats: a volume, in Italian, of Paul Jovius's "Lives of the Great Captains." It moved me deeply: this message, telling of deepest misery, perhaps, from the country of my adoption; from that brilliant, evil, yet sensitive and human Italian Renaissance; this only consolation, perhaps, of one of the captives in those dungeons, cruelly taken away and thrown into the moat under his eyes.

We are better, certainly, whatever we may say, I thought; and breathed more freely as the train swished along the sedgy Indre. And, what is more, we are distinctly more imaginative than our ancestors. They could invent more lovely forms than we, and in some ways, angels and saints, sweeter

fancies. But they had, apparently, no imagination for other folks' anguish; and it took the highest poetic effort of the greatest of mediæval poets to realise the fate of Ugolino with as much vividness as Laurence Sterne, in our modern eighteenth century, put into realising the fate of a caged starling.

There have been too many horrors for perfect imaginative comfort by the Loire side, and on the banks of its lovely tributaries the Indre, Vienne, and Cher. The lovely fantastic architecture of the earlier châteaux, nay, of the little farms and gentilhommières, their carving restrained and dainty, like the first few blossoms on wintry blackthorn,—all this is out of keeping with the evil stories insisted on by guides and concierges. The monstrous hybrid pile of Blois (I am speaking, of course, of the Renaissance portion), with those frightful rows and rows of hideous gurgoyles over the classic colonnades, with that warren of small, low, stuffy rooms, where Catherine dei Medici's poison cupboards and the murder of the Guise are eternally insisted on,—this dreadful palace of Blois seems the only fit monument of that bad Valois France,

whose wickedness was never purged away, like that of Italy, by open air and sunshine, by the great gales of human energy and the beneficent heat of genius. It contains, among other gruesome objects, a picture of the Wedding of Joyeuse: a ball in a narrow, low room, where starched and farthingaled ladies are dancing with Henri III.'s minions, in villainous gibbosities of hose and sleeve, and Mephistopheles beards and hats: a fit Sabbath for this carved stone Brocken. Even the charming castle of Amboise, so fantastic above its wide Loire reach, is full of memories which the breezes from the river poplars and the scent of sun-dried lime flowers and honeyed clematis are not sufficient to sweeten. They show one in this Castle of Amboise, in a vault below that charming chapel of St Hubert, which projects, like a thorny Gothic gurgoyle, from the great castle wall, a statue they call *La Noyée*, which might represent the evil genius of the Loire. The river cast it up in a flood, and the country people think that it represents a drowned woman. But it is, in reality, only one of those terrible nude effigies such as Goujon, Pilon, and the other great French sculptors

of the time had the heartlessness and superstitious irreverence to make. Would it were cast back into the Loire, utterly ground out of shape by the stones in flood time; and that, with it, so much of the Past of this beautiful country, alas! of all France, were washed and rolled away into nothingness.

Let us, at all events, substitute for this Past which should never have been, a Past—the only right sort—made by our fancy out of the pleasant hints and far-fetched suggestions of brick and mortar. Not brick and mortar only, but largely also of lovely feathery grey slate, covering the high-pitched roofs; and of twisted, silvery lead on roof spine and pinnacle. For I am speaking now of Azay-le-Rideau, which, thank Heaven, has no history, or none to speak of. The Sunday we went there it stood shut up and apparently deserted. A circus was being unpacked under the big limes by the gates; and little red-legged soldiers were fishing intently in the lilied waters of the moat. "If one could get inside," remarked my friend the poetess, "one would have afternoon tea brought in by invisible hands; and the beast would rush out and insist on marrying one, if one were to

pick a geranium." For Azay-le-Rideau is indeed a fairy castle, or at least a castle for Celia and Rosalind before (or after) they took to the Forest of Arden.

A feudal castle, moated and towered, but with windows and doors covered with delicate Florentine carving, and set about with microscopic statuettes, Gothic in motive, but like those on the pedestal of Cellini's Perseus. Its shape is of triumphant irregularity, obtuse and acute angles and sudden bends everywhere, and towers where none should be, reflected more irregularly still, but scarcely more silvery and more unreal, in the green waters of the moat; roofs slanting Heaven knows whither. Those roofs are, properly, the culmination of everything: they put the last touch, or rather the last story, to all that is already charmingly improbable. The slate, to begin with, has turned to what looks like a thatch of beetles' shells and wings, only of every variety of deadened silver; and out of it, and (of course, because we were there that Sunday) into a sky of most delicate, loose, silvery greyness, rise the leaden ornaments of the weathercocks and finials: tiny figures, or seemingly tiny, of knights holding lances,

of twisting salamanders' heads issuing out of flower bells, all growing out of dainty little fern fronds, or wreathed about with petals of flame. One would imagine that the elves of moonbeam and cloud had got caught, some night, and spiked for ever on the pointed turrets of the castle.

As we had tea (from hands, alas! not invisible) at the inn of the Grand Monarque, the poetess and I discussed the probability of Azay-le-Rideau having been, at one period of its history, the property of the old fairy who kept princes and princesses in her aviary, from whose hands it naturally passed into those of the shepherd Joringel and his Jorinde. What a much more appropriate and reputable past that than of the castles of, say, Loches and Amboise!

SIENA AND SIMON MARTINI

SIENA AND SIMON MARTINI

THERE is, of course, a special middle age within the Middle Ages; a character within the general mediævalism, which died, so to speak, without issue, leaving nothing for later times to elaborate or improve: Middle Ages, which never could turn into anything modern. I was struck with this very forcibly on returning for the dozenth time this early spring to Siena. This beautiful city, so isolated between its high-lying oak woods and its half-barren hillocks of white volcanic clay, got its civilisation, like the rain-water of its tanks, at home; and, what is more characteristic still, got itself built, with no traces of early times, and few or no subsequent additions, at one particular moment, just before the great plague of the fourteenth century. Built of finest rose-coloured brick, with dainty corbels and

pillared ogive windows, battlements, and towers, like flowers, rising everywhere sheer out of the valley. Gay, simple, yet a little conventional, chivalrous still and romantic—a place where, as Lorenzetti painted it in his great fresco, girls might dance in the streets, singing *en ronde*, like those whom Dante, in his boyhood, met on All Hallows Day. Dante in his boyhood; for it seems to me that however much the "Divine Comedy" issues out of Antiquity and opens up modern days and the never-ending future, the "Vita Nuova" belongs essentially to those Middle Ages which, so to speak, died young and without issue—the Middle Ages of this rose-coloured, battlemented and towered Siena. The Greeks and Romans have not much hand in either; and as to the "Vita Nuova," it is, after all, only the perfect flower of mediæval love-poetry, quixotic and mystical, of the straw-splitting Guinicellis and Cavalcantis, of the Rudels and Vidals and Ventadours of Provence, charming, conventional, yet as mad as hops. These Middle Ages, represented by Siena (for Pisa tells of older, half Byzantine days, while Florence and Venice live passionately

on through the Renaissance)—these Middle Ages of pink walls and striped towers (just delightfully toy-boxish, as the early painters, up to Angelico, loved them) have left us, also other most perfect things—the legendaries of St Francis, the more romantic stories of the "Decameron," and, most exquisite of all, "Aucassin et Nicolette."

One chief characteristic of this especially mediæval art is, that it knows no time of year save spring. And perhaps this is the reason why Siena struck me as so completely mediæval this time; I had never before been there in April. The brilliancy of young crops, and tenderness of first leaves, the fruit blossom everywhere on the slopes among the city walls and towers, brought home to me the dainty and ornate sweetness of this particular kind of mediævalism, and made me realise (for the first time fully) the particular delightfulness of local Sienese painting. For I confess to taking pleasure in the very circumstance which has made recent critics so merciless to the school of Siena, the circumstance that it never led to anything. It was certainly mean-spirited of the Sienese to persist in

being purely mediæval right through the Renaissance, and to go on manufacturing lovely Madonnas and fervent saints, all dressed in marvellous embroidered garments like those seen in vision by Mechthild of Magdeburg, on marvellous gilt and stencilled grounds; without stirring a finger to hasten the coming of Michelangelo, or Leonardo, or Tintoretto, or Velasquez, or the Royal Academicians and Hors Concours of to-day. Of course, they ought to have moiled away at anatomy, perspective, movement, and the modern spirit in general, like the Florentines thirty-nine miles off across the oak woods and vineyards of the Chianti. But they just would or could not; and, as I said, I am foolishly pleased they did not. There is room for many things in art, as in life; besides progress, which sometimes implies certain uncouth and angular qualities, and nearly always a battering-ram hard-headedness, there is repose: the charm of the backwater. These poor Sienese, who continued, like their native city, mediæval when the Middle Ages were thoroughly played out, have left us, after all, pictures of exquisite loveliness of colour, in embroidered

mantle and fretted nimbus, and loveliness and sweetness of Madonna and angel faces, and gentle, wistful anchorites; a walled-in garden of mediæval childishness and grace, of flowers which have a fragrance for the mind as well as a fascination for the eye. Let us be grateful to them for keeping it untouched under the rose-coloured walls of this solitary hill city: the world is wide enough to allow other men to play in other fashions at the divine play of art; cannot our sympathies be wide enough also?

Yes; I am not ashamed to say it; I love not only Sano di Pietro, and Andrea di Vanni, and Giovanni di Paolo, and Girolamo di Benvenuto (their vague patronymics are their worst qualities) in their big works, which remind me of parts of Wolfram's "Parsifal," and of "Aucassin et Nicolette," and the "Fioretti di San Francesco," but even in their very sillinesses and childishnesses, which descend to the level of nursery rhymes: marvellous blue and grey rockeries, with little hermits in striped blankets playing at housekeeping, with toy wells and wooden animals; and gardens of paradise where angels, and lovely ladies, and

young petticoated and turbaned dandies, and fine magnificoes, and all the poor little massacred Innocents, are walking about among lilies twenty feet high, and violets big enough to hold rabbits, and wild strawberries as big as a man's head. It all suits Siena, and I am glad that Siena suits it.

And now I come to Simon Martini; for, if Siena had not been just what it was, the concentration of everything mediæval, and incapable of getting beyond mediævalism, Siena could never have produced this painter; and if not Siena, then no other place on earth. Simon Martini's work, alas! is more scattered and more damaged than that, almost, of any of the great men; his very individuality having been hopelessly merged for centuries into an apocryphal Simone Memmi, from whom, by picking away a mediocre pupil, Lippo Memmi, the Morellian school of criticism has only recently extricated him. His "Annunciation" is one of the rarest and loveliest pictures in the Uffizi; the gallery and the seminary of Pisa contain a number of small panels of saints, delicate and brilliant beyond words; and on

the wall of the Council Chamber at Siena there is a ruined fresco of a Virgin enthroned among saints and angels, which seems to come and go with the light and with one's power of appreciation, an uncertain and tantalising vision of celestial magnificence. But this extraordinary master's greatest remaining works are at Assisi; and, as a matter not of historical interest, but of absolute artistic and poetic pleasure, they ought, with the memory of St Francis and the reality of those ravines of crumbling rosy rock, to be that which we go to Assisi for. The strange Lower Church of St Francis broods, indeed, with its flattened arches, over some of the most memorable works of all art: the frescoes, for instance, of Giotto and Giotto's greatest pupils and immediate predecessors, the whole prophecy and promise of Renaissance art. But there is in the works of Simon Martini—in the chapel painted with the story of St Martin, and the dado of saints round the high altar—neither prophecy nor promise, but only perfect fulfilment. It is, however we describe it, a mixture of lingering antique refinements, loveliness grown abstract in

subtle and hieratic Constantinople, of splendours of the Far East transmitted through Persian enamel and Syrian damascening, dead elements or disparate ones, vivified, fused by the flame of the chivalrous West. Is this art an expression of individual genius, or a fortunate historic fluke? Be this as it may, it seems to me that this art of Simon Martini — art indifferent alike to anatomy, perspective, and solidity; utterly careless of dramatic expression—is of the sort one can only call final, *consummate*. It corresponds, I think, though come later in the day, to the aristocratic, artificial poetry, the subtle love-metaphysics, of the earlier Middle Ages, of troubadours, neo-platonising mystics and pre-Dantesque sonneteers. It is indeed, perhaps, the only quite perfect flower of real mediævalism, before the revival of Apostolic Christianity and the return of Pagan good sense: mediævalism chivalrous, mystical, of Courts of Love and Grail castles; and uncertain, even like the heroes of the French and German epics, whether it is quite European or quite Oriental. A perfect thing, and yet, contradictory though it sounds, marked with the immaturity of

spring, which has just issued out of winter, but which will never turn into summer.

It fits into that mediæval town of Siena as I saw it last: rising with rose-coloured battlements and towers above the still sapless vines, the first green wheat, the cherry-blossom of the arid little hills.

AMONG THE MARBLE MOUNTAINS

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THIS is the heart of the marble mountains, of those peaks and crags which bound the grass plains of Lucca and Pisa like a group of giants reclining on their elbow at table, and which, from the bridges of Florence and the heights above Siena, loom fitfully, a spectral wreath, so faint and immaterial as to be distinguished from storm-clouds only by their sharp and flame-like forms. I am seated under sparse yellowing chestnuts on the hill-side, above the quarry forge, smelling of dry balm and of myrrh. High up, so high that if I turn round I look across a series of descending ridges, not into the valleys, but down on to the sea. And close opposite, in front, abrupt, like the house facing one in a street, rises the great Monte Altissimo, serrated like a broken crystal, pure marble rock from crags to base. Bare marble rock, of faintest

lilac where the weather has toned it, striped here and there with fainter cinnamon brown, on which my climbing friend and the two quarrymen look like pins' heads.

They are climbing up to the highest quarry, the famous Tacca Bianca, the White Scar. You see it from miles and miles away, like a great patch of snow with jagged outline against the sky: the stratum of whitest, most crystalline marble; the innermost core of the mountain, not excavated like the other quarries by the hand of man, but laid bare by the unceasing labour of sun and frost and storm. Up there, above and below the narrow ledges of road, iron wedges are driven into the rock, planks laid across them or slung by ropes, and the mountain-side cut away into blocks by the quarrymen hanging on its face. The great White Scar faces me if I raise my eyes, white, hazy, in the blinding sunlight. And from the whole of the great mountain, mingled with the clear voice of the well-head below, comes a faint clink of chisel; and every now and then the rattle of an avalanche of white quarry refuse, bounding from ledge to ledge.

The quarries of Monte Altissimo are only

the highest and most wonderful among innumerable others of the twin valleys of Seravezza. They hang everywhere on the mountain sides, above the autumnal woods of chestnut and beech scrub, mere distant snow-like patches when high up; and lower down great scoopings, wonderful crumblings of white marble shale, and loose deep scarlet earth, runs of flaky débris, like overblown chrysanthemums among the thick groves of olive. Two torrents, glacier white with marble dust, twist through the double valley, and make their way, a shallow quiet stream, among the yellowing poplars to the sands. And as they go they turn the sawmills, which grind quartz sand into the marble blocks and cut them into slabs.

The roads are deep in marble dust, furrowed into enormous ruts by the strings of bullocks, sometimes as many as four yoke, carting the great slabs and rough-hewn blocks. Arrived at their destination, sawmill or storehouse, the drivers dismount from between the huge horns of the oxen, and prise the block round on steel levers, chanting as they move. The block slowly turns on itself, balances on the brink of the cart, sways, topples, leaps down

into the slush of pounded marble, heaves on its point, and steadies itself on its side.

The quite primitive labour of this carting and quarrying of marble is very interesting and beautiful. No two blocks seem ever to be alike, and they act as if alive, moving as the result not of brute force, but of extraordinarily distributed skilful touch. Hence the men also seem alive, dealing with things which have a will. This struck me particularly in one of the lowest quarries of the valley, which we called the Red Quarry. It is a circular amphitheatre, cut in crimson, *carmine* earth, a few big olives and white walls of marble débris overhanging it, its entrance guarded by huge rough-hewn blocks. These blocks are covered on one side by a network of what looks like orange crystal or lichen, wherever the water has trickled; the other side is toned and stained a golden rosy flesh colour, compared with which Giorgione's nudes and the Subiaco Niobide are pale and cold. Above the quarry chasm of brilliant red earth another quarry, half hidden among the olives; and below immense, almost vertical, runs of white and pinkish refuse, perpetually slipping and clattering into the river pools of the

valley. It was down one of these rubbish slides that the men were preparing to launch a colossal block of marble. The block was being lifted on to rollers made of undressed chestnut wood, in a sort of little square at the quarry brink, a few huts of leafage, and some strange primitive hand-saws, like those on obelisks, all round. About a dozen men, some really beautiful, and all with beautiful movements, were raising the block with their crowbars, singing like sailors as they pushed it along and eased it. At last it rushed along, like a boat on rollers, to the edge of the platform, all the men shouting as they ran. Then the pieces of wood, all but one, were picked away, and the block was raised on its point with the levers. The foreman, having got it eased all round, gave the signal, and it was launched. It ran down the steep shoot, some hundred feet long, gathering as it went the dust of the marble shale, till it was enveloped in what seemed a cloud of smoke, which continued along its course. The hillside *shook*; the block had arrived at the bottom. "How it smoked!" remarked the foreman.

These quarries of the valleys of the Serra and the Vezza do not appear to have been

known in Antiquity, which quarried marble, ever since the time of Augustus, in the other valleys, nearer the Gulf of Spezia, of Luni, or, as we now call them, of Carrara. Michelangelo seems to have been the first to recognise that the Florentines possessed in their own territory (what he calls the mountains of Pietrasanta) marble as fine as any they could obtain from the Marquises of Lunigiana; and as a result he was, as we all know, employed for years to make roads and open quarries for Clement VII. He is said to have quarried even on Monte Altissimo: perhaps—who knows?—to have reached the wonderful Tacca Bianca at its summit. The quarry smith at the foot of the Altissimo, with whom I had a long talk under the chestnut trees, informed me that before our hospitable French friends, the Henraux, had attacked the wonderful White Scar in 1870, attempts to quarry it had been made, many, many years ago, by "a certain Buonarroti"; but that might be merely an old woman's tale, a *favola*. Be this as it may, and despite the complaints in his letters, I cannot help feeling that the great marble peaks and the narrow gorges were a fitter place for Michel-

angelo than the ante-rooms of the Vatican. And I would willingly forget all those studio vexations and intrigues, and think of his real life as up here, watching the storms smoking along the crags, or the ships sailing in the sunset in the sea, far, far away across the mountain ridges—a fit successor of Dante's mysterious soothsayer Aruns, who

Had once a cave, among the snowy marbles,
For his abode, whence, when he scanned the stars there,
And scanned the sea, his view was not impeded.

Certainly, the marble mountains, seen from the hills of Florence or from their own seaboard, seem to have haunted Michelangelo's imagination. And if he never put real mountains into his backgrounds, he caught, nevertheless, their attitude and, so to speak, their gesture: the weary repose of some, the uneasy leaning on elbow and shoulder of others, the twisting of neck and straining of back and loins, the whole primeval tragedy of effort, and triumph, and failure of the marble giants; and copied them into his prophets, and sibyls, and tragic allegoric men and women.

And this—who knows?—is perhaps the greatest service which the marble mountains, which this great Monte Altissimo, rising in front of me with pinnacles like a weather-worn cathedral, have done to art. For, alas! the marble—the finest, purest, almost Grecian marble—has come too late in the day. Niccolo and Giovanni Pisano, Donatello and Jacopo della Quercia, when they could not get some fragment of an antique column, had only veined, spotty, easily-decaying marble to work in; and Michelangelo himself does not seem to have employed the finest marble of these valleys, certainly never the marble of the Tacca Bianca. That was reserved for the benefit of contemporary salons and academies. And, meanwhile, there are the men hanging from the crags by ropes, cutting the blocks from the perpendicular face of the mountain. . . . As regards myself, I feel, as I hear the faint click of invisible chisels from across the ravine, and the rattle of marble débris, and occasional distant rumble of blasting, that the works of modern sculpture, all this dead and dreary art, will have in future a living and wonderful side for me; in the fact of

the marble in which they are carved, and the remembrance of the scent of sun-dried herbs, of the sound of the well-head at the base of the Altissimo, and the sight of the eagle circling above its spectral white crags.

THE EPITAPHS AT DETWANG

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I ALWAYS like to see cemeteries; but neither from sentimentality nor, I trust, a ghoulish spirit. Death, which has terrors only because it means parting, does not attract my thoughts or harrow them more than the other dignified, though disagreeable processes of life. My fondness for churchyards, therefore, does not depend upon their inmates being dead, but rather on their having been alive. For history is not a satisfactory introduction to bygone generations. It deals exclusively with persons of distinction; it leaves one with the same sort of feeling as the fashionable intelligence in certain papers; edified, no doubt, but just a little bit out in the cold. It is so very unlikely that I should have dined with Dante, or been the intimate friend of Queen Elizabeth. In churchyards, on the contrary, one

makes acquaintance with persons, if I may apply to them such an expression, of one's own standing; indeed, the epitaphs may be considered as cards which they were obliging enough to leave upon Posterity.

Apart from this, it is only in a place of burial that one learns certain details of the life of a locality; the cloth-weavers of the Marches of Wales have revealed, for instance, their prosperity and refinement in their beautifully carved and lettered tombstones. Also, one gets to know the magnates and minor notables by this means: at Cirencester, for instance, the family of Pope's Lord Bathurst; and at a similar little town, Tonnerre, in Burgundy (with a whole century of French politics and Court intrigues), the Le Telliers, Marquis de Louvois, and their clients the Beaumonts, of whom the mysterious M. or Mdlle. d'Eon. And, as regards Italy, one is often repaid for spelling out sepulchral inscriptions by the mere romantic splendour of the names; there is a whole unwritten poem of Browning's in the mere fact of the death, in fifteen hundred and seventy something, of a high-born nun of Ravenna called Elettra Malagola.

But, so far as I can see, the nicest churchyards are in Germany. By far the most impressive thing at Nuremberg, for instance, is certainly the Johannis-Friedhof. The unspeakable modern town has surrounded it, and Krafft's Calvary and Cross stations stick up in the midst of incipient boulevards; but this only adds to its solemn strangeness. For it is one of the strangest places anywhere, just by virtue of its excluding nobody or no time: people dead only a couple of years are buried alongside of Dürer or Pirkheimer or Hans Sachs; and there are big wreaths, barely withered, of fir and yew on the graves of Nuremberg burghers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There are nursemaids and babies about among the incredibly thick-set graves, and barefooted street boys amusing themselves (as befits a nation of learned men) spelling out epitaphs. Everybody seems to have wished to be buried there; and no wonder, it is such a pleasant neighbourly place: all the great patrician families of the Middle Ages, Tuchers, Löffelholzes, Fuhrers and Eisenbeiss (with their *armoirie parlante* of a wild man biting a knife), who have left only enormous lists of their defunct members

in the principal churches. And, thanks to them, the cemetery is a perfect museum of one of the most fascinating branches of German art — namely, heraldic decoration. If one has the patience to sweep and gouge away (with a twig from off a neighbouring rose, or the butt-end of a fallen lime-leaf) the dry and powdered needles of the defunct garlands of centuries (lifting up the present aromatic fir wreath the while), one lays bare bronze inscriptions and coats of arms which explain for what purpose Dürer must have drawn those magnificent shields and helmets, with wings and elephants' trunks, and superb tattered foliations, which are among his grandest work.

One reason, methinks, of the greater profitableness of German places of burial is that their occupants do not waste time on immortality and so forth, nor bother much about impressing posterity with their virtues; but make straight for the essentials of their biography and position. One sees this admirably in the Emerams Kirche at Ratisbon, which belongs mainly to the time when that city was the seat of the Imperial Diet. Here we learn all the various ways in which,

during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was possible to come into the world: noble born, high noble born, or merely well-born, etc.; for, as that Bavarian naturalist remarked, der Mensch, humankind, begins with the baron. Let there be no misapprehension about that! One feels that if Death, that jocose skeleton of Dürer and the Little Masters, is allowed a jester's liberties towards individuals, it is on condition of his keeping his claws off class distinctions. This is peculiarly the case with the ladies buried at Sanct Emerams, the feminine terminations expanding names and titles, and making them stand of themselves like so many farthingales or hoops with *paniers*. "Was a lady *such* a lady!" one exclaims with the poet, on becoming aware of the existence (or the death) of the high-well-born Frau Maria Barbara Magdalena, feminine Bayer (Bayerin), born feminine Sutor (Sutorin), His - Roman - Imperial - Majesty's - and - also high - princely - Schwarzenberg and Liechtenstein - Legation - Secretary's - wife. Had ever ghost more whalebone and buckram about her? This inspires awe; but another feminine epitaph at the Emerams-Kirche inspires terror.

It is alongside of a small votive picture, showing Ratisbon on fire, and a saint in Roman lappets and sandals (probably St Emeram) descending to put it out with a little wooden one-handled milking-pail. In this place reposes the illustrious Domina Maria Susana Baronessa (*sic*) de Leoprechting nata de Saverzapf. "Hic jacet et Tacet," says the epitaph, with laconic suggestiveness — "Hic jacet et Tacet." One dare not think what Domina de Saverzapf must have been when she still stood on her feet and had the use of her tongue.

One feels the better bred for reading the epitaphs at Ratisbon; but one's heart and mind are improved, in good eighteenth-century phrase, by perusal of the epitaphs at Detwang. If you should happen to know where Detwang is, the better certainly for you. But I choose not to reveal it to the ignorant, for it lies in a very happy province of my memory. Suffice it, therefore, that Detwang is a village in a narrow, green valley, between steep slopes of firwood and salad-like Alpine pasture, with a brown stream under the alders, and the walls and towers of a certain city on the horizon. There

are a few vineyards also in sunny places, and you can drink an excellent white wine under the flowering lime of a big roadside inn. Besides this building, Detwang possesses three large neat houses with old tile roofs pulled like Napoleon's hat across their brows, and surrounded by currant-bushes and carefully tended stocks, and lilies and roses. There is, of course, a mill; also a great castellated farm; and a small Gothic church with a fine Lombard belfry, and inside it three handsome old carved and gilded altars of the Veit Stoss school, and oleographic portraits of Dr Luther and Dr Melanethon.

I had not heard of Detwang's existence very long, and it did not occur to me that it possessed a great man. A great man, moreover, who proves in his person the truth of heredity. For, like Sebastian Bach, the illustrious musician of Detwang came of a distinguished family. The bronze plates, with coat of arms and helmet, had got rather weather-worn in the outer church wall, besides being inscribed in a peculiarly crabbed Gothic type; but my eye most luckily caught a phrase in italics: "Musicus Instrumentalis." Off went my memory, and speedily returned

with associations innumerable, which settled down like rooks in Detwang churchyard. The thought, for instance, of Quantz (enchanting name!), Frederick the Great's Kunst-Pfeifer, or art-piper, with the recollections of Bach and Matteson and Handel's various singers, which he dictated to Dr Burney); also of Hoffmann's young composer, Kunst-Musikus also, who (somewhere about 1780) was seduced away from eight-part fugues and *unending canons* by the two bewitching sisters, Lauretta and Teresina, who led him such a life from inn to inn, in this very region, by the way, of Middle Franconia.

Musicus Instrumentalis! I began spelling out the epitaph of Herr Georg Heinrich Zahn, how he was born in 1735, and "wandered through the wide world," in the service of the Counts of Wickerat and Hombusch; becoming, meanwhile, aware of another Zahn reposing hard by, a more illustrious brother, who had made music for his High-Countly (Hoch gräflich) Excellency the English Ambassador Didlay, at Copenhagen; then, of a just slightly less illustrious father; and finally, of the culmination of the Zahn family, the greatest brother of all, of Herr

Georg Philipp Zahn himself. "By dint of diligence and virtue," said his epitaph, "he was able to swing himself ever higher and higher through the high houses of counts and princes ("er schwang sich durch Fleiss und Tugend durch gräfliche and fürstliche hohe Häuser immer höher"), until, in 1762, the Russian Emperor Peter III. had him called into his presence, where he performed to everyone's satisfaction. And when, only two days later, the throne of Russia was ascended by Catherine II. [the epitaph delicately forbears allusion to poor Emperor Peter and what happened to him after listening to Herr Zahn] he was taken into her service as Kammer-Musikus. His instrument was the Bassoon (die Fagotte) with which unpretending piece of wood (unscheinbares Stück Holz) he was able to move sensitive hearts to tears and joyfulness. After eighteen years (continues the epitaph) of meritorious service, he received the grace of kissing the hand of the greatest Empress in the world on bidding her farewell. And in 1780 he returned to the home of his fathers, intending to consume the wealth he had amassed in the company of his brothers

at Hohlbach. But he was killed, in 1784, by a stray shot while on a shooting-party in the Upper Forest."

The principal ladies of Detwang, who had issued out the old houses with the cocked-hat roofs and stock and lily gardens, and (guided by the bicycle I had left in the porch) had followed me with their children to the churchyard, obligingly helping me to spell out the epitaphs—the ladies of Detwang expressed unfeigned concern at Herr Georg Philipp Zahn's untimely and violent end. But I was able to dispel their sorrowful feelings, by pointing out that no mortal is allowed complete good fortune in everything; and that Herr Georg Philipp Zahn had undoubtedly enjoyed the highest privileges and honours which could reward the diligence and virtue even of a Kunst-Musikus whose instrument was the Bassoon.

FRIBOURG

FRIBOURG

THE evening we arrived at Fribourg—Fribourg in Switzerland, not Freiburg in Baden — the Jeunesse des Ecoles, as it described itself, proceeded in solemn procession to the Bishop's little palace, and implored Monseigneur, who graciously appeared at a window, to encourage its studies with "quelques douces paroles." The impression it all left, though not what modern France has taught us to call French, was certainly *French-speaking*. It suggested, in connection with the peaceful, inviting *pâtisseries* and *charcuteries* haunted by suave ecclesiastics and discreet black-dressed ladies, and with the neatly-kept doorways of genteel Louis XIV. houses—a sort of ideal France, saved from Encyclopédie and Revolution, and made prosperous and pious by the benevolent wisdom of, say, the author of "Télémaque." I mention the author of

"Télémaque," because in that neat flowery *haute ville* of Fribourg, by far the most conspicuous object that struck my sight was the sign over a bookbinder's shop, a colossal red volume colossally inscribed "Œuvres de Fénelon, Tome II."

That is the impression of the upper town of Fribourg and its charming humdrum Frenchness. But when you descend from the knife-blade ridge on which it is built—cathedral with eighteenth-century organ, big lime tree (with bench round it) grown from the victor's twig at Morat, Police Locale with windows choked with superb carnations and geraniums, episcopal palace, and delectable *charcuteries* and *pâtisseries*, and all—when you descend any of the paved lanes leading to the river, you plunge as by enchantment into another country and century, and into the world of the utterly unlikely.

For the lower town is Germany, Germany of the Middle Ages, of the times at least of Luther, and Hans Sachs, and Götz von Berlichingen "with the iron hand"—Germany of rather doubtful authenticity, and which one half-suspects of being a sort of picturesque *folly*, made up in prevision of the Romantic school

of La Motte Fouque and Hauff and Uhland by Dürer and the little Masters. As regards Fribourg, there cannot be two opinions; and I happen to know where the idea of it was got from. Did you ever behold, O Reader nursed by German nurses, a certain block-tin toy, made by poetic Teuton tinmen, in the shape of a fortified castle, strongly walled and girt with towers, enamelled forests of fir and concentric tiers of moat, in which, by pouring water into the central donjon, you could swim ducks with a magnet? This toy, which stood to me for the Middle Ages, is what visibly inspired the creation of Fribourg. Let me explain. The upper town, as I have said, is stacked upon a narrow tongue of hill attached to the world of reality only at the railway station and detached from it on three other sides. This sounds quite simple, because you, of course, imagine that the ridge projects, like hundreds of other ridges, above a valley or a plain, or some other arrangement of Nature. But this is exactly what does not happen at Fribourg. For Albrecht Dürer, or whoever made plans for Providence while creating this toy city, procured the ridge

in question, bristling with church steeples and high-pitched roofs, out of a tableland by the extraordinary device of cutting a deep, deep trough, with sides straight like a chalk-pit's, and just wide enough to hold the foaming brown river Saane, which was then poured in and flowed all round by way of moat. Beyond this more or less circular trough the tableland was allowed to continue, rolling away to distant forests and Alps; and on the edge of its quarry-steep sides were laid on patches of brilliant green grass, and fringes of firs and birches hanging romantically (according to the Dürer pattern) from the rock; and the whole was set with extinguisher chapels and pepper-pot towers at proper intervals. The place was finished, and the only thing wanted before furnishing the interior of the toy with houses and fountains and a few knights and ladies and saints and skeletons to match it, was to run some pieces of city wall here and there up the steep banks, and to throw two or three bridges over the trough into which the river had been poured; one of the bridges, by-the-by, of blackened wood with a penthouse roof, an enchanting toy in itself.

This is what must have happened at the creation of Fribourg, long before, or (who knows?) long after Duke Berchthold of Thuringia in the year one thousand and—— (my Baedeker has got hopelessly mislaid).

This much is certain, that the town has, to a very recent date, been not French but German speaking. Indeed, the poor folk of this less genteel lower town still talk some sort of Alemmanisch. The inscriptions on fountains and houses are in German, and I noticed a votive picture recording the explosion of a "Powder Town" on the 9th of "Brachmonat," 1737. There still remains, in a most picturesque steep street above the tanneries, a splendid gilt iron peacock over an inn, Zum Pfau; beyond the river, in fine mixed language, an "auberge du Schild"—and, best of all, a "café du Tirlibaum." *Tirlibaum!* wonderful delightful Swiss mystery, a maypole, no doubt, from which sausages and gingerbread were shot with cross-bows by some of the purfled giants whose ghosts still haunt the place. But besides ghosts, as I have said, the German Fribourg is not without its legitimate population. They hang about,

these Teuton burghers, everywhere in the steep streets and cock-eyed squares, attending, of course, to their various business. But their fixed residence, where the prosaic-minded traveller must seek them, is usually on the column which surmounts the octagon sculptured trough and the four thin spirts of the fountains. There is a charming kirtled burgher's wife thus perched on the Fountain of the Good Samaritan; a fine Wild Man of the Woods, with clotty hair and furry coat, called foolishly St John, down by the river side; a Teutonic Hercules—or, if you prefer, Weaver Bottom in "Ercles' vein"; there are one or two good dragons and monsters, a bagpipe-player (I think), and several knights in armour.

Most of these are swashbuckler and boastful. But one is the real trusty man-at-arms who guards the town. He is usually stationed (when your fancy does not meet him going out to meet the Dragon, or Death and Sin, in some lonely valley beyond the town) in the remotest part of German Fribourg. A little irregular square, called after the old Auberge de l'Ange, immediately beyond the covered bridge; a rough un-

paved square with only that ancient hostelry, and a couple of old, old wooden houses with cocked-hat roofs well pulled over them; 'tis barely within the city walls, which clamber about, with extinguisher towers, among the green grass, the hanging firs and birches of the steep slopes above; and just to the back is a postern gate, marked by a tiny spired chapel, and a narrow wild valley squeezed between the wooded hills. There on the rough ground, with wooden troughs and washtubs surrounding him, stands the knight on his Corinthian column. Perhaps he was once of stone; but four centuries and much Alpine storm have turned his plate armour and his undercoat of mail, and his helmet with lifted vizor, to rusty, reddish iron; and on his hip swings an iron sword, and from his lance waves an iron pennon, with the undoubted clatter of metal. He has a long beard, and a level, firm, trusty gaze. Who he is I have no notion.

In this German Fribourg, as in all the towns which the south German engravers have shown us (big masters and little), Death, the skeleton with the hour-glass, is

always lurking, and has to be considered as one of the principal inhabitants; grim, tactlessly humorous, no doubt, as this German Death always is, but not therefore unkind. I judge this by the little freehold, his "acre," which he selected in this town of Fribourg. It is down on the level of the river, which swirls under the bridges brown from the tanneries; the many-atticed, gabled, black-and-white escutcheoned Halle or Rathhaus (now abandoned) on one side; and a sort of grass-grown cattle-market, where the children swing head downwards on the wooden posts all round. The ridge, with cathedral and church towers, the piled-up town, rises yon side the river; and close above, on this side, the sheer yellow wall of rock, patched with tenderest green grass, and fringed with firs and birches, with a little chapel on the top. Here is the little old cemetery, stifled in green, the swallows who haunt the river trough whirring perpetually about it; and a fine, pathetic, and solemn crucified Christ, protecting it all from under a wood-tiled penthouse.

We wandered up the steep banks of that extraordinary toy-like ravine, and out on the

rolling plateau above the walls and towers of the town. It was rainy, without view, and the great avenues of limes and distant clumps of firs looked the limit of all things. But it seemed all right that this dear old improbable town, and those romantic rocks and ravines in which it is absurd to believe, should be separated by mists from the rest of the world, with which they certainly can have nothing to do.

FRANCE AGAIN

FRANCE AGAIN

I AM happy to perceive that, as years go on, and I find myself trundling about more and more over a very limited and very familiar portion of the earth's surface, there is in myself no diminution—nay, if anything, an increase in a peculiar feeling of the difference between places, and of the wonderfulness of change from one place or country to another. Not to possess such a feeling, or to have got it atrophied, is surely a very great waste. There must be, methinks, to every decent human being something just a little bit sad, and something just a trifle humiliating, in every kind of uprooting; and, pleasure even apart, one's dignity seems to require that if one is to wander through places, and to be whisked across countries towards which one has no duty of any kind, one should at least be conscious of their existence, and have with them some silent,

quite impersonal intercourse of fancy and feeling. It is, after all, something to be suddenly in the presence of so great a personality as a whole country—nay, merely a whole province or district, with its whole past, whether registered in the forms of its churches and houses, or in the shape of its hills and its valleys.

France again! I have that feeling whenever I get off the boat, even after an absence of only a couple of months. I believe I should have it after an absence of a couple of days. I can so well understand the emotion of our great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers, getting off the packet at Calais or Boulogne, and climbing into their lumbering carriage or more modest chaise. For that vehicle could take them straight, without interruption, to the South; those whiter roads led across the Alps, skirted the southern seas, came to an end (if at all!) only just opposite Africa. France! the Continent! Feelings impossible to analyse, although one may in part explain them; for these names, like the word "wet," or "sweet," or "cold," represent specific impressions quite irreducible to any others.

I never felt it quite so strongly as that early July morning at Dieppe. For it was dawn; France seemed freshly created that very minute; and moreover, for the next hour at least, I was going to have France entirely to myself, to the exclusion even of its own, at present, slumbering inhabitants. It was quite light, but still a little grey. The streets were utterly empty, and all the shutters closed; only a few furtive cats and scavengering curs in possession. One could almost hear, as well as feel, the sea breeze, and the harbour even was deserted. The sabots of the solitary wakeful woman of Dieppe had a pursuing clatter as if at midnight. But even she disappeared; and I was alone with France.

How utterly different from England! The Grande Rue actually beautiful by mere irregularity of houses, high pitch of roofs, and variety of windows, attics, and doors; moreover, everything of that rather dirty white and black (call it, rather, for we love it, a vague pearl colour) which is so very French; which harmonises so adorably with the delicate grey or slaty blue of the skies; which corresponds as colour, to the slight-

ness of hill and valley lines. White and black, grey, slate colour; but picked out, of course, with brilliant red and orange of carnations or nasturtiums here and there on the balconies, as the grey dress and grey blond hair of a Velasquez Infanta are relieved by minute scarlet bows, by scarlet little mouth. Down side-streets, glimpses of towers and flying buttresses of the cathedral, of porches and steep dormered roofs, and pavilions on some other church. But I was attracted towards the end of the town, towards the still half-castellated hill with pepper-pot towers and remnants of delicate fifteenth-century tracery of windows; making one think of stories out of Froissart, of Mdme. Darmesteter's splendid *Philippe Le Cat*. There was a sound of bugles from the castle; the little red-legged *piou-pioux* were beginning to stir.

I found my way to the cathedral, noting as I went a shop, still closed of course, *Au grand St Pierre ès Liens*; how far from England does this dedication of shops not take us; this adoration of words, even if it be only *Gagnepetit*, and the various *Renommées*, the Fame of *Pain d'epices*, Fame of *Layettes*, or

Fame of *Chaussures*! How different also from England this little cathedral (built, no doubt, by English kings), in the fact that it should not have been dingily rusted, but most delicately etched, black and grey, by the weather; in the fact also that the gurgoyles, the long projecting dogs, wolves, monks, should none of them be modern! This lovely little flamboyant cathedral, all flowerlike with star and stem, its carved stone further carved and engraved by the centuries, seen thus under the pale, new morning sky, is a thing I shall not easily forget.

Meanwhile, few and far between, people were beginning to open shops; bakers and women fetching water to cross the streets; booths also to be unfolded. The harbour with smokeless, sleeping steamers was empty, and the green water, the chalk cliff opposite, still veiled in a slumberous mist. I got into an empty train, and pursued my journey into still sleeping France.

A few hours later I was rolling along the white high roads of the Vexin, bordered not with hedges, but with great tufts of overblown thyme and mint and wreaths of dusty

travellers' joy; great slopes of oats and ripe corn, and little bushy woods under the crude blue sky and rolling slate-coloured clouds. No roadside cottages, no lanes, no carts, no visible inhabitants; only at intervals along those splendid roads, sign-posts with pleasant, old-fashioned names:—Théribus, Villotreau, Jouy-sous-Thelle, Beaumont-les-Nonains. A desolate, almost ugly country; but oh! the delight of the high, flat, wind-swept levels, of that light air sweeping across the whole continent, thoroughly dried and sweetened by the sun.

The following day I was taken by my friend to see several villages lying round her shapely Louis XVI. house of Montchevreuil-en-Vexin. Villages with mean little flowerless cottages; but churches with great slate barn-like roofs and shuttered belfries, and, for the most part, sixteenth-century glass defying all the geraniums, phloxes, and purest cobalt larkspurs of English gardens.

And the next day after that we went to see the neighbouring Beauvais. I confess its cathedral has remained in my memory a mere unreal vision. Seen from afar it looks—this huge unfinished choir—as if it were built upon

a rising ground high in the middle of the town, a sort of Ark on Ararat, as Mr Ruskin has shown it in his "Light in the West." And it gives one a shock of surprise to find that it rises out of the level of the streets, and that the supposed hill is merely the building itself, with its projecting chapels, and the supposed church the building's own clerestory. A storm burst out as soon as we were inside; and in the brooding darkness one was conscious only of indomitable spring of arch, of unreachable height, and huge expanses of dark glass, spotted with ruby and jacinth. The rain raged like a torrent; lightning beamed through the glass, across the arches; a great peal of thunder seemed to become only a gigantic organ chord among the echoes of this unearthly place. I went away with the storm still raging, and feeling that it was certainly a judgment from heaven which had forbidden the finishing of Beauvais cathedral.

The day after that I was in Paris. How delicate and brilliant! The trees on the boulevards still bright green, and flags hanging everywhere; an open-air, almost Southern, life lasting deep into the bright summer night:

the mere ordinary illumination of the Place de la Concorde looking at a distance like an Aladdin's palace; the river, with its red and green lights reflected among the big wharf trees, and the swishing lit-up steamers, giving the impression of a colossal Fête de Nuit.

But even more charming was Paris in the early morning, a morning touched with autumn crispness, as I drove along the quays, alas! to the Gare de Lyon. Such a fresh renovated morning; the air still hazy, and all objects, rippling poplars and shining slate roofs, hazy, vague after the night's refreshment. Water was being sprinkled all along the pavements; the long book boxes on the quays were beginning to be opened; a breeze, to cool the coming day, was rising along the river trough. But, alas, alas! that day was to be spent by me in hurrying away again out of France.

THE LION OF ST MARK'S AND ADMIRAL MOROSINI

THE LION OF ST MARK'S AND ADMIRAL MOROSINI

I HAD been suffering, this time at Venice, from a sense of spot-and-dottiness (as of a bric-à-brac shop for tourists), and from the absence of what one asks of every historical city, a *genius loci*. One wants, if one really cares for places (and the *passion for places* is a very special and strong one), to feel what the life of that particular place has been striving after through the uneasy centuries—what has been, to put it pedantically, the formula of its evolutions. Only that one wants this formula, not intelligible and dull in words, but brought home to one in a hundred details, and, if possible, symbolised, but not too plainly, in some man, or monument, or momentary aspect of nature.

At Venice this is the office, naturally, of the Lion of St Mark's. There he is on the

top of his column, active, truculent, with stiffened tail and white, terrific eyes. But what does he mean? And what has he to do with this lazy over-lovely city? To understand him would be to understand Venice, and *vice versâ*. Under the layers of beautiful and meaningless and detestable things which the centuries have heaped up at the foot of his pillar, one would find, at length, the real Venice—the Venice of the Lion.

I seemed far enough from that, in good sooth, wandering about among the furniture and old clothes of the municipal museum. The revelation of the real Venice came to me, none the less, while looking at a white-leather habit *à la française* of Charles II. cut, the leather coat of Francesco Morosini. I had never felt more baffled and bored by the desultory picturesqueness of Venice than that morning; and nothing more important than this coat could have caught my attention. After the coat, the coat's former wearer: a bristling warrior of the seventeenth century, by no means unlike the Commander in "Don Giovanni," displayed in various pictures and busts, each with its laudatory inscription, among the stacks of weapons which he had

captured from the Turks, damascened muskets and cannon, quivers full of arrows, standards with horsehair tails, crescent-shaped pikes and splendid scimitars, the whole deadly equipment of the true legendary East.

The series of very bad landscapes, battle and sea pieces, in which some contemporary artist had chronicled the great deeds of Francesco Morosini was simply endless. Aimlessly, as one does when bored, I began to spell through the highly abbreviated inscriptions which explain them. Here was a grand sea fight, with plenty of smoke, and Morosini's beautiful rose-coloured galleys (like the model in the same room, with its gallant prow lamp and gold banner with the lion) combing the sea with their rows and rows of red oars. They are beating the Turks in 1660 in the waters of Samos and Melos, and capturing "ten million biscuits, after setting fire to almost as many more which they could not carry off." Samos! Melos! The names caught my fancy and worked their way in it: Melos, with the Venus buried in its walls, and Samos, where Polycrates had been king in the days of Darius. I found myself suddenly taking a kind of interest in Morosini,

last of Venetian captains, who had hitherto been associated in my mind only with the explosion of a powder magazine in the Parthenon; Francesco Morosini, *Maurocenius* more gloriously in Latin, on whom the Senate of dying Venice had bestowed the splendid name of Peloponnesiacus. I really think that what had tickled my attention was the rather absurd contrast, suggestive of Duke Theseus or Goethe's "Classic Walpurgis night," between this seventeenth-century wigged and whiskered Venetian, capturing biscuits and cannon from the Turks, and the places, with names to conjure with, where it all happened. For see, here he is, in 1684, beating the Turks by the river Aspro, "formerly called *Achelous*"; and in 1686 beating the Seraskier "in the Morea in the country about *Argos*"; and here capturing twenty-six pieces of artillery and various munition, after taking *Corinth.* Very odd doings these places and the ghosts in them were allowed to witness, for after giving holy baptism to "several hundreds" (*più centinara*; I like the loose calculation of this wholesale conversion) of Turkish captives, he takes "about eight hundred" other ones (presumably without giving them baptism),

and "puts them under the oar," in other words, to row in chains in those victorious rose-coloured galleys of the Republic. And farther on he captures more Turks "by thousands, so that they had to be sold for one or two reals apiece and no more."

I went on repeating that sentence to myself; and the fact that it had all happened in the year of Our Lord 1687, near *Argos in the Morea*; and gradually it all worked itself out in my mind, and by the time I got out of the penny steamer at St Mark's I seemed to understand. For Francesco Morosini, Maurocenius Peloponnesiacus of the leather coat, this (doubtless) over-glorified old sea-rover, capturing biscuit and selling his Turkish prisoners at *one or two reals a head and no more* (himself with his Mongol whiskers and slave-rowed galleys, not so very unlike the Seraskier he defeated), had explained Venice—had, in my eyes, personified for the last time, in that wretched seventeenth century, the *genius loci* of the dying city.

He had made me understand that Venice *is* Venice, is different from any of her mediæval rivals, only inasmuch as, like her Lion on the column, she looks East. Her activity is in the old Hellenic world, the ruins of the Empire

of Alexander, and with that world she is the last link. After that the East, the East of classic antiquity, has no more say. The last word of the antique civilisations of the Mediterranean was said in the building of St Mark's. For St Mark's is Venetian in a different sense from the Ducal Palace: the latter might have been built equally at Verona, and could *not* have been built till the fourteenth century, while St Mark's might have been built any time between 500 and 1200; but, out of the East, only at Venice. Nay, we can imagine the Venice which built it as a Venice speaking, when it tried to be polished, in Greek, as the later Venice spoke, or tried to speak, in Italian.

When all this came to an end—and it came to an end with Morosini Peloponnesiacus and his leather coat—Venice ceased to fulfil in any way her own geographical position; she ceased to look East. The lagoon, the great harbour for what had been the Alexandrian world, had no longer a meaning; the Far East, India, China, etc., were not attainable that way, and the Near East, of Hellas, and Carthage, and Constantinople, was dead and done with. From that moment, and despite all lingering

independence and Doges and Councils, Venice was merely a dead city from past times—a provincial town, differing in beauty and oddity only from those of the mainland; ready for Austrians; preparing for Cook and his tourists.

Thinking these things, I went out on the Piazzetta, where the autumn tides were washing over the steps, and the green lagoon showing its teeth at the foot of the Lion of St Mark's. I understood him now—truculent, with stiffened tail and white dreadful eyes, preparing to spring into the East. And it was thanks to Morosini and his white-leather coat that I understood him.

CHARCOAL AND ICE

CHARCOAL AND ICE

YOU see those seemingly incongruous wares written up above the fuel-shops in Florence, black caverns, whose mouths are usually marked by a string of pine cones and a bundle of oak staves, like those which Titian placed behind his Duke of Urbino of the family of Quercus Robur. Charcoal to cook your food, and ice to cool your drink; both gifts of the same district, and bringing back to the minds of those who have loved it the friendly freshness and solitude of the middle zone of the Tuscan Apennine. Above it are the bare peaks and the belts of fir with which the great mountains of sand and slate and grey and red clay endeavour to mimic the real Alps of granite and glacier, with snows, moreover, which, while present, look eternal.

Compared with the Alps, the Tuscan Apennines seem scarcely worth talking of.

Their peaks are not very high, their valleys are narrowed into gorges by the washing and slipping of earth, and they show too little rock and too much vegetable soil. But all this manifest inferiority makes them what the Alps can, of course, never be—mountains which are inhabited, and mountains where, living one's ordinary life, one can come in contact, daily and hourly, with the delightful qualities of high places, the solitude and silence and *newness,* the eternal drama of clouds and winds and sudden storms. One can be, not exceptionally, but always, in sympathising commerce with their forms. I have written this last phrase very deliberately. For these dear, accessible Apennines have taught me that the mountains are always doing something, and very often doing something to us. They are never, in the first place, without movement. Even when we are not causing them to furl and unfurl by changing our place, making peaks arise, walls of rock to turn, like gates on their hinges, and lower hills to drop down, invisible, into the valley; even when they are not giving us their splendid topographical drama, they never become motionless when we become

stationary. Their ravines, whenever we look down, seem actively to burrow and twist, sucking our thoughts like whirlpools. Their sky lines, on the other hand, and the projections of their spurs, draw themselves up (as our eye follows their curves), and, as our much scoffed at ancestors said, often rear, rear even like a wave or a horse, making us draw deep breaths of strenuous pleasure as we watch them. They rear, and they turn on their side and roll over; they take hands, and begin, at least, to march and to dance, if not, as the Psalmist assures us, to skip like young rams rejoicing. And when evening comes they lie down, as in Mr Watt's magnificent sketch, becoming, as darkness increases and only thin outlines remain, inconceivably quiet, and making us feel, when we too lie down, enwrapped, put to sleep, in their shadowy blue folds.

All mountains do that; but just because we are able to live familiarly with them, the dear Apennines, the mountains which give us our ice and our charcoal, more than the rest; as Shelley seems to have felt when he wrote the little song ending (with a hyperbole which all who have witnessed the thing must

understand), "And the Apennine walks abroad with the storm."

The small scale of the Apennines has allowed them to be thus companionable, not merely, like the Alps, to a few climbers, or, at most, a handful of herdsmen during the brief summer weeks, but all the year round to a whole population, to a little people whom they have made their own. For the excessive narrowness of the valleys has forced the inhabitants of this district to seek air and sunshine, and the possibility of tillage, on the high shelving-away slopes and ridges. One is astonished, after driving along solitary roads cut into the mountain-sides just above the strangled rivers; and after climbing up a path like a water-course, through miles, sometimes, of even lonelier chestnut woods, to emerge suddenly upon vineyards and cornfields, olives and cypresses, in a village, sometimes almost a small town, of neatly-paved streets and solidly-built, escutcheoned stone houses; perceiving, once up there, ever so many similar places, invisible from the valley, piled, like a mural crown on a crest, or hanging, like a long black grape, above a precipice.

The Tuscan Apennines, in fact, possess,

thus hidden above sight, a considerable population, indispensable for the cultivation of those woods, which are really orchards, where every chestnut tree requires banking up, pruning and cleaning; and every prickly chestnut fruit requires picking up singly among the thick moss and heather on the steep pathless slopes of the gorges. The cultivation of the chestnut, together with that of a little grain and wine in favoured spots, with the pasture of the highest places, and the trade in charcoal and ice already mentioned—all this has given the Tuscan Apennines a hard-working and fairly prosperous people; and certain historic accidents, and also, I hope, the company of these gentle yet austere mountains, have given that people a unique perfection of language, a scarcely less perfect refinement of manner and sentiment. The poetry which they made, and even now sometimes make, is well known from Tigri's delightful volume, from Miss Alexander's exquisite picture-books, and Gordigiani's songs; the "Rispetto" particularly, which, with its elaborate interweaving of rhymes and thoughts, is a relic, undoubtedly, of the courtly poetry of the early Middle Ages, of

the Sicilians of Frederick II. and the half Provençal predecessors of Dante, but with the added charm of infinite sincerity and freshness.

Is this poetry of the Apennines a mere chance survival, due to the remoteness (till our days) of these high-lying villages? Or may one indulge in the old-fashioned notion that this race of peasants has made songs because, in the mountain fastnesses where it dwells, everything, the sun-scorched peaks and the green forest slopes, the leaping torrent and ever-battling clouds, seems to joyfully sing the goodness of life, and to make us also, drawing deep breaths of virgin air, feel like singing, in spirit at least?

Another circumstance which might make these people poets, is the extraordinary wide views, suggesting Dante's ever-present sense of Italian geography, which these Apennines present; lying, as they do, across Italy like a series of high-pitched roofs, from whose attics and towers and ledges you see everything that passes in the wider streets and in the open spaces below. Nor are such views at all limited to very high places. I can never forget a walk with my dear friends of Casa Cini, which, between tea-time and supper,

revealed what seemed all the kingdoms of the earth.

Little by little, as we climbed through the woods, the big mountains arose (hitherto hidden by the high wooded slopes) pale in the perfect blue sky; the highest peaks towards Modena, sufficiently near to show the beautiful modelling of their bare rock; then the wonderful flame-like crags of the marble Carraras. And suddenly a great hummock dropped away from the foreground and revealed the valley of the Arno, with gleaming streaks for Pistoia, Prato, and Florence, and the far-off volcanic ranges bounding the Roman Campagna. The hill we were on, with a few stunted beeches and pale grass, might have been some hill of the Scottish border. But look around! The great pale giants sitting round, cloud smoke curling towards them from the lower hills effaced by the sunlight; the watershed of Italy, in which rise the Arno and Tiber, the tributaries also of the Po. And to the south-west, highest up (except for the high Carrara peaks), a pale, pale luminous flatness, the sea, broken in one spot by an island under the sunset—Gorgona? or can it be Elba?

There is a strange imaginative stimulus in such a view; the fancy actually carried by the eye, distance obliterated, the thoughts permitted to roam, not among memories, but realities. My San Marcellese friends told me, what I can perfectly believe (for I could catch the gleams of the gilding of Florence Cathedral), that the shepherds up there, among the wind-warped beeches, and the snow-stunted junipers, look down of a night on the white flare of Florence, of gas and electricity; boys who, in all probability, have never been as far as Pistoia, and for whom San Marcello is the capital of the universe.

It was beginning to be dark when we descended through the woods. The mountains gradually disappeared, and the high wooded hills lay folded as if in sleep against the pale sky with its first stars. The dead chestnut leaves rustled under foot, and the song of the torrent, the bell of the little town, alone broke the stillness. With the freshness of southern night, there came from the hillsides the smell of charcoal-burning, of charring wood, and wet leaves and turf; a smell very peculiar, bitter-sweet, and heady, as of the wine drunk by the creatures of the forest.

One seemed to know, after such a walk, how much of our life is real *living*; and how much, alas! mere grazing with nose on the ground. The Apennines can give such impressions.

ST GERYON OF COLOGNE

ST GERYON OF COLOGNE

AFTER trudging about from church to church, over the cruel cobbles of Cologne ("and pavements fanged with murderous stones," sings the poet), involuntarily registering smells like Coleridge, I found myself, by the end of the afternoon, impressed, and in a way absorbed, by the ancient sanctity of this city. Not even Ravenna or Lucca possesses so great a number of churches built in the same period and on the same pattern, fusing in one's imagination and remembrance into one single impression. A city, it seemed, of solemn Byzantine nave and massy column, of sombre, blocked-up narthex and vaulted, gold shimmering apse; very literally, as Heine calls it, "Das grosse heilige Köln."

These churches, with the cathedral as sole exception (the cathedral which was originally indifferent Gothic, and has become bad

Gothic since its completion), these churches are all of those vague times (with often a real difficulty about even approximate dates) extending from the sixth to the twelfth century, and which, rather from our lack of light than any manifest barbarism about them, we picturesquely style "dark ages." Ages, at all events, of very dark churches: uninterrupted walls of immense thickness, low ceilings, oftenest flat; flattened arcades of aisle and triforium; small windows and few of them; subterranean crypt and unlit excrescences of chapels and porch. Churches, the absolute reverse of that closed-in market-place we call a Gothic cathedral, with its acres of ground and sky and a whole town's population caged in by glass and buttress. These, instead, are small, essentially monastic, intended for the few initiate, barely a railed-off entry permitted to stray outsiders; and, above all, they are churches intended to hold some relic and brood over it. Indeed, the beautiful shape, symmetric crossing of square nave and circular apse, of the straight line and pillar of Greece with the Roman vault and cupola, is so well fitted for this purpose that the most lovely real reliquaries

existing—the domed one, for instance, at South Kensington—are merely copies of such Rhenish basilicas, diminished to the size of a casket, with columns and tiles of gold and walls of green and blue enamel. Reliquaries decidedly; things not for live human beings, but for dead saints or bits of saints; you feel that all the time; and with it the momentary revelation of what, in those ages of faith, a relic really meant.

One feels it all the more because Cologne, thanks to the great number of St Ursula's maids of honour, had the luck of getting so very many relics all at once; and particularly one feels it after a visit to the Treasury of St Ursula's Church. It is a vaulted chapel, whose upper part is, very literally, *thatched* vertically and horizontally with canonised bones in elaborate pattern; while on shelves all round stand quantities of busts, of wood and silver, mostly women, containing each a real skull; while other shelves hold rows of wonderful caps of cloth of silver and gold, embroidered with pearl, in each of which a skull is grinning.

One understands in this place that such relics were not mere matters of sentiment,

like the locks of hair of people's sweethearts or the letters of dead great men; for sentiment, however strong in individuals, is not a thing of the masses; and it takes practical interests to move large numbers of people to collect such relics as these, and give their gold and gems and seed pearl, their time and labour, to house them. Rather the relic must be conceived as an object of quite inestimable use, combining all the advantages of a patent medicine of infallible virtues with those of warlike munition of unrivalled potency. This skull, in its little baby's bonnet of silver filagree, or that bony hand, enclosed in a glove of jewelled gold, or any of those rather gruesome vaguenesses enveloped in cotton-wool and labelled in minute characters, may cure the plague, or at least the ague, bring rain or sunshine, and even rout whole armies. Such objects are worth keeping, collecting, buying, stealing (as the Venetians certainly stole the body of St Mark, and, I believe, Barbarossa stole the Three Kings out of their horned sarcophagus at Milan); and we build solid dwellings to keep them in; and (here comes the advantage over the grosser medicaments

and weapons of unbelieving ages), we build beautiful and solemn places above them, because, besides being useful for our material advantage, they fill us with every manner of noble and gentle thoughts, and do our souls good here, as well as hereafter.

Such were my thoughts, as I wandered through Cologne, from basilica to basilica: that of St Ursula, of the Holy Apostles, of St Mary of the Capitol, of St Cecilia, and I know not what others besides. It had been a rainy day, and was late in the afternoon; so that the regrettable fact that these churches have been largely restored became less and less apparent. Crude modernesses disappeared; the nave was filled with deeper and deeper gloom; and a white altar, for instance, lit by invisible lights from the side, stood very lovely and solemn in the short Byzantine apse, against mosaics and gilded capitals of which one knew only that they were golden and shimmering.

Still, what a pleasure it was when at last I stumbled upon a church which was not restored at all, which was much the worse for wear, and actually held a praying

crowd with a litany going on! Odd and delightful incongruities were just visible in the gloom and the candle-light: big Rubensish pictures of battles with cannon smoke commemorating victory over the heretic Swedes of the Thirty Years' War; and opposite, a blackened Byzantine Virgin, with her gilt halo and gilt drapery-folds shining behind a row of tapers. There hung about the church a vague smell, besides incense, of drying flowers, instead of the all-pervading Germanic scent of long-departed cheese and beer; and from the thin rows of kneeling men and women rose the solemn responses, closed each of them by an archaic modulation of the organ. It might have been the time of the building of the church; or, rather, there was the infinite added solemnity of all the centuries which had since accumulated, each bringing its bit of splendour or of equally touching rubbish. When the service was over I turned to my neighbour and asked which church this might be. The church, I was answered, of St Geryon.

It was satisfactory, no doubt, to think that anyone should end off as a saint, and

why not Geryon? The place where he was last heard of, acting as lift between the two floors of hell, was perhaps rather suspicious; and Dante has some hard words about him, let alone the claws and snaky tail; but the poet, we know, suffered most frightfully during that descent, and was perhaps somewhat difficult to please in consequence; moreover, even he had to admit that Geryon had "the face of a righteous man"—which is always something to the good, even in incipient saintliness. Still——

I passed out of the church through the narrow twilit streets, where the lamps were making little halos of yellow; and wandered, musing, to the water-side. The Rhine, at Cologne, is about as wide as the Thames is at the docks, with great wide wharves, overtopped by the massive belfries of the city. There was not much craft, only a few steamers finishing unloading; but every kind of shipping office, chandlers, and so forth, inscriptions in all languages too, and pumps marked "fresh water for sailors"; making one feel that the Rhine is still one of the world's great thoroughfares. Evening came on; the ships began to show green and red

lights, the city became a mere dark mass, only its belfries clear against the pale green sky. I leaned against a parapet and watched the dark swirls of water, the spots of light on the opposite bank.

Suddenly I gave a little start, a start at least in my inner self. Geryon! I understood now the canonisation of Geryon; he had been the city's benefactor. For my eye had mechanically followed the movements of the steam ferry-boat crossing and re-crossing the river, a vague black shape, with bright red eye, and an outline as of a swimming bird, with its awning and funnel. That had been Geryon's trade during the Dark Ages, before he was met by Dante doing duty as lift in hell. In stormy winter nights, when no boatman would put out, he had played the St Christopher for the good people of Cologne, carrying them safely from bank to bank. Until one night that indiscreet little monk, who played the spy, as Dürer tells us, on the real St Christopher, came out with his lantern, and revealed the peculiar shape, snaky tail and claws, of the holy monster who was doing such useful work—the work, perhaps, of Ibsen's *vital lies* (for Dante

identifies him with Fraud) carrying people across the darkness and whirlpools of life.

I very nearly returned, despite the dark, to the Geryons Kirche; and was only restrained by the thought of the sacristan's surprise, if I rang him up at that late hour, and begged, as a favour, to be shown the bones and, if possible, the tail and claws of St Geryon.

IN PIEDMONT

IN PIEDMONT

IT is quite cool this side of the Alps, although still only mid-September, and although it has not rained for months and months. The fields and sloping meadows are like tinder, and the vineyards—the famous vineyards of Asti—make black stripes on pale, pale burned-up hillsides. The country looks so old, so worn to the bone, so bankrupt in this drought. But morning and evening—nay, more or less all day—there pervades everything, under the pale blue misty sky, a sort of Pier della Francesca grace of delicate dove-coloured tints and delicate, undulating, saw-edged line. And then, through the mist, there sometimes loom, immensely high and dim, pieces of the great semicircle of the Alps.

We go to watch for their appearance, most days at sunset, on the terrace of the villa, at the end of the lime walk leading to the

great buttressed Louis XIII. house. The house belongs to people who unite the two names most significant in the re-awakening of Italy, of the statesman who made the new nation, and the fiery and scornful playwright who first affirmed its existence; and every anecdote, almost every name, which turns up in table-talk, suggests details of that heroic period of recent history which has, worse luck, subsided into such squalid bureaucratic dreariness. But the house itself, the castle, in the French sense, of San Martino, and the places round it, tell of remoter things, of the old Piedmont before Italy was ever thought of.

The old Piedmont which, while already half-Italian, was certainly half-French. The mixture of two such hostile nationalities is almost inconceivable, in the abstract, nowadays; but that is because we think of the democratic, cut and dried, centralised France made by the Revolution. During the *ancien régime* the transition was gradual and imperceptible; one feels no change when Sterne crosses the Alps; and Rousseau's life seems quite the same on either side of them, the odd Savoyard character spreading both

ways, being perhaps, as Taine suggested, *the* character of the *ancien régime*. Speaking of Rousseau, one of the things which make me feel this part of Piedmont, and this house particularly, as so old-world French, may very well be that on the opposite hill stands another big white château, Govone, in its modern Italianised form, belonging to that family in which, alas! Jean Jacques was a very undesirable lacquey. The Abbé de Gouvon, as he calls him, was the person, if I remember rightly, who gave him some smattering of mathematics; and presented him with the "Fontaine de Hiéron," the little scientific toy with which he thought to begin his fortune.

To return to San Martino. It is, of course, in many respects, an Italian villa, standing, as it does, high on a hill-top levelled into terraces. But it is flanked with square towers, and has the unmistakable look of a French Louis XIII. château. And was it not built during the regency of that Duchess of Savoy, Madama Reale, as they called her, the characteristic daughter of Henri IV., who reigned romantically among Jesuit intrigues and love conspiracies? The rooms

also are French: more delicate in their stuccoes than the Italian villa and palace rooms of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and with long French windows, and parquets instead of marble floors. It is quite fitting that its dear, hospitable owners should speak, even with their servants, alternately in French as well as Italian: French, not of foreigners, but a real French, different in a sort of vagueness and grace from the curt language of modern France; the French I always feel, of the *ancien régime*.

The traditions also are in some respects quite the reverse of Italian. Since the days of the Tarquins the real Italians have always disregarded kings, considering them as things from abroad, penniless adventurers; their own ideal sovereign, the *Prince* of Machiavelli, remaining the military adventurer, the cunning and magnificent upstart tyrant; at best, in the dreams of Dante, a very remote and shadowy German Emperor, strictly elective and not in the least feudal. But here in Piedmont they have had their long line of legitimate, hereditary Dukes of Savoy, and the chivalrous devotion to monarchy which, until the Revolution, seems to have been so

essential, often so pathetic, a side of the French character. This feudal feeling, so out of keeping with all things Italian, is well exemplified in the story of one of my friends' not very remote ancestors, Count Catalano of their name; and by the curious motto which, in a grievous manner, he brought into their family. *Tort ne dure*: injustice does not abide; it is scrolled all round their heraldic eagle; and in their other huge castle of Magliano, which stands dismantled higher up the valley, that motto, with the Collar of the Order of the Annunciation, reappears in the stuccoes of each vast white empty room. The Count Catalano in question lies buried in the chapel there, with an honourable epitaph. But he died miserably in prison of poison or a broken heart, his estates confiscated, his Order of the Annunciation taken from him, degraded as a traitor in one of the petty seventeenth-century wars; for the Duke of that day, having lost certain fortresses through his own incompetence, had saved his honour by accusing his old general of selling them to the enemy. Years afterwards, when another Duke of Savoy had succeeded, the son of

Count Catalano had returned from exile and obtained an inquiry into the case of his unfortunate father. The treason was utterly disproved; the collar of the Annunciation laid on the tomb of the poor dead soldier, and everything set right by the gift of a commemorative motto. One is tempted to exclaim against this easy feudal way of redressing the faults of princes; but, alas! does the French democracy of our day show signs of even this cheap Ancien Régime magnanimity; and will she be willing to say, in a case not unlike that of Count Catalano, "Tort ne dure"?

All this, as I said, is, on the whole, French. But the country itself is intensely Italian. I felt it very strongly yesterday, when we went to see the Duke of Aosta's little castle of La Cisterna. You wind interminably among slopes of crumbling, sandy vineyard, already russet and yellow, and of sere lilac aftermath. On the top of a hill, and on immensely high bastions of beautiful red brickwork, stands the square white villa, colonnades and cypresses, castle yard and great feudal towers. A great green precipice descends sheer on the other side, filled in

the afternoon light with flame-like swarms of flies from the wine vats. You pass from room to room, immense, abandoned, with scantiest eighteenth-century furniture, until you get into a narrow strip of garden on the bastions, a forsaken little place: poor vines, fruit trees shrivelled, box hedges parched, a pervading smell of peaches left to wither on the branch; a forlorn Faun's bust on the broken balustrade overlooking the dim, distant hillsides with their other decaying villas, and the poor little hill villages, burned up in summer, snowed up in winter. This truly is Italy with her pathetic material poverty. But Italy also with those splendid vivifying qualities which make the soul brighter and life simpler and more dignified: exquisite light clear air, and in the distance, faint wraiths of mountain chains. And in this bleak, remote little garden under the Alps I meet again with a little thrill of delight the beautiful, significant things of the South, great bay trees for Apollo, and Persephone's pomegranates, covered with bursting crimson and scarlet fruit.

We returned at dusk to the dear Louis XIII. French-looking château. The sunset

had come, like mosaic or old picture gold, behind the towers and steeples and heaped-up houses of a little town on the hillside. Then, little by little, great isolated Alps, Monte Rosa, the Matterhorn, Monviso, had appeared for a few seconds blue against the pale evening sky; and the song of the crickets had arisen in the dusk, with the scent of cool grass and poplar leaves from the invisible streams in the valley. Italy most certainly.

BAYEUX AND THE TAPESTRY

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HOW odd a thing is nationality, or rather what passes muster for such. There were five or six tourists, besides my Jewish friend and myself, in that little museum of Bayeux, where the tapestry hangs, all of us enjoying patriotic emotion, and all of us for different reasons and wrong ones. The French bicyclists, at the prompting of the official guides, expressed great satisfaction, though no surprise, at what they seemed to regard as a sort of previously arranged *revanche* for Waterloo. The pure Anglo-Saxons or Scottish Celts of unmistakable origin, showed, peering over their Murrays, a silent pleasure in a British victory. No realisation, on either part, of what every history book makes plain, the kinship of these French or English conquerors with the far-off folk of the Volsunga saga, their Sigurd and Brynhilt origin. The writer

of these lines, though fondly believing in a Norman forebear, vaguely resented the Conquest as a filibustering aggression on England; and my Jewish friend, whose ancestors were merchants in Toledo or Saragossa till late into the Middle Ages, identified herself with these Norman conquerors because, like herself, they were *French*. The moral of which seems to be, that race is nothing and language all; for the blood carries only physical resemblance, which is simple and very individual; while the word carries thought, custom, law, and prejudice, which are complex and universal.

The tapestry meanwhile, the source of such conflicting patriotric satisfaction, is really a delightful work. I had forgotten, of course, the facsimile at South Kensington, and felt a little shock of surprise on finding it quite small and interminably long; yards and yards, of which each piece might have been stretched on a very small frame, and pushed into a corner when it became too dark to work. There is a pleasant, homely quality in its not being loom tapestry (that mysterious thing which looks as if it were born ready-made), but embroidery on linen in what appears to be wool—green, brown, red, yellow, and black,

without a background; and this homeliness makes one more willing to believe the historical facts it purports to establish. The figures are quite marvellously expressive, the more so that there is in the whole series of designs not a vestige of anatomy, the heads, for instance, always having a piece missing out of them. It is an admirable instance of the way in which people who really feel movement, children or ignoramuses, invariably succeed in rendering it; movement, for instance, in the horses, which the eclectic, superfine school of criticism would enjoy comparing to that of Degas.

Here is the whole lamentable and glorious epic: Harold swears; how those embroidering ladies have given Harold's sheepish look, and contrasted with it the force and determination of (as they call him) Willelm. Also the ragged, vaguely piratical appearance of the Saxons in their Viking clothes and long moustaches; the superb *tenue* of the tall, straight Normans, always in steel, with vizor over nose, stern Prussians of the day. Also the holy imbecility of bearded King Edward on his throne among his little churches. And then those horses! reaching forwards, kicking,

bucking, rearing, snuffing, answering the hand and spur; marvellous horses, red and green and black, with parti-coloured manes. And the boats, rowed or sailing, with the knights and little horses on board!

Another thing that struck me most curiously is the fact that (except for this quality of movement) the art of these embroideries, and all they represent, is thoroughly Byzantine. These supposed English and French men might be Greeks of the days of Justinian; they sit among architecture like that of the basilicas of Ravenna, throning Edward, Harold, and Willelm like consuls in tunic and chlamys and imperial robe; and sit at meat like the Apostles in the mosaics of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo. Frenchmen? Englishmen? Men of the Middle Ages? Surely not: but Romans run to savagery. And here, as elsewhere, Antiquity rises up to say that it was not yet dead and done with. Indeed, one sometimes feels inclined to wonder, looking at mediæval things, did Antiquity *ever* come to an end, did Rome ever cease ruling the world?

When we had seen the tapestry, we wandered about the dull little town of Bayeux, and

looked up at the wonderful towers of the cathedral. Here, at least, Antiquity has nothing to say, and the Middle Ages, if ever there were any, are manifest. These towers are perfect castles; large at their base, like small churches, and barnacled all the way up with counterforts, and warders' chambers and turrets. And as the eye seeks the clouds which sail (seemingly close) above the great open-work bell cage, it climbs along abrupt surfaces, along vertiginous projections, as of some fortified mountain.

It rained all the time at Bayeux, but as we drove home the weather lifted above the calm sea and the pale undulations of cornfields, and the sky became as full of swallows as it might have been of gnats, depths and depths of them, in the white air, little black specks, flitting and twittering. As the evening silence came over us with the jingling of the horses' bells, my mind rambled back to the tapestry, to Harold and Willelm. Surely one of the chief things which the Conquest did for us, was that it took us out of Scandinavia, out of the vague Teuton anarchies, moored England to the Continent and civilisation, made us European and half-Latin. Half-

Latin? Surely more! Think of the Provençal and French England of Henry II., of Chaucer, and of Froissart, less British, far, than ours. The Conquest also gave us our beautiful language, so rich because it participates in the nature of two great races; our wealth of synonyms, of delicate distinctions; above all, our utter freedom of grammar. And with this mixed language it gave us the possibility of assimilating once and again the wealth of Latin form and feeling, giving us Spenser and Shakespeare and Milton; and again Shelley, Rossetti, and Swinburne, wonderful hybrids of north and south. And while it did this for the conquered country, the Conquest was probably a frightful source of misfortune for France, placing England in her very vitals, with the Norman and Angevin succession breaking to bits, withering her beautiful beneficent Middle Ages with the miseries and barbarism of the endless wars of defence; forcing centralisation on the dismembered country, foredooming it (who knows?) to Ancien Régime and Revolution.

All these thoughts wandered idly through my brain, interrupted every now and then by the quaint vision of poor old Edward

the Confessor throning foolishly among his toy churches; and of Harold and Willelm galloping about, little childish mannikins, on the red and green toy horses of the tapestry.

THE LAKES OF MANTUA

THE LAKES OF MANTUA

IT was the Lakes, the deliciousness of water and sedge seen from the railway on a blazing June day, that made me stop at Mantua for the first time; and the thought of them that drew me back to Mantua this summer. They surround the city on three sides, being formed by the Mincio on its way from Lake Garda to the Po, shallow lakes spilt on the great Lombard Plain. They are clear, rippled, fringed with reed, islanded with water lilies, and in them wave the longest, greenest weeds. Here and there a tawny sail of a boat comes up from Venice; children are bathing under the Castle towers; at a narrow point is a long covered stone bridge where the water rushes through mills and one has glimpses into cool, dark places smelling of grist.

The city itself has many traces of magnificence, although it has been stripped of pictures more than any other, furnishing out every

gallery in Europe since the splendid Gonzagas forfeited the Duchy to Austria. There are a good many delicate late Renaissance houses, carried on fine columns; also some charming open terra-cotta work in windows and belfries. The Piazza Erbe has, above its fruit stalls and market of wooden pails and earthenware, and fishing-tackle and nets (reminding one of the lakes), a very picturesque clock with a seated Madonna; and in the Piazza Virgilio there are two very noble battlemented palaces with beautiful bold Ghibelline swallow-tails. All the buildings are faintly whitened by damp, and the roofs and towers are of very pale, almost faded rose colour, against the always moist blue sky.

But what goes to the brain at Mantua is the unlikely combination, the fantastic duet, of the palace and the lake. One naturally goes first into the oldest part, the red-brick castle of the older Marquises, in one of whose great square towers are Mantegna's really delightful frescoes: charming cupids, like fleecy clouds turned to babies, playing in a sky of the most marvellous blue, among garlands of green and of orange and lemon trees cut into triumphal arches, with the Marquis of Mantua and all

the young swashbuckler Gonzagas underneath. The whole decoration, with its predominant blue, and enamel white and green, is delicate and cool in its magnificence, and more thoroughly enjoyable than most of Mantegna's work. But the tower windows frame in something more wonderful and delectable—one of the lakes! The pale blue water, edged with green reeds, the poplars and willows of the green plain beyond; a blue vagueness of Alps, and, connecting it all, the long castle bridge with its towers of pale geranium-coloured bricks.

One has to pass through colossal yards to get from this fortified portion to the rest of the Palace, Corte Nuova, as it is called. They have now become public squares, and the last time I saw them, it being market day, they were crowded with carts unloading baskets of silk; and everywhere the porticoes were heaped with pale yellow and greenish cocoons; the palace filled with the sickly smell of the silkworm, which seemed, by coincidence, to express its saecular decay. For of all the decaying palaces I have ever seen in Italy this palace of Mantua is the most utterly decayed. At first you have no other impres-

sion. But little by little, as you tramp through what seem miles of solemn emptiness, you find that more than any similar place it has gone to your brain. For these endless rooms and cabinets—some, like those of Isabella d'Este (which held the Mantegna and Perugino and Costa allegories, Triumph of Chastity and so forth, now in the Louvre), quite delicate and exquisite; or scantily modernized under Maria Theresa for a night's ball or assembly; or actually crumbling, defaced, filled with musty archives; or recently used as fodder stores and barracks—all this colossal labyrinth, oddly symbolized by the gold and blue labyrinth on one of the ceilings, is, on the whole, the most magnificent and fantastic thing left behind by the Italy of Shakespeare. The art that remains (by the way, in one dismantled hall I found the empty stucco frames of our Triumph of Julius Caesar!) is, indeed, often clumsy and cheap—elaborate medallions and ceilings by Giulio Romano and Primaticcio; but one feels that it once appealed to an Ariosto-Tasso mythological romance which was perfectly genuine, and another sort of romance now comes with its being so forlorn.

Forlorn, forlorn! And everywhere, from the halls with mouldering zodiacs and Loves of the Gods and Dances of the Muses; and across hanging gardens choked with weeds and fallen in to a lower level, appear the blue waters of the lake, and its green distant banks, to make it all into Fairyland. There is, more particularly, a certain long, long portico, not far from Isabella d'Este's writing closet, dividing a great green field planted with mulberry trees, within the palace walls, from a fringe of silvery willows growing in the pure, lilied water. Here the Dukes and their courtiers took the air when the Alps slowly revealed themselves above the plain after sunset; and watched, no doubt, either elaborate quadrilles and joustings in the riding-school, on the one hand, or boat-races and all manner of water pageants on the other. We know it all from the books of the noble art of horsemanship: plumes and curls waving above curvetting Spanish horses; and from the rarer books of sixteenth and seventeenth century masques and early operas, where Arion appears on his colossal dolphin packed with *tiorbos* and *violas d'amore*, singing some mazy *aria* by Caccini or Monteverde, full of plaintive flourishes and

unexpected minors. We know it all, the classical pastoral still coloured with mediæval romance, from Tasso and Guarini—nay, from Fletcher and Milton. Moreover, some chivalrous Gonzaga duke, perhaps that same Vincenzo who had the blue and gold ceiling made after the pattern of the labyrinth in which he had been kept by the Turks, not too unlike, let us hope, Orsino of Illyria, and by his side a not yet mournful Lady Olivia; and perhaps, directing the concert at the virginal, some singing page Cesario. . . . Fancy a water pastoral, like the Sabrina part of "Comus," watched from that portico! The nymph Manto, founder of Mantua, rising from the lake; cardboard shell or real one? Or the shepherds of Father Virgil, trying to catch hold of Proteus; but all in ruffs and ribbons, spouting verses like "Amyntas" or "The Faithful Shepherdess." And now only the song of the frogs rises up from among the sedge and willows, where the battlemented castle steeps its buttresses in the lake.

There is another side to this Shakespearean palace, not of romance but of grotesqueness verging on to horror. There are the Dwarfs' Apartments! Imagine a whole piece of the

building, set aside for their dreadful living, a rabbit warren of tiny rooms, including a chapel against whose vault you knock your head, and a grand staircase quite sickeningly low to descend. Strange human or half-human kennels, one trusts never really put to use, and built as a mere brutal jest by a Duke of Mantua smarting under the sway of some saturnine little monster, like the ones who stand at the knee of Mantegna's frescoed Gonzagas.

After seeing the Castello and the Corte Nuova one naturally thinks it one's duty to go and see the little Palazzo del Te, just outside the town. Inconceivable frescoes, colossal, sprawling gods and goddesses, all chalk and brick dust, enough to make Rafael, who was responsible for them through his abominable pupils, turn for ever in his coffin. Damp-stained stuccoes and grass-grown courtyards, and no sound save the noisy cicalas sawing on the plane-trees. How utterly forsaken of gods and men is all this Gonzaga splendour! But all round, luxuriant green grass, and English-looking streams winding flush among great willows. We left the Palazzo del Te very speedily behind us, and set out towards

Pietola, the birthplace of Virgil. But the magic of one of the lakes bewitched us. We sat on the wonderful green embankments, former fortifications of the Austrians, with trees steeping in the water, and a delicious, ripe, fresh smell of leaves and sun-baked flowers, and watched quantities of large fish in the green shadow of the railway bridge. In front of us, under the reddish town walls, spread an immense field of white water-lilies; and farther off, across the blue rippled water, rose the towers and cupolas and bastions of the Gonzaga's palace — palest pink, unsubstantial, utterly unreal, in the trembling heat of the noontide.

ANSBACH AND THE KNIGHTS OF THE SWAN

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WE jumped out of the train at Ansbach without any previous intention of stopping there, from sheer incapacity of sitting still any longer in the dreary humour left by Nuremberg and its factory smoke, and electric trams, and model hotels. My friend remembered something not very clear out of Carlyle's "Frederick"; I had read the memoirs of Elizabeth Lady Craven, Margravine of Ansbach, when I was twelve; there was also the fact of George II.'s wife, and a dim item about Kasper Hauser, himself dimmer; but beyond this I don't think either of us had ever properly realised the whereabouts or existence of Ansbach until its name was shouted at the station.

The little town is surrounded by gardens full of the finest standard roses, and you feel that its inhabitants have lots of leisure to

cultivate and contemplate them. Set down with its orange tile roofs and funnel-shaped steeples in brilliant green pastures, it looks at first like a mere magnified version of the old-fashioned, prosperous villages, grouped round their church, which are set like toys every couple of miles or so along those shallow Franconian valleys. It was only after going over the Residenz, the delightful Louis XV. palace of the Margraves, that one noticed that Ansbach was not a purely German town, and recognised (once the notion of France suggested) that many of its houses have French rounded roofs, *mansardes*, decorated *porte-cochères*, and some of its streets, with perspectives of park trees, a vague look of Fontainebleau.

I have never seen a pleasanter palace than this of Ansbach, nor one which brings home so vividly (particularly after a course of German mediæval towns, genuine and cardboard) the easy, graceful, friendly ideal of life which France taught the world in the eighteenth century. The rooms are just large enough to allow people to talk without having to raise their voices, and without their *tête-à-tête* being mixed with that of

their neighbours. Full of light, the shining parquets as little encumbered as a lawn, just enough furniture arranged symmetrically in corners—dainty furniture, allowing the sitter to be at ease, but not free and easy; the few details, frames, cornices, chandeliers, absolutely perfect; and the whole expanded, imaginary doors and windows added, by the big mirrors facing each other in the panelling. There is a dining-room all lined with blue and white Chinese tiles, which makes one understand the charm of a very few, discreetly chosen, exquisitely cooked dishes, with a conversation in which everything was indicated and nothing insisted on, to suit it all. Also a charming music-room, where you could follow the parts of a string quartet, and hear every nicety of swelling and diminishing a note, and rounding and pointing a phrase, when the hands were lifted from the harpischord and the voice let go in its mazes. The friendly custodian, whose zest of explanation betokens, alas! a scarcity of visitors, showed us, with much pleasure, some funny Dresden candlesticks given by Frederick the Great to the Margravine, his sister; and which represent a slim and

powdered shepherd, clearly the great one himself, writing unfinished letters. The characters, of course, are twice the size of life, and three times as legible; so, with a little hesitation (to prolong the custodian's enjoyment), one can spell out on one candlestick a letter beginning *Sire*, and announcing a great victory; another *Monseigneur*, enlarging polite phrases; and a third, *Mademoiselle*, discreetly broken off under the little porcelain beruffled hand.

Ansbach, like most small places, is presided over by a forgotten celebrity, the eighteenth-century poet Uz, plentifully invoked in memorial tablet and column, "the lover of his kind." And now, I recollect, was it not Uz whom that most delightful mixture of eighteenth-century romance and pietism, Jung-Stilling, visited at Ansbach, and wept tears of philanthropic and poetic joy on beholding? It was part of the eighteenth century's delightful cheerfulness and levity, after all, to melt into tears as often as possible. And who would not enjoy weeping among such delightfully witty and sensitive and idle persons of quality as must have filled this charming palace of Ansbach?

That is the French side of Ansbach. But most unexpected in it all is hidden a bit of Germany; of the Germany, moreover, of romance, of the unlikely, one might think fabulous, Middle Ages. You are taken over the Gumbertus Kirche, after having been shown the Margraves' vault opening on the street, where they lie under their periwigged effigies and stacked up bronze trophies of victories unknown to fame—the Gumbertus Kirche, originally Gothic, rebuilt into the most marvellous eighteenth-century Protestant place of worship, decorated (as Heine remarked of Lutheran churches) only with colossal movable Psalm numbers; where the Margraves who rest below in death once rested alive in a gigantic pew with a stove and arm-chairs. The less charming qualities of the eighteenth century (with recollections of certain churches in Georgian England, which married, remember, an Ansbach) settle down on one's spirit like a fog. When, behold, the young lady who acts as sacristan turns a key, throws open a wide door at the end of that galleried and pewed temple of eighteenth-century prosiness, and discloses a vision of Gothic romance. It is the choir

of the original fourteenth-century church, which alone remained intact when the rest of the building was burned or pulled down. In the narrow semi-circle, dimly lit by the dusty lancet windows, stands a great gold triptych on the altar, with a carved and gilded St George on the top. Overhead blackened coats of arms, those splendid German coats of arms with fantastic crests of elephants' tusks or mermaids; and two solemn trophies of lances and tattered banners. And all round, the life-sized figures, tomb-stones placed upright, of the Swan-Knights of Markgraf Albrecht-Achilles.

They are more or less broken and defaced, and undoubted archaic and a little childish in workmanship; but they take one aback by a certain stiff vivacity of gesture, and an odd, solemn elegance of rigid, slender figure and resolute, beardless face. Robber-nobles, filibustering captains of adventure, no doubt these Ehrenheims, Lendenbachs, Ebersteins, thus portrayed by the unknown fifteenth-century stone-mason. But what of that? These battered grey-stone men made in their effigy, these knights with long tight-fitting armour and delicate, sensitive hands, these

Swan-Knights of Markgraf Albrecht-Achilles, are, by virtue of the soul of their sculptor, paladins every one. And yet I cannot rest satisfied with this notion: art, however sincere, cannot make us so absolutely its dupe. And there is one of the Knights of the Swan, a young Eberstein, with the date 1479 and the motto "Edel und Fest," stepping rapidly forward, sword in hand, of whom I shall never believe that if the sculptor of Ansbach made him like a St George, it was not because he felt a real St George hidden in him.

Revolving in my mind a number of similar idle questions (to which I would on no account desire any answer), I followed my friend into the dear little park of Ansbach, where, among the formal shrubberies, a column marks the spot of the assassination of Kasper Hauser some fifty years ago—"the mysterious one mysteriously murdered," says the Latin. We had coffee and bread-cake at the former "orangerie," among orange-trees and clipped bays in tubs. Families were having coffee all round, the ladies peacefully sewing. I retailed to my friend some hazy information about Kasper Hauser;

a certain old, old Baron von Blank, with whom my father sometimes went out shooting, had been pointed out to me in my childhood as the "Duke's Minister, who knew who Kasper Hauser really was." We discussed the improbable story while drinking coffee at the "orangerie," and waiting for a train to take us away from Ansbach. But my mind was really back in the choir of the Gumbertus Kirche and among Markgraf Albrecht-Achilles' "Knights of the Swan."

HIGH UP

HIGH UP

AMONG the various kinds of love which we can have for places, there is, providentially, the love for the place which we disliked while in it. Providentially, certainly. For what a saving grace that, once our ill-health, ill-humour gone, once the incompatibility of mere bodily or momentary circumstances at an end, we should be able to enter into appreciative and happy relations with anything; and a recollection is surely a very big *something*. I have had this particular experience very notably twice in my life: once in Morocco, whither I was sent when I was ill; and in the high, nay highest Alps, which reduced me to worse than illness after the first two days. In both these cases I fretted miserably to be taken away. But once away what a delight to have been there!

Such must have been the feelings of Æneas

and the Sibyl after the trip down Avernus; and would have been the feelings of Eurydice, if, as in Gluck's opera, she had definitively returned to earth after her residence in Elysium; a place unaccountably depressing, it seems, but wonderfully lovely in detail! I am not irrelevant in comparing the High Alps with Elysium. I feel assured that the homes of the Blessed (so sweet but mournful in Gluck's choruses) were not below ground, but very high, so to speak, above it. Nowadays at least, when Orpheus would have met only miners organizing strikes by going down, he might have found Eurydice very probably in some high Alpine meadow, of flowers fairer and more marvellous than asphodel, under a sky too bright for mortal eyes, in air too icy-rare for mortal lungs; cut off by endless walls of rock and snow, from every view and almost every memory of living men. . . .

I quite understand that it is good, occasionally (and quite apart from climbing) to go to these high places, even if they half-murder us while there; for the sake of that sense of immaculate virginity, which modern life makes us require. But this impression is due to the fact that human life is really impossible

in those places. I speak of places buried under snow eight months out of the twelve, the cattle living there for only a few weeks; and every necessary, save their milk, having to be brought from many hundred feet below; places where, as a result, human existence is as far-fetched as in a ship on mid-ocean. For Heaven's sake let them remain remote; let not mere mechanism, material or intellectual, make them of easy access, or victual them to perfection. Their usefulness is in the very fact that human life cannot be lived there; that we cease up there to exploit the earth and pollute it as sole thanks. They have a sober and sanctifying power due to elemental life, not man's.

It was the flowers first suggested Elysium as a fitting name. They have a brilliancy of hue, a perfection of minute form, an odd penetratingness of scent—the lilac pansy, for instance, which smells of "peau d'Espagne"—unknown to earthly flowers; and they are grown closer together—every mossy little boulder an exquisite microscopic garden—than would be possible, save under the pressure of only ghostly feet; for they are at an end, their brief spring turned to autumn,

before the cattle reach those heights. They are manured and kept warm, and, presumably, crossed into wonderful variety by the snow. Going high enough, you find alongside of the narrow line of melting snow and soppy black earth by the moraines, an inconceivable garden of loveliness uncovered only yesterday: pink painted moss and ledges of pansy and forget-me-not against the dark storm mountains.

The water is more supernatural still than is the vegetation; and in the same way: the endless bubbling rills losing themselves in the grass; the streams rushing at incredible pace, transparent, white, bringing an ice-cold draught under the fierce sun; the element, new born, just made by the chemistry of clouds and peaks. The little lakes, too, hidden here and there among the pastures and larch woods, of a blue deeper but brighter than any gem, broken at the edges into shell-like ripples, which, in the sunshine are iridescent, tipped with gold, like shifting peacocks' eyes. Most wonderful of all, and totally unearthly, the little stream, the thread of clear water which runs along the glaciers, in a channel of purest, tenderest

blue ice: a thing which makes one dream of what Alkestis must have seen in her descent to Hades. For, as I said, there is in the things up here, a suggestion perpetually of the impossibility of human existence in the very purity and strenuousness of their primæval life, too keen and strong for man's poor little vitality.

This struck me more and more the higher I was able to go. I cannot forget my first impression of a great snowfield. We climbed far above those wonderful gardens, with the clear streams dashing through them; up the steep slopes, until as the mountains narrowed and receded and the valleys disappeared from sight, one had the illusion of a wide amphitheatre closed in by the snow peaks, down whose sides sweep with magnificent curves the avalanche tracks. On over stones and snow, to a high rocky ledge, approaching which we saw new slopes of snow and new walls of rock rise in front of us as we rose. Once on the ledge and on its brink, behold! plumb below, an unsuspected valley of pure, silent snow; white, unruffled by stone, or track, or crevice, only a pale stream dividing its middle in a blue ice trough. A valley

infinitely quiet and serene; wide, girdled by dark purple mountains of gentlest outlines; nothing savage or frightening; a home, it would seem, of eternal sleep. And, to make the silence more poignant, a twitter of snow larks; and, every now and then, in the perfectly still air, the distant muffled rattle of an avalanche.

A few experiences like this made it dawn on my mind that this was a closed-in world. I ceased to long to go any higher. I did not envy, as I thought I should, the climbers whom I heard making their start at midnight. It seemed as if no peak could ever be high enough to project beyond the others, to put an end to that heartbreaking rising-up of mountains and evermore mountains; to satisfy from its tip-top crest, the longing to look down into the world of everyday life of man and man's history. For the higher one went the more closely one seemed imprisoned. Lying on the thin grass of those highest pastures, while my friends continued up the dreary steep moraines, with no sound save the bubbling of the brook and the browsing of my mule (for the wind had nothing to play with) I could not help thinking some-

times of those funnel-shaped shutters, of convents and harems, which allow you to look up, but forbid your looking down. For here also there was no *down*; the nearest valleys even closed from sight, the reddish crags and dazzling snow-caps set all round, forcing the eye into the narrow dome of dazzling cloudless blue. That cloudlessness was in itself unearthly. For when the mountains were not absolutely curtained off, the valleys blocked with storm smoke, it seemed as if only a few thin vapours were possible in that sky. From lower mountains one watches the great drama of the clouds trying to pass, hanging impeded, tearing in two, sinking back into the valley (as one sees the Italian clouds in the Engadine) or crossing, tattered but victorious, over the highest jags. But all that seemed too human, too much like the unquiet life of mortals, for this stern and serene Elysium. There are no Oceanides up there sailing to visit Prometheus; nay, surely, even Zeus himself would not have intruded, would not have ventured to chain so human a Titan to these peaks.

There was much more than the sense of

change of place, nay, even change of country, when, having walked down from those heights I had been staying in, I was awakened next morning by the sounds of human life: the bell and church clock, cocks and hens, swallows, and the voices of women at the fountain. It was only a miserable mountain village, marking the limit of habitation, and itself many hours' climb above the valley of the Rhone. But it had inhabitants; it had a past; it belonged to the world, battered and soiled, of mankind; not merely the world of the splendid, indifferent elements. Among the chalets and manure heaps, with the green grass slopes and the larch woods behind it, stood a whitewashed church with a pillared belfry built by some Como mason of the Middle Ages. And round the church, half-choked with weeds, was a little churchyard. They could die and be buried here, then, I thought. There was no dying possible *up there*. For dying is a way which only living things can have; and one does not die in Elysium.

THE SOUTH

THE SOUTH

IT was of Genoa and its surrounding country that Goethe was thinking when he wrote Mignon's song; the part about shimmering marble palace floors, and statues in the orange groves. For Genoa is the gate into the Second, the Southern Italy. People may have thought they had got there in Lombardy, on the Lakes (Garda especially), at Venice or Verona; but they crossed those Ligurian mountains, and, suddenly, behold! this coast.

I always noted that my mother, who lived so many years in Italy, was wont to speak of the months she spent at Genoa, just fifty years ago, as a thing quite absolutely apart, a kind of fairy tale: of the colossal palaces, the narrow, narrow streets of tower-high houses painted red and green, the bouquets of strong-scented flowers which people tied in the doorways, and the donkey-rides in

the stony hills, bringing back baskets of arbutus fruit. I have often thought of the pleasure of reconstructing, if possible, in reality, if not, on paper, the Italian journey of our grandparents; the series of surprises, of undreamed delights as one range, Alps, Apennines, was crossed after another; and, as I say, Genoa would be one of the *coups de théâtre*.

Railways have largely put an end to all that, transitions being too rapid, and too much ground also got over at night; moreover, the sense of arduousness and ease, the difference between up and down hill, so very much effaced. Yet, if one have a heart for such things, it may still be made to beat.

I was returning to Italy after many months in the North, and after a horrible precocious London winter; straight from Paris to Nervi, where I arrived at nightfall. Italy, and (as I thought) the South, had met me already in the Alps, as the hillsides of sere scrub flamed red from out of the mists of a perfectly pure morning, and the fresh snow glittered against a brilliant sky of blue. The delusion (for it was such) enveloped me more and more descending into the plain, where the

bare poplars made a delicate pinkish mist across the bright green of the first corn-sprouts, and the sun set slowly in a sky of amber and pure, refulgent, cloudless brass. I thought that was the South; but it was merely Italy.

I arrived at Nervi in darkness, to be awakened next day early by the bells of the mules bringing fagots (the only necessary firewood) to the house of my Genoese friend. I knew they were made of lentisk and myrtle, and the long heather of the Mediterranean; and I wanted to see again those delicate southern things, and the scarlet coverings of the beasts. And when I opened my shutters, in rushed the South. For there, opposite, was the great promontory, dolphin-shaped, of Portofino, lying Parma-violet-coloured in a sea not so much of water as of palest lilac-blue light; and below, the roses blowing white and red among the orange and lemon trees, as if it were June and not December.

The sense of being in the real South is made up of many and various impressions, and leads to many more: the nobility of an excellent climate; the sort of purity and

vigour of life due to abundant air and sunshine, as opposed to the deathliness and ignominy of our English fields, which I had left steeping in cold or steaming in lukewarm vapours. Then, the odd quality of being precious (I noticed this very much in Southern Spain and at Tangier) which such excellence of climate lends to the cheapest material, common brick or whitewash transformed by the light into something glorious like costly marble; and similarly, the delicate alteration of tint which this generous sunshine, this mild sea wind, effect in colours, turning the originally garish into the exquisite. There are houses on this hillside, peasants' cottages, roughly washed red and white, which in their whiteness and silveriness and rosiness, as of alabaster, olive leaves, clove pinks, or faded Persian carpets, make one gasp with a sense of far-fetched beauty. And even opposite my window I see a quite trivial, modern house, painted plain cream colour and pale rose, with faded green shutters and a terrace paved with glazed tiles, which taken altogether reminds me more than anything in this quality of pricelessness of colour of certain of Turner's sketches and of Brabazon's.

Perhaps my mind has been pointed in this direction, made to understand the ineffable exquisiteness of Southern roof and wall, by the recent gift of a sketch by my friend S——, a white yard at Seville, with a bit of white sky above, which has the magic of a moonstone. Connected with this, though its opposite, comes the recognition of having lived in the North, spoilt by our nineteenth century, on miserable short commons for beauty. Nay, the eagerness with which we have noted the charm of vague tree-lines in the fields, of lilac town mists pricked with orange lights, of reflections on water and wet pavement, all transient effects redeeming for an instant ugly things, is proof of an acuteness of æsthetic desire very near akin to starvation.

And one understands that all art, and all civilisation which had beauty, arose originally in such fortunate climates — Greece, Syria, Southern Italy, where winter is a word, and the commonest objects are as lovely as the rarest. Alas! these Genoese places, made, one would think, for Greek gods, or at least their votaries, are given up to very different inhabitants. I am not speaking

of the poor people who come here to die. Meeting them along the rocks, one feels sometimes a dreadful spasm of almost pagan superstition: the tragic irony behind all things, the seeming lie involved in all that shows a fair and smiling front. What, all this loveliness of life merely to die in, inch by inch? At other moments, and they should be cultivated for the more permanent, the feeling is pagan, indeed, but of a nobler paganism. For these little Genoese towns—these sunny balconies of rock jutting on to the walled-in, sheltered sea—are hospitals, often cemeteries; places, as I said, to die in. Yet the sea and the sky and Hesperides' vegetation take no notice, go on living and praising the goodness of life; and would it not be wise if we too, having bowed our head for a minute at the passage of Death, should recognise also that Death—others, or ours—passes indeed every minute, but passes only, while life abides and is eternal?

I was not thinking of these inhabitants—passengers awaiting Charon — as the wrong ones for such places. There are things less saddening than death, but yet certainly far more depressing; and among these

foremost is life lived without thoroughness. The false note in these Southern places, which are so naturally classical, in the good sense, is the cosmopolitan idleness. I do not deny that it may have, if skilfully handled, a kind of frothy grace and even of topsy-turvy picturesqueness; a great modern painter may make something of it, like the gauze petticoats of the ballet dancers and the silk jackets of the jockeys of Degas. But it takes a great painter; and one wonders why, save for the wager, a great painter should take *it*. One wonders all the more here, where everything natural, even the stains on old walls and the patches on old clothes, preaches the superiority of the open air, the workaday, over that which comes (whether material or intellectual) out of a bandbox.

The violence of this incongruity gives a salutary reproof to that sneaking taste for luxury which lurks, alas! in all of us modern mercenary persons: for what refinement can there be in being absurdly out of place? And this brings me to note that there is, for the healthy of soul, a moral wholesomeness, as well as that of sunshine and sea air, to

be found in these favoured Southern places: the wholesome recognition of the meanness of our complicated and parasitic life. One gets to long for some scheme of existence which shall be open to the air and sun; precious in colour and flower-like in shape, like the cottages and belfries among these groves of oranges and olives; but, even as they, made of homely materials, simple whitewash and sound brick for rich as well as poor.

ENVOY

ENVOY

I WROTE a few days back about the well-nigh passionate and certainly romantic feelings we may have for towns wherein we are utter strangers, and for roads and paths along which, as we know full well, we shall never pass again. *Amours de voyage* I have allowed myself to call them, as distinguished from the love we may have for localities wherein our everyday lot is cast.

But although we may never, in the literal sense, experience such wanderers' emotions, and never, or seldom, move from one place to another, are not our lives full of things very similar; and are not some of the best loves we have even *amours de voyage* like these?

For, as ascetic writers and stoics have taught us, life is but a journey; the funny little eighteenth-century song adding, "Si la vie est un voyage, tâchons de l'embellir."

A journey which for some, and not necessarily the best of us, has a very ostensible goal, towards which they bustle or plod year in year out. A journey, for others, no matter whence and no matter whither, from the unknown merely to the unknown; a thought which depresses some spirits, like Tolstoi's Levine, to the verge of melancholia; unpractical and ungrateful persons who must need ask Life's *Why*, instead of making the best of Life's *How*.

For journeying without a goal may be the very best journeying; if only the feet are willing, the eyes open, and we chance on a spell of fair, bracing weather. This conviction is embodied to my mind in the person of a Franciscan brother whom I met one March day as I was riding idly among the cypress trunks and crumbling reddish rocks at the foot of Mount Morello. He issued, laughing, out of a farm, with his sack and staff; kindly showed me my way; and disappeared through the almond blossoms in the olive yards, up towards another farmhouse, with a dovecot like a church belfry, high on the bare mountain side. A very brisk, pleasant, earnest-looking per-

sonage, not without a sense of the ridiculous. I think of him often enough, and of how good, symbolically, at least, his life seemed to be: eating the bread people gave in return for good news of the Madonna and saints; and wandering wherever a house or a fountain beckoned, through the March winds and sunshine, and the scent of bean-flower and cypress.

Yes. That 's all very well if the time of year happen to be spring, or a mellow, sunny autumn; and as long as the feet be willing and the eyes not weary of looking. There 's the rub! and all optimism necessarily breaks down somewhere: wherever (and Heaven knows that 's often) the inner constitution and the outer circumstances of poor human creatures make it difficult to enjoy that eternal journeying. Always to be on the go; for ever packing and unpacking one's wares; for ever greeting and saying good-bye; never allowed to lie down and say, "Not one step farther to-day!" Perpetually made to move on by Policeman Fate, much like Dickens' Poor Jo, the boy who "never knowed nothink about anythink," very much, by-the-by, like his betters. No, no. If one is perfectly honest, one must fain admit that life's being a per-

petual journey, with or without a goal, was not an absolutely satisfactory arrangement.

One has to admit it, though it is just as well not to admit it too freely. But, given the fact, should we not seek for the palliatives it may bring for its own evil? And here comes in the value of my *amours de voyage*. Into the eternal instability they bring an element of consecutiveness, of peace: the element of happy remembrance. For love, of whatever sort or intensity, ties us to the past; and, in a certain fashion, carries the warm present into the dreary, dim future. It knits things together otherwise quite separate, in the kindly meshes of association; and allows us to live, however, interruptedly, not where we are, but where we would be. Say, we are being hurtled along by a screaming express through a flat country and under a flatter sky, smoking factories alone marking the horizon; but that is only our body, say rather our clothes and our packages. For our real self is seated under those pale green Alpine larches; or wandering through the silent streets, with the mountains at their end, of that beloved old town.

And so, since life is a journey, for Heaven's

sake let it be one which is sentimental. And, since we are nineteenth-century people, to whom stones and roof-tiles and rivers and hills can say things which are charming or touching as well as (and better than) Sterne's Fair Glovers and Marias and Chevaliers de St Louis, let us be on the lookout for passages of romance with places as much as with persons.

Such *amours de voyage* as these are necessarily, from the nature of the case, one-sided. But that makes them only the more honourable (precluding jealousy, fatuity, and every bitterness), and certainly, to my mind, more really romantic. For it seems to me certain (and all poetry is there to prove it, headed by the two most romantic personages that ever stepped, Duke Orsino and his Page) that all the finest romances always are one-sided. And this is a proof, not of the poverty of human nature, but of its occasional splendid richness. Since it is rich and handsome, and at the same time wonderfully well advised of human nature to get its most delectable emotions from art, the past and such part of the present as is unreal; making itself the little charming pocket divinities required for adoration, instead of picking up meteoric

stones and worshipping them merely because they have rained down from heaven.

In saying this much I have, of course, let the cat out of the bag of my argument. All that I call *amours de voyage* are (but so is the best part of all loving, whether of persons, art, ideas, or ideals) mere drama of the imagination; and of the nature of what discontented persons are pleased to call *unreality*. They exist only for those who can make them up, perceivable only to the feelings and fancy of which they are a part; satisfying like art, religions, philosophic systems, and all the things we make to suit our likings.

This can be happily illustrated by a particular kind of romantic episode which does actually come about, sometimes, in the course of an actual, literal, not metaphorical journey. The episode of tarrying, unnoticed, at the gate of persons wholly unknown, towards whom one yet feels friendly and almost familiar; making them up in one's mind gracious and meaningful like their dwelling; entering in the spirit a house whose threshold we never cross in the body. Such an incident happened not longer than last June to the writer of these lines; and the house,

name unknown, was a dear old schloss, half-farm, half-convent, not far from the Danube. It was sunset, and the big lime trees which kindly hid my companion and me by the gate, were filling the coolness and fragrance. All was still; but there began the little silent stirring of the evening. People came and went, taking no heed of us, between the main building and the stables and dairy. And presently, from out of the little walled garden, came two or three young girls, arm-in-arm and carrying their tennis-rackets; passing slowly, in the low light, across the lawn where some ducklings were nibbling. At the same moment, behind the windows of the long white house, one seemed to distinguish the heads of elderly ladies. . . . One had the feeling that it was by the merest accident or oversight that the doors of this house were not opened to one, and oneself led in as the expected friend. And yet, at the same while, there was the consciousness that it was better as it was, recognising that this imaginary one is perhaps the more satisfactory possession and intimacy.

Perhaps more satisfactory; at all events discreet, leaving other folk to *their* private little romances, and oneself to the weaving of

one's own. But there are other possibilities, and it seems that sometimes, under that moon which is exceptionally blue, and which shone so persistently upon Wilhelm Meister and other fortunate heroes, such little dreams do actually tail off, unexpected, into waking reality. The doors of the house are thrown open, the stranger Wilhelm (since Goethe is chiefly responsible for such stories) is admitted; delightful people are discovered within having tea or watching the sunset in the garden; all subjects under heaven are discussed, and fragments of autobiography exchanged. There are girls and children whose relationship is never explained but always taken for granted; and presiding grave yet pleasantly inconsequent personages, among whom one's instinct singles out, unhelped, the host or the hostess; also (to add point to the situation) there are mysterious objects about, books and pictures and so forth, which, if examined (of course they are not), *would reveal the name of the house and its inmates.* And thus on, for pages and pages, through more rooms filled with more delightful welcoming strangers, through orchards and across terraces, along field paths and woods (for these things partake of the topographical eccentri-

cities of dreamland) into countries beyond; on and on, in fruitful and friendly converse, more or less hand-in-hand, till we lose sight of them all, unknown hosts and unknown guests, down the dim avenues of time. . . .

But if that fabled adventure does not come off; and the friendly unknown house does not open its door to the wanderer; well, one continues one's journey along high roads and byways, both real and metaphorical, feeling the miles made shorter, the skies more luminous, by the remembrance of that imaginary little romance under the lime trees near the gate, by the charm of that one-sided *amour de voyage*.

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