

# THE CENTURY MAGAZINE.

VOL. XLV.

FEBRUARY, 1893.

No. 4.



## AN EMBASSY TO PROVENCE.

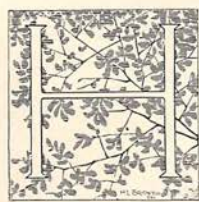
BY THOMAS A. JANVIER, SÒCI DÒU FELIBRIGE,

Author of "Stories of Old New Spain," "The Uncle of an Angel," "Color Studies," etc.,

WITH PICTURES BY A. CASTAIGNE.

### PART FIRST.

1.



HAD we not gone roundabout through devious ways in Languedoc,—being there-to beguiled by the flesh-pots of Collias, and the charms of the ducal city of Uzès, and a proper desire to look upon the Pont du Gard, and a longing for the shade of an illusive forest,—we might have made the journey from Nimes to Avignon not in a week, but in a single day. Had we made the journey by rail, taking the noon express, we could have covered the distance in three minutes less than a single hour.

The railroad, of course, was out of the ques-

tion. Geoffroi Rudel, even in the fever of his longing to take ship for Tripoli, and there breathe out his life and love together at his lady's feet, never would have consented to travel from Bordeaux to Cette by the *rapide*. To me, a troubadour's representative, the accredited Ambassador of an American poet to his friends and fellows of Provence, the *rapide* equally was impossible. Strictly, the nice proprieties of the case required that I should go upon my embassy on horseback or on foot. Consideration for the Ambassadors, however, forbade walking; and the only horses for hire in Nimes were round little ponies of the Camargue, not nearly up to my weight—smaller, even, than El Chico Alazan: whose size, in relation to my size, was wont to excite derisive comment among my friends in Mexico. The

outcome of it all was that — compromising between the twelfth and the nineteenth centuries — we decided to drive.

By a friend in whom we had every confidence, we were commended to an honest livery-man, one Noé Mourgue. It was ten in the morning when we went to the stables. Outside the door a lithe young fellow — a Catalan, with crisp black hair, a jaunty black mustache, and daredevil black eyes — was rubbing down a horse. To him we applied ourselves.

“M’sieu’ Noé is absent upon an affair,” the Catalan replied. “He is a witness at the Palais de Justice. It is most provoking. But he surely will return at noon. That is of necessity — it is his breakfast-hour. Even a court of justice is not so barbarous as to keep a man from his breakfast. Is it not so?”

We looked at carriages in the *remise*, — it all was delightfully like Yorick, and the “desobligeant,” and Monsieur Dessein, — but found nothing to serve our turn. The Catalan cheered us with the assurance that precisely what we wanted would come in that very night. At the moment, a commercial gent had it upon the road. It was a carriage of one seat, with a hood which could be raised or lowered, and in the rear was a locker wherein m’sieu’-madame could carry their samples with great convenience. It was in constant request among commercial folk, this carriage — not because of its elegance, but because of its comfort: it ran so smoothly that driving in it was like a dream!

A little after noon we returned to the stables. The Catalan had vanished, and the only live thing visible was a very old dog asleep on a truss of straw in the sun. The dog slowly roused himself, and gave an aged bark or two without rising from his place; whereupon a woman came down the spiral stair from the dwelling-place above. She was in a fine state of indignation, and replied to our question as to the whereabouts of the proprietor hotly. “The breakfast of M’sieu’ Noé is waiting for him,” she said. “It has been waiting for more than a quarter of an hour. If he delays another instant the whole of it will perish! What are these judges thinking of that they keep an honest man from his breakfast? It is an outrage! It is a crime!”

Even as she thus wrathfully delivered herself, Noé returned; but with so harried and hungry a look that ’t was plain this was no time to make a bargain with him. We assured him that our matter did not press; bade him eat his breakfast in peace, and to take his time over it; and to come to us, when it was ended, at our hotel — the Cheval Blanc.

When he presented himself, a couple of hours

later, he was in the most amiable of moods, and our bargain was struck briskly. Provided, he said, that we took the horse and carriage for not less than a week — here I interpolated that we should want it for a considerably longer period — we should have it for six francs a day; and, also, monsieur was to pay for the food of the horse. Nothing could be more reasonable than these terms. We accepted them without more words.

“And what sort of a horse does monsieur require?”

Monsieur replied that he required simply a good average horse; neither a sheep, nor yet a wild bull.

“Ah, the Ponette is precisely the animal suited to monsieur’s needs. She is a brave beast! Perhaps monsieur will not think her handsome, but he will acknowledge her worth — for she is wonderful to go! He must not hurry her. She is of a resolute disposition, and prefers to do her work in her own way. But if monsieur will give her her head, she will accomplish marvels — forty, even fifty, kilometers in a single day.” And as to the carriage, Monsieur Noé declared briefly that it was fit for the Pope.

The excellent Noé, be it remembered, came to us fresh from the Palais de Justice, and the strain of delivering himself under oath. We caught his veracity, as it were, on the rebound. There was truth in his statement, but the percentage of this element was not high. The Ponette, stocky, stolid, did have a considerable amount of dull endurance; but she was very much lazier than she was long. The carriage did run easily, for its springs were relaxed with age; but it was quite the shabbiest carriage that I ever saw. Indeed, when this odd outfit came to the door of the Cheval Blanc the next morning, I had grave doubts as to the fitness of associating the Embassy with a conveyance so utterly lacking in dignity.

Fortunately, one of the troubadours of Nimes happened along just then, and put heart into me. He had come to see us off upon our journey, and had brought to each of us, for a farewell offering, a poem in Provençal. They were exquisite, these little lays; and especially did the soul of thirteenth century song irradiate the one entitled “*Uno responso*” — which was addressed in what I am confident was purely imaginative reply to a strictly non-existent “Nourado,” on the absolutely baseless assumption that she had asked him, “What is Love?” I state the case with this handsome series of qualifying negations because — this troubadour being a stout gentleman, rising sixty, most happily married to a charming wife — the inference that his verses indicated a disposition to emulate the divided allegiance of Bernard de Ventadour is not tenable. But that Bernard would

have been proud to own this delicately phrased and gracefully turned poem will surprise no one learned in the modern poetry of Provence and Languedoc when I add that its writer was Monsieur Louis Bard.

nicety. "Take care never to wear a ripped garment," wrote the Sieur de Sescas; "better is it to wear one torn. The first shows a slovenly nature; the second, only poverty." Applying this rule to the carriage, Monsieur Bard pointed out

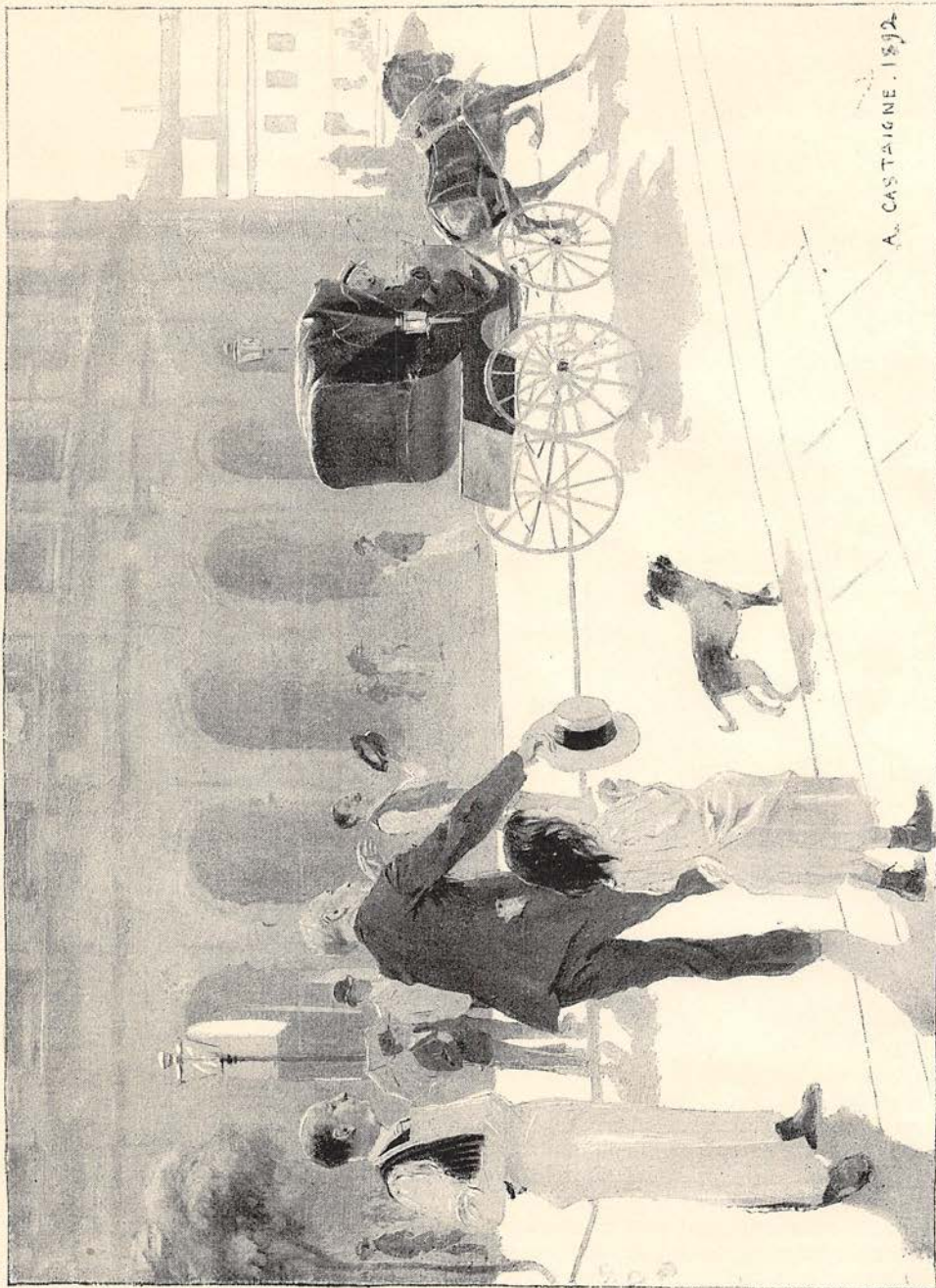


LOUIS BARD.

When we had accepted gratefully his offering of lays, I opened to him my doubts in regard to the fitness of our equipage; which doubts he resolved promptly by quoting from the rules laid down for the guidance of troubadours (and, therefore, for the ambassadors of troubadours) by Amaniéu de Sescas, a recognized past-master in the arts of love and war. A proper troubadour, according to this Gascon authority of the thirteenth century, must have "a horse of seven years or more, brisk, vigorous, docile, lacking nothing for the march." Monsieur Bard declared that the Ponette fulfilled these several conditions, excepting only that of briskness, to a

that while the slits in the leather were many, the rips were insignificantly few. And in triumphant conclusion he quoted: "There is no great merit in being well dressed when one is rich; but nothing pleases more, or has more the air of good breeding, than to be serviceably dressed when one has not the wherewithal to provide fine attire."

As our friend knew, this summing up of the matter fitted our case to a hair. More than satisfied with his reasoning, I ordered the valise to be stowed in the locker (in lieu of the samples which the Catalan had expected us to carry there); we mounted into our chariot; our poet



THE DEPARTURE FROM THE CHEVAL BLANC, NIMES.

bade us God-speed; the Ponette moved forward sluggishly—and the Embassy was under way!

## II.

OUR first intention had been to drive direct to Avignon; and we did, in fact, go out from Nîmes by the Avignon road. But there was not the least need for hurry. The troubadours of Provence did not even dream that an American embassy was on its way to them. There was no especial reason why we should be anywhere at any particular time. And out of these agreeable conditions came quickly our decision to drift for a while along the pleasant ways of Languedoc, taking such happiness as for our virtues should be given us, before we headed the lazy little Ponette eastward, and crossed the Rhône.

The tiny ducal city of Uzès seemed to be a good objective point; and it was the more alluring because on the way thither—at the village of Collias, on the Gardon—was an inn kept by one Bargeton, at which, as we knew by experience, an excellent breakfast could be obtained. It was the breakfast that settled matters. At St. Gervasy we turned northward from the highway into a cross-country road, a *chemin vicinal*; passed through the rocky *garrigue* region, and down to the river through a cañon that seemed to have gone adrift from the Sierra Madre; crossed the Gardon by a suspension-bridge, and so came into Collias an hour after noon.

On a very small amount of structural capital, the inn at Collias supports no less than three names. Along the end of it is painted in large letters "Café du Midi"; along the front, in larger letters, "Hôtel Bargeton"; over the main entrance is the enticing legend "Restaurant Parisien." Our previous visit had been upon a Sunday. Then, the establishment was crowded. Now it was deserted. As we drove through the arched gateway into the courtyard the only living creatures in sight were a flock of chickens, and two white cats with black tails. All the doors and windows were tight shut—for breakfast long since was over, and this was the time of day divinely set apart for sleep.

The noise of our wheels aroused Monsieur Bargeton. Presently a door opened, and he slowly thrust forth his head, and stared at us drowsily and doubtfully. Then, slowly, he withdrew his head and closed the door. From the fact that some minutes elapsed before he came forth in his shirt-sleeves, we inferred that at his first semi-appearance his attire had been even less complete.

"Yes, yes," he said, speaking in an injured tone, "breakfast can be had, of course. But it will not be a good breakfast, and it will not be

ready soon. The time for breakfast is long past. Everything must be prepared."

Fortunately, the end was better than this bad beginning promised. As he unharnessed the Ponette and stabled her, he shook off a little of his slumbrous heaviness, and his disposition toward us grew less severe. The old woman whom he summoned to his counsels, from some hidden depth of the house, put still more heart into him. After a conference with her, while we sat on a stone bench beneath a tree in the courtyard, he came to us with a statement full of encouragement. It was all right about the breakfast, he declared. Monsieur and madame should be well served with an omelet and sausages and fried potatoes; and then he came again to say that monsieur and madame should have a good cutlet and a salad; and yet later, with triumph, he announced that there was a melon for the dessert.

It was our fancy to have our breakfast served on the great stone table in the courtyard. Monsieur Bargeton did not approve of this arrangement,—the table, he said, was only for teamsters and such common folk,—but he yielded the point gracefully. Over one end of the table he spread a clean white cloth; set forth a service of clean, coarse chinaware; brought us very fair wine in a wine-cooler improvised from a watering-pot, and then the omelet was served, and our feast began.

No teamsters came to interfere with us. The only suggestion of one was a smart black wagon, on which, in gilded letters, was the legend: "Entrepôt de Bières, Uzès." While we were breakfasting, the beer-man came out from the inn, hitched up his horse, and drove away. He seemed to be surprised to find us eating there beside his wagon—but he said never a word to us, and never a word did we say to him. The black-tailed white cats breakfasted with us, the boldest of them jumping up on the far end of the table, beyond the limits of the cloth, and eating a bit of cutlet with a truly dainty and catlike grace; and while our meal went forward a delightful old woman in a white cap and a blue gown made a pretext of picking up sticks near by that she might gaze at us with a stealthy wonder. It all seemed like a bit out of a picture; and when Monsieur Bargeton, thoroughly awake and abounding in friendliness, came flourishing out to us with the coffee, we assured him that never had a breakfast been more to our minds.

Not until four o'clock—after an honest reckoning of eight francs and fifty centimes for our own and the Ponette's entertainment—did we get away; and evening was close upon us as we drove slowly up the hill whereon is the very high-bred and lovable little city of Uzès.

## III.

We had hoped that three days of absolute rest in Uzès would have put a trifle of spirit into the Ponette; but this hope was not realized. She came forth from her pleasant pastime

ran west again—afforded a circuitous line of approach to the Pont du Gard that was much more to our liking. Naturally, after having carefully looked out this route upon the map, and after having decided considerably to follow it, we abandoned it for something that we



BREAKFAST AT COLLIAS.

ENGRAVED BY M. HAIDER.

of eating her head off in Monsieur Bèchard's stables in precisely the same dull, phlegmatic condition that she went in. It was impossible to force her to a faster gait than a slow jog-trot. Left to herself—in accordance with her owner's fond suggestion—she instantly fell into a lumbering walk. But her loitering disposition was so well in accord with our own that we found little fault in her monumental slowness. There could be no greater happiness, we thought, than thus to go idling along through that lovely country in that bright weather while our hearts were as light within us as the summer days were long.

The highway leading eastward from Uzès served our purposes far too directly for us to follow it. A minor road—going around by the northeast to another road, which ran south to a third road, which, doubling on our course,

believed to be better before we had gone half a dozen miles.

Near the hamlet of Flaux we began the ascent of low mountains: a very desolate region of slate-gray rock, with here and there patches of scrub-oak (*chêne-vert*) growing in a meager soil. Beyond Flaux, off to the right among the oak-bushes, went a most tempting road. According to the map it was a *chemin d'exploitation*. Precisely what meaning attached to this term I did not know (I found out a little later); but the road possessed the obvious merit of leading directly across the mountain to the village of Vers, and thence the highway went onward to the Pont du Gard. Setting aside as irrelevant the fact that we had come out of our way for the express purpose of prolonging our journey, we decided to commit ourselves to this doubt-

ful pathway for the good reason that it was a short cut.

We had gone but a little way along it when we met a carter (a treacherous person, whose apparent kindness cloaked a malevolent soul) whose deliberate statement that the road was passable set us entirely at our ease. He himself had but just come from Vers, he said; and he gave us careful directions that we might not miss the way: We were to ascend the mountain, and to continue across the little plain that there was on top of it, until we came to a tall stone post at a fork in the road. This was a sign-post, but in the course of years the inscription upon it had weathered away. At this post we were to take the turn to the right—and then we would be in Vers in a twinkling.

After we left this betraying-beacon of a carter, the road rapidly grew rougher, and the growth of scrub-oak on each side of it became so thick as to be almost impenetrable. The four or five bare little stone houses of Flaux were the last which we saw in a stretch of more than six miles. It was a most dismal solitude, having about it that air of brooding and portentous melancholy which I have found always in rugged regions desert even of little animals and birds.

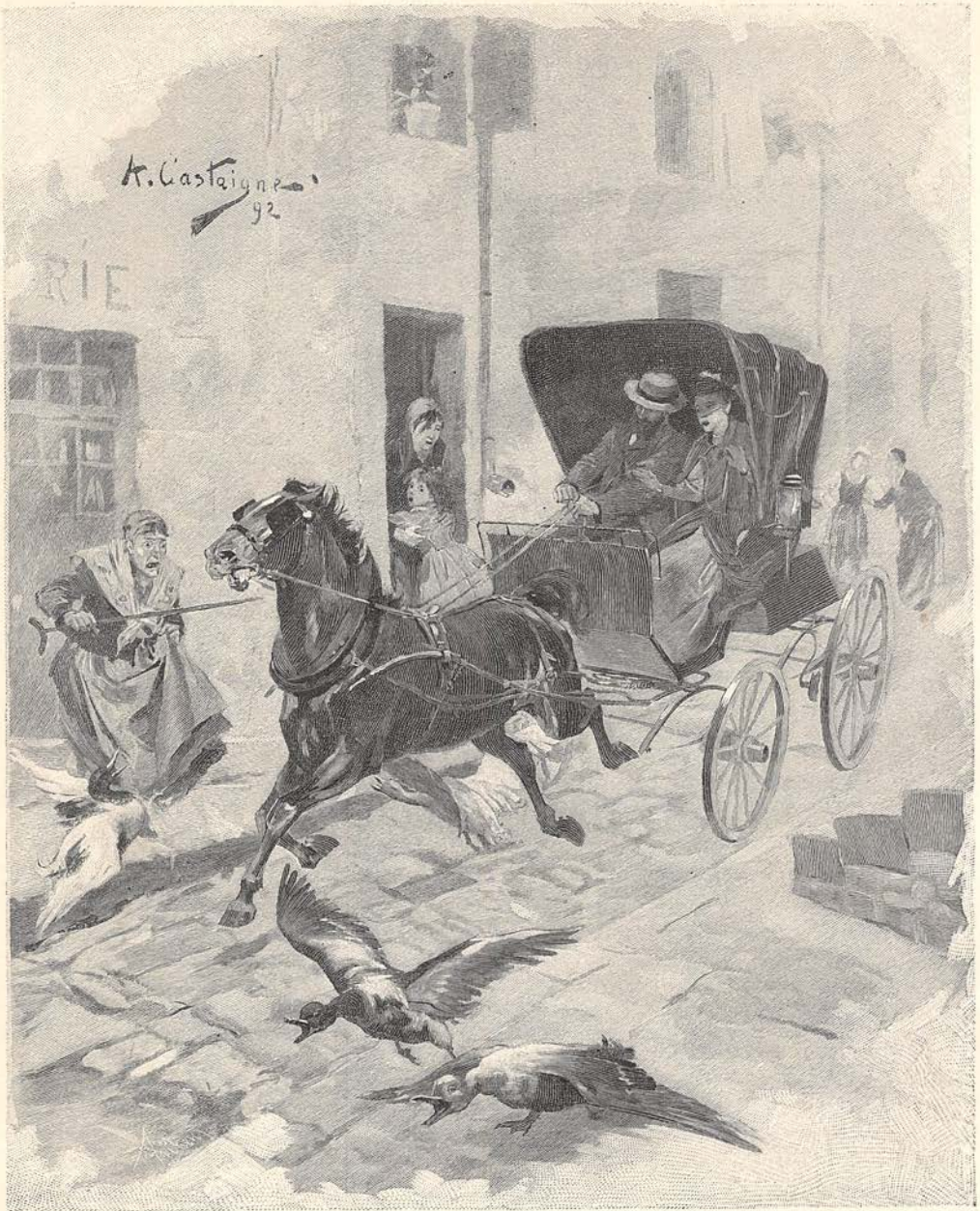
We came slowly to the plain upon the mountain-top, and to the sign-post whereon there was no sign; and there we took, as the perfidious carter had directed, the turning to the right. The road ran smoothly enough across the plain, but the moment that it tipped downhill it became very bad indeed. Before we had descended a dozen rods it was no more than the dry bed of a mountain stream, cumbered with boulders and broken by rocky ledges of a foot high, down which the carriage went with a series of appalling bumps. To turn about was impossible. On each side of the stream—I prefer to speak of it as a stream—the scrub-oak grew in a thick tangle into which the Ponette could not have thrust so much as her snubby nose. So narrow was the watercourse that the oak-bushes on each side brushed against our wheels. We were in for it, and whether we wanted to or not our only course was to keep on bumping down the hill. In my haste, I then and there cursed that carter bitterly; and I may add that in my subsequent leisure my curse has not been recalled. That he counted upon finding our wreck and establishing a claim for salvage I am confident. He may even have been following us stealthily, waiting for the catastrophe to occur. It is a great satisfaction to me that his pernicious project was foiled. By a series of miracles we pulled through entire; on the lower reaches of the mountain the stream became a road again; and as we swung clear from

the bushes,—getting at last safe sea-room off that desperate lee-shore,—we saw the houses of Vers before us, not a mile away.

## IV.

VERS is a very small town, certainly not more than a hundred yards across, but in the course of our attempt to traverse its tangle of streets—all so narrow that our carriage took up almost the entire space between the houses, and all leading down-hill—we succeeded in getting hopelessly lost. We descended upon the town at about five in the afternoon; at which peaceful hour the women-folk were seated before their house doors, in the shade of the high houses, making a show of knitting while they kept up a steady buzz of talk. Many of them had helpless babes upon their laps, and innocent little children were playing about their knees.

Our passage through the town even at a walk would have occasioned a considerable disturbance of its inhabitants. Actually, we spread consternation among them by dashing through the narrow streets almost at a run. This extraordinary burst of speed on the part of the Ponette—the only sign of spirit that she manifested during our whole journey—was due to extraneous causes. Just as we entered the town a swarm of vicious flies settled upon her sensitive under-parts, biting her so savagely that they drove her quite wild with pain. For a moment she stopped, while she made ineffectual kicks at her own stomach; then she darted forward, and all my strength was required to keep her off a run. The women and children shrieked and fled from our path; bolting into their houses and, most fortunately for all of us, taking their chairs in with them and so leaving us a clear course. At the little *grande place* I took what looked like the right turn, but it really was a doubling upon our course—and in a minute more we were charging down the very same street again, scattering the crowds assembled to talk about the cyclone and to gaze in the direction in which it had gone. As these people had their backs turned toward us, it was only by a miracle that they escaped alive. This time I took another turn from the *grande place*—grazing a young woman carrying a baby as I rounded the corner; skilfully swinging the Ponette away from an open door that she seemed bent upon entering; and then forward among a fresh lot of women knitting and talking at their ease. The Ponette seemed to be quite crazed. Twice I succeeded in almost stopping her, while I tried to ask my way out of that little devil of a town; and each time, in the midst of the answer, she made vain kicks at her luckless stomach, and then dashed forward



IN VERS.

ENGRAVED BY P. AITKEN.

like a simoom. Had I been driving a night-mare the situation could not have been worse.

A brave old man rescued us. While I held in the Ponette hard, he seized her bridle; and when he had calmed her by brushing away the tormenting flies, and I had explained that we were lost and had begged him to guide us to the highway, he smiled gently and in a moment had led us out from that entangling maze. The distance to the highway

proved to be less than two score yards—but then he knew what turns to take in that most marvelously crooked town!

In my gratitude I offered the old man money. He refused to accept it: "I cannot take monsieur's silver," he said politely. "Already I am more than paid. In all the seventy years of my life here in Vers, monsieur is the very first who has been lost in my little town. It is most interesting. It is enough!"



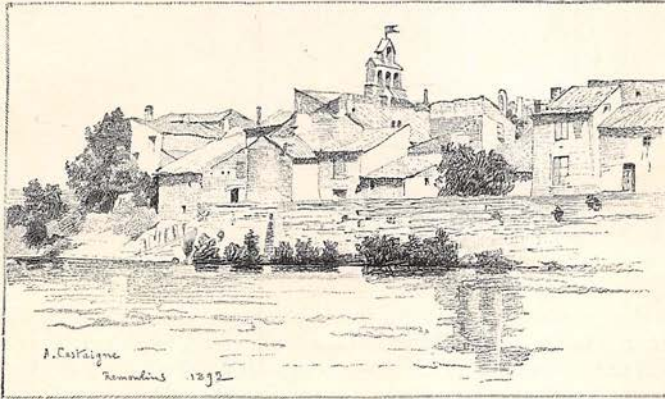
In this position he was firm. I thanked him again, warmly, and we drove away. When we had gone a short distance, I looked back. He was standing in the middle of the road gazing after us. His face was wreathed in smiles.

## v.

In going from Vers to the Pont du Gard, and thence to Remoulins, we were compelled to travel by the great highways; but in going from Remoulins to Avignon we fell once more into roundabout courses, taking a *route nationale* north to the village of Valliguières, that thence we might go east by a cross-

crest the sun was hanging low on the horizon above the summits of the Cévennes.

On the hilltop, with a sigh of thankfulness, the Ponette stopped; and for a while we did not urge her to go forward. Below us, in purple twilight, lay the Rhône valley, here widely extended by its junction with the valley of the Durance. On its farther side were the foothills of the Alps, with Mont Ventour standing boldly forward and rising high into the radiant upper regions of the air. Near at hand, down in the purple shadows, close beside the river, was a dark mass of houses and churches, sharply defined by surrounding ramparts, from the midst of which a huge



REMOULINS.

ENGRAVED BY J. NAYLOR.

country road which traversed a forest, according to the map, and therefore promised protection from the blazing rays of the August sun. On the map, this Forêt de Tavel made a fine showing. On the face of nature, the showing that it made was less impressive. In fact, when we reached it we found that we had come a full half-century too soon. For four or five miles we drove across rocky hills more or less covered with oak-bushes, which in time, no doubt, will become trees. But of trees actually grown, we saw in this distance precisely six. Unfortunately, they were scattered at intervals of half a mile or more apart. They would have been more impressive, would better have realized our crude American conception of a forest, had they been in a group.

It was because of our detour in search of the shade of trees which had only a cartographical existence that our coming to the hills bordering the Rhône westward was delayed until late in the afternoon; and the Ponette walked up the long ascent so slowly, and so frequently halted,—with a persuasive look over her shoulder that could not be refused,—that when at last we reached the

building towered to so great a height that all its upper portion was bathed in sunshine, while its upper windows, reflecting the nearly level sunbeams, blazed as with fire. And we knew that we were looking upon Avignon and the Palace of the Popes: and our hearts were filled with a great thankfulness—because in that moment was realized one of the deep longings of our lives.

The Ponette, with the carriage pushing behind her, went down the zigzag road, Les Angles, at an astonishing trot; but pulled up to her normal gentle pace on the level before we reached the bridge, and crossed that structure—over which a sarcastic sign forbade her to gallop—at an easy crawl. We did not try to hasten her pondering footsteps, being well content to approach slowly this city of our love: seeing below us the Rhône tossing like a little sea; on each side of us, in the central portion of the passage, the green darkness of the Isle Barthelasse; off to the left the surviving fragment of the bridge built seven hundred years ago by St. Bénézet of blessed memory; in front of us the high houses of the city rising above their encircling wall. Slowly we went onward, and in the

dusk of early evening we entered Avignon by the Porte de l'Oulle.

## VI.

WE had intended going to a modest, low-priced hotel—"un peu à l'écart, mais recommandé," as the guide-book put it—in the central portion of the town. The civic guard

lead the Ponette to her quarters, manifested a sense of the indignity put upon the establishment by interrupting my orders as to oats with a curt, "But yes, m'sieu'; I know, I know," and going off with his nose ranged well in air.

It came upon us with a shock, this show of scorn. In the little towns where we had halted during the week that our journey had lasted



THE PALACE OF THE POPES, AVIGNON.

ENGRAVED BY C. SCHWARZBURGER.

who halted us at the gate—to request our assurance that our cargo in the after-hold was of a sort upon which the *octroi* had no claim—gave us with the good will of a true Provençal the most precise directions as to how this hotel was to be reached. Having thus directed us, he said frankly that we probably would get lost on the way thither, but added that anybody whom we met would be glad to set us on our course anew. This warning, and a single glance into the labyrinth before us, determined me against essaying the adventure. After our experience in Vers,—and Avignon was to Vers as a haystack to a wisp of hay,—I had no fancy again to try conclusions with a maze; and I was the more easily seduced from this dangerous endeavor by finding, not a dozen rods within the city gate, the friendly doorway of an inn.

It was the Hôtel de l'Europe, the most magnificent establishment in Avignon; the hotel to which, above all others, we had decided that we would not go. Without a moment's hesitation I drove the hopelessly vulgar Ponette and our shabby carriage through the open archway and across the courtyard to the main entrance. The *gérant* received us coldly; the waiters, in evening dress, regarded us with an open disdain. Even the stable-boy, called to

we everywhere had been well received. At Tavel, where we had breakfasted that very day,—'t was a village that I had hesitated about entering in such poor array because of the sign at its outer limits: "A Tavel la mendicité est interdite,"—our host had volunteered the handsome statement that the Ponette was a *bonne bête* with legs of iron; and he had spoken in tones of conviction which left no room for doubting that his admiration for her was sincere. But at Tavel, and through the whole of that happy week, we had been among the simple children of nature; in coming to the Hôtel de l'Europe, as we now sharply realized, we once more were in touch with that highly conventionalized phase of civilization known as fashionable society, and were subject to its artificial laws.

As we were led to our gilded and red-velveted apartment,—with a man in waiting to brush the Ambassador's rusty coat, and a maid to bring hot water for the Ambassador,—I could not but feel a shuddering dread that my mission might prove a failure after all! What if the Provençal poets should resent—even as the *gérant* and the waiters so obviously resented—the lowly state in which the American Embassy had come?

T. A. Janvier.



AN EMBASSY  
TO  
PROVENCE.

BY THOMAS A. JANVIER, SÒCI DÒU FELIBRIGE,

Author of "Stories of Old New Spain," "The Uncle of an Angel," "Color Studies," etc.,

WITH PICTURES BY A. CASTAIGNE.

PART SECOND.



I.

HAVING been swayed by considerations partly diplomatic and partly personal, the Embassy had gone from America to Provence by a route which

gave it no opportunity, so to speak, for changing cars. Diplomatically, the hope was entertained that by thus ignoring all other nations and principalities a more favorable impression would be made upon the high poetic powers to which it was accredited. Personally, the danger was recognized that if the Embassy — being by nature errant — were given large opportunities to stray, years might elapse before it arrived at its destination; to say nothing of the possibility that it might never get there at all.

Under constraint of these convictions our course had been shaped. On a gray morning in April we had taken ship at New York, and had glided out through the gray mists which enveloped the harbor into the gray waste of the Atlantic. Gray weather clung to us. Mist overhung the land when at last we sighted it, and Cape St. Vincent and Cape Trafalgar loomed large through a cold haze; when we

passed the Rock, the base whereof was hidden in a mass of cloud, that considerable excrescence upon the face of nature seemed to have started adrift in the upper regions of the air; mist clung about the lower levels of the east coast of Spain, hiding the foundations of the snow-capped mountains, and leaving only their gleaming crests defined against the cold sky; even the Gulf of Lyons was chill and gray. And at the end of all this, in a flood of May sunshine, Marseilles — in its glow and glory of warm color — burst upon us like a rainbow-bomb.

From Marseilles to Avignon, by the *rapide*, the journey is made in precisely two hours. The time consumed by the Embassy, however, in its passage between these points was three months and four days. I mention this fact in order to exhibit in a favorable light our wisdom in choosing a direct route across the Atlantic. Had our landing been made at any port on the northern coast of Europe, with the consequent beguiling opportunities for lateral travel which then would have opened to us, I am confident that even now we would be working our way southward amidst enticing winds and luring currents toward our still far distant goal. It was only our firmness in resisting at the very outset all these attractive possibilities

that in the end brought us to Avignon in what, I think, was a reasonably short space of time.

Aside, however, from the predilection of the Embassy for devious rather than direct ways, there were large considerations of policy which made advisable a slow advance from Marseilles northward. For the adequate discharge of our mission, it was very necessary, before presenting our credentials and opening official relations with the poets of Provence, that we should enlarge our knowledge of themselves, their literature, and their land. In truth, our fund of ignorance touching all these matters vastly exceeded our fund of information—a lack of equipment for which I should be disposed to apologize were it not so entirely in keeping with all the traditions of American diplomacy.

Our whole store of knowledge was no more than a mere pinch of fundamental facts: that about the end of the third decade of the present century a poet named Joseph Roumanille had revived Provençal as a literary language; that to this prophet had come, as a disciple, Frédéric Mistral, who presently developed into a conquering and convincing apostle of the new poetic faith; that to these two had been gathered five other poets; that the seven, all dwelling in or near Avignon, had united—about the middle of the century—in founding a brotherhood of Provençal poets to which they gave the name of the *Félibrige*; that, in the course of years, this brotherhood had come to be a great society with branches, or affiliated organizations, in various parts of France and even in Spain. But of the poetry which these poets had written we knew nothing at first hand. We had not seen, even, either of the English versions of Mistral's "*Mirèio*"—the one by Miss Harriet W. Preston, the other by Mr. Charles Grant. In short, the position of the Embassy toward Provençal literature was as finely unprejudiced as the most exhaustive ignorance could bring to pass.

## II.

ON the other hand, the Embassy did possess a considerable store of knowledge in regard to the group of Avignon poets personally; and all of it tended to induce a prejudice of a most kindly sort.

Eleven years before our mission was undertaken, the American troubadour whom we represented had made a poet's pilgrimage to Avignon, and had been taken promptly to his brother poets' hearts. How unexpected and how delightful had been his experience best may be exhibited by a citation from the record made at the time by the historian to the expedition—who thus wrote, under date of the 8th and 10th of April, 1879:

"We have made a great discovery—a 'nest' of Provençal poets, all living and writing here at Avignon. Our own poet spent the morning with them yesterday, and came home bringing an armful of their books; from which, last evening, H—— read us some of the translations, which are very charming. One of the poets is Mr. Bonaparte Wyse, an Irishman and a cousin of Napoleon III. He makes this his home for a part of the year, and writes the poetry of Provence. . . .

"We had a most interesting day yesterday. The little company of poets ('*félibres*') have united in doing honor to our poet and H——. They came, brought by Mr. Wyse, their interpreter, to invite us to a '*felibrijado*'—a meeting, a dinner, speeches, poems, songs, everything delightful. We had been to Vaucluse for the afternoon—on our way home passing Mont Ventour with its snowy peaks, and the hills with their olive-trees and cypress dark against a pale golden sky. It was evening when we reached the hotel and found them all waiting for us in the little square dining-room.

"Mr. Wyse presided at dinner, with H—— and the Boy beside him: H—— wearing a bunch of starry blue periwinkle, the flower of Provence, in her hair. Opposite to them sat M. Roumanille (founder of the School), with our poet beside him; and for my neighbor I had M. Mathieu, the oldest of the poets. Two young men were on the other side: M. Gras, and another whose name I do not recall. Each one has a device and a name by which he is known among the '*félibres*'—one a '*cricket*,' another a '*butterfly*.'

"After dinner a cup of *Château-neuf* was passed, and every one in turn made a speech and gave a toast. We were loaded to embarrassment with compliments, and our own modest little speeches—through Mr. Wyse's interpretation—were transformed into flowers of sentiment. The Boy, to his delight, saw very near him a dish of his favorite sponge-cakes—of which he sometimes had been allowed two as a special favor and treat, and to which he had given the name of '*biffies*.' Kind old M. Mathieu helped him to these without limit—as H—— and I, happening to look at the dish, and seeing its great diminishment, suddenly perceived to our consternation.

"The dinner over, they led us up a dark old stairway into a long hall, dimly lighted, at one end of which a little candle-lit table was laid with coffee and delicious crystal-like cordials. The hall had been, years ago, a meeting-place of the Knights Templar; and there were still signs remaining of a little chapel there, set apart. Indeed, it all was like a little bit of the middle ages. After we had had our coffee, they gave us their songs and poems: one of the younger

men stood up while he sang a sort of troubadour march to battle, his voice ringing through the great dim hall. M. Roumanille recited some Christmas verses, full of fine solemn tones; M. Mathieu, a little poem with the refrain *Catoun! Catoun!*—keeping time with his own airy gestures and waves of the hand as graceful as the lines. Mr. Wyse gave us some translations of Walt Whitman into Provençal verse. Madame Roumanille, too, repeated a poem for us—and our own Poet brought some verses which he had written at Vacluse that afternoon and which H—— read in their French translation. They gave us some choruses. Many of their voices were rich and musical. Then H—— repeated for them those lines of Keats, beginning:

O for a draught of vintage, that hath been  
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country-green,  
Dance, and Provençal song, and sun-burnt  
mirth!

and although they could not understand the words they felt their wonderful melody.

“It was very late when we went home through the quiet streets, escorted by two or three of our entertainers—one of them carrying the Boy. He had been safely tucked away in a bed at the hotel after dinner, and did not wake except—his head on his own little pillow—to say once (still dreaming of poets and sponge-cakes), ‘Nuff biffies!’”

Upon our troubadour's store of delightful memories (only a part of which are referred to in the foregoing citation of history) we had drawn so often and so freely that these Provençal poets had come to be to us—while as yet our very existence was unknown to them—our own familiar friends. Time and again we had fancied ourselves knocking at one or another of their doors in Avignon; and thereafter, as we entered, receiving the welcome which we knew would be given us so warmly because of our coming as the vicars of one whom they knew and loved.

And yet, being landed at Marseilles, close to these friendly doors which we were sure would be standing wide for us the moment that our status as ambassadors was known, we deliberately chose to make our approach to Avignon by methods so slow, and by courses so roundabout, that we spent three months upon a journey that could have been made in less than that many hours.

### III.

OUR tarrying, as I have said, was the outcome of our intuitive perception of the requirements of diplomacy. Those whom we so longed

to know were not mere ordinary men: they were poets. For us to cast ourselves upon them ignorant of their poetry would be a grave discourtesy; almost an affront. Common politeness, no less than our own interest, commanded that we should seek in their writings for that understanding of their tone of thought, their purposes, their aspirations, which would enable us to meet them upon a common ground. And we realized that hand in hand with this study of their literature should go a study of their fellow-countrymen and of the land in which they lived. For which several reasons we perceived that the case of the Embassy was one that required slowness in order to assure speed.

At Marseilles, in the very first book-shop that we entered, the very first book that we bought was Roumanille's “Oubreto en Vers.” It was to Roumanille, the Capoulié, the head, of the *Félibres*, that the Embassy specifically was accredited. Therefore was it fitting that our first purchase should be the volume in which his first poems are included—the sparks of pure fire which kindled anew the flame of Provençal literature in modern times.

The poems were in Provençal only. There was no French translation. Fortunately the Ambassador—possessing an equipment of Spanish, Italian, and French, together with a certain skill in Latin—found the conquest of this language easy; and the Ambassador profited by her gift of tongues to become acquainted with the spirit of Roumanille's verse. It was a most genuine poetry, and popular in the better sense of that injured word. With few exceptions, the themes were of a sort which countryside folk readily would comprehend; commonplace subjects made relishing, and at the same time shifted wholly away from the commonplace, by delicate turns of poetic sentiment or an infusion of genial humor or a sharp thrust of homely wit. Very many of the poems were homilies; but so gaily or so tenderly disguised that each went fairly to its mark without arousing any of that just resentment which is apt to annul the benefits supposed to be conferred by homilies of the usual sort. It was easy to see in these poems how and why Roumanille had laid hold upon the hearts of his countrymen. We ourselves, though losing much of their rich flavor of local allusion, yielded instantly to the blending of grace, freshness, humor, manliness, naïveté, which gave them so peculiarly original a charm.

In the same book-shop we found another volume of poems which greatly stirred us: “*Lou Roumançero Prouvençau*” of Félix Gras. In our then ignorance, we barely knew this poet's name. But we had read no farther than “*Lou Papo d'Avignoun*” and “*Lou baroun*



ROUMANILLE.

de Magalouno" when our minds were made up that here was a singer of ballads whose tongue was tipped with fire. They whirled upon us, these ballads, and conquered our admiration at a blow. We knew by instinct—what time and greater knowledge have shown to be the truth—that of all the Provençal poets whom we soon were to encounter none would set our heartstrings more keenly a-thrilling than did this fiery ballad-maker, Monsieur Gras.

It was in another book-shop, the friendly establishment of Monsieur Boys,—a shop pervaded by that delightful smell of mustiness which, being peculiar to old books, sets every bookman's soul on the alert for the finding of treasures,—that we came upon Mr. Grant's unrhymed English version of "Mirèio"; and so were able (having already bought the edi-

tion in which is the author's parallel translation into French) to essay the reading of Mistral's first poem with the double advantage of his own French version and of this literal English key.

English and Provençal, be it remarked, are more closely allied in genius than are Provençal and French. They have in common an honest directness, a sonorous melody, a positive strength; and even many almost identical words—for which reasons Provençal may be resolved into English with a close approach to literal exactness, and with little loss of the essence of the original phrase. Mr. Grant's translation of "Mirèio," it must be confessed, is not a brilliant illustration of these facts; but in Miss Preston's rhymed English version of the poem (at that time unknown to us) many

felicitous passages show how successfully the soul and the body of the original may be transferred into English verse.

But these considerations of the verbal mechanism of translation came later. When we first read "Mirèio" we thought only of the poem itself: a perfectly simple story of country life which Mistral's genius has exalted to the plane of the heroic; an idyl which rises from height to height until it becomes a tragedy; a strain of pure melody throughout. Having read it—and after it "Nerto," "La Rèino Jano," "Calendau," and the exquisite shorter poems, "Lis Isclo d'Or"—we were at no loss to understand why Mistral is called Master by his brethren of the Félibres.

Still another book did we find in a Marseilles book-shop, which so substantially increased our store of necessary knowledge that I desire to place formally on record here my gratitude to its author: Monsieur Paul Mariéton. This book, "La Terre Provençale," is a treasury of information concerning the Félibres and all their works and ways; a blending of kindly personal gossip—so frank and so confidential that those about whom the author writes rise up in the flesh before the reader's eyes—with a mass of accurate information about what these celebrities in the world of letters have accomplished, and about the beautiful land in which they live.

I did not venture to hope, while I was reading this book with so much satisfaction, that in the fullness of a fortunate time its author would become my friend; and I certainly did not imagine (though this also has come to pass) that my life would be made a torment to me by receiving from Monsieur Mariéton letters in a handwriting so bewilderingly chaotic that to read them requires in every instance a special inspiration from on high.

And so, through the weeks and the months which followed our landing at Marseilles, we added constantly to our stock of books and to our store of literary knowledge; while from various points of vantage—Montpellier, Arles, Aiguesmortes, Tarascon, Beaucaire, Nîmes—we softly spied upon the land. Through all this time we found growing within us a stronger and yet stronger love for a people and a literature whereof the common characteristics are graciousness, and manliness, and absolute sincerity, and warmth of heart. And all was so satisfying and so entrancing that the three months and four days during which we were upon our journey from Marseilles to Avignon seemed to us no more than a single bright spring morning: wherefore, as we sank to rest that night amidst the excessive gilding and red velvet of the Hôtel de l'Europe, we counted the evening of our coming to Avignon—as it

truly might have been had we gone direct from our ship to the train—but the evening of our first day in France.

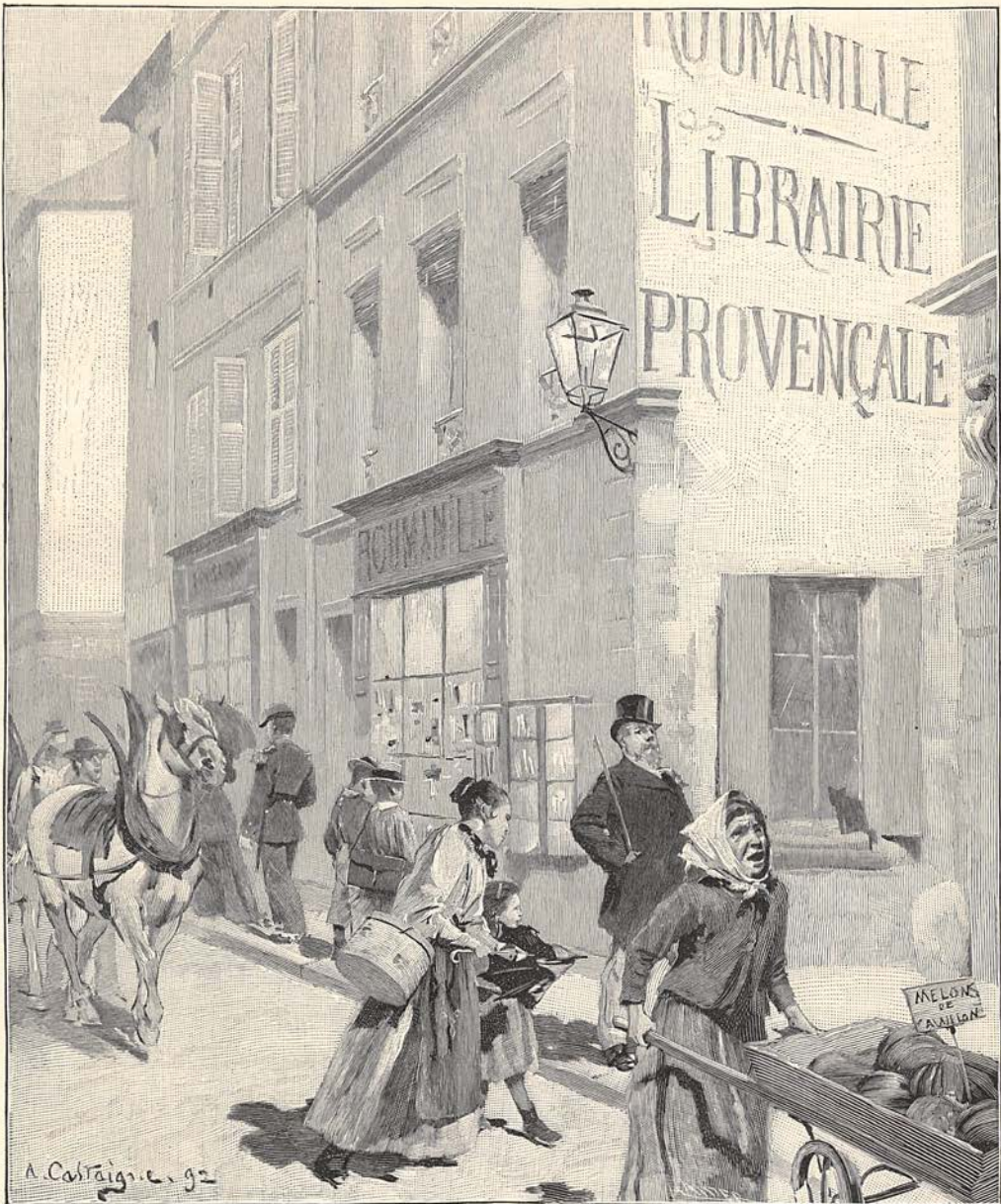
#### IV.

OUR hearts were beating many more than the normal number of beats to the minute when we set forth to deliver to the Capoulié of the Félibres the credentials of our Embassy.

These credentials—therein following primitive Mexican customs—were wholly pictorial. They consisted simply of four photographs: of the American troubadour whom we represented; of his dame; of their children; of their great dog. My instructions were to present these empowering documents to Roumanille, in his official capacity as Capoulié of the Félibres, and to tell him that with them came the love of those to whom love had been given by the poets of Provence eleven years before. And I was to add that in America still were cherished warm and grateful memories of those glad evenings in the old house (the abiding-place of the Templars in Queen Jano's time) where the poet Anselme Mathieu in most unbusinesslike fashion carried on the business of hotel-keeping: when the corks flew out in mellow cannonading from old bottles of precious Châteauneuf du Pape, wine consecrate to the félibrien festivals; when all the poets wrote poems to their brother from afar; when the ancient vaulted hall of the Templars rang with the echoes of iambic laughter, and with the choruses of Provençal songs.

Knowing that English was a sealed language to Roumanille, I ventured to add to my pictorial credentials some written words which had the appearance of being English verse. The sentiments embodied in these supposititious verses would stand translation into French prose creditably; and I had the more confidence in their kindly reception because the Ambassadors had encompassed them with a decorative border of olive-branches, amidst which were blazoned the arms of Avignon and of our own country together with the emblem of the Félibres, a *cigale*. This illusive manuscript being inclosed in the official-looking envelop which contained the authoritative photographs, the Embassy moved out in good order from its too-magnificent quarters, and with a becoming dignity advanced upon Roumanille's book-shop in the Rue St. Agricol.

From the Hôtel de l'Europe to the Rue St. Agricol is a walk of but five minutes. As we rounded the corner from the Rue Joseph Vernet, we saw our Mecca before us—plainly marked by a sign on which was the legend in tall yellow letters: "Roumanille. Librairie



SHOP OF ROUMANILLE.

ENGRAVED BY M. HAIDER.

Provençale." Here, together, Roumanille had both his shop and his home. Directly across the street was the church of St. Agricola, wherein, in reverent faith, this good old man worshiped through so many years.

The door of the shop stood open. We entered into a bookman's paradise. The room, large and lofty, was packed with books from floor to ceiling; books were spread out upon tables; books were on nearly every chair; boxes of books and piles of books encumbered the

VOL. XLV.—87.

floor. In the midst of this bibliographic jungle, at a desk everywhere littered with books and papers, sat Roumanille himself: a sturdy, thick-set man of medium height; gray hair; beard and mustache clipped short and grizzled almost to white; fresh complexion; kindly light-brown eyes twinkling humorously under bushy gray brows; a racy and at the same time a very sweet and winning smile.

He rose slowly, and in accepting the package, and in listening to the message that ac-





PORTRAIT OF MLE. ROUMANILLE. QUEEN OF THE FELIBRES, 1885-1892.

companied it (which message the Ambassador prudently delivered through the medium of the Ambassadors), he manifested so marked a hesitation as to strengthen our already aroused fears that the Embassy might be rejected by the Power to which it came. Later, when cordial relations were fully established, he explained matters. What with the appearance of the Ambassador (who by some twist of atavism has reverted to the type of his ancestors of three hundred years ago, dwellers in almost this very part of France), and the fluent French of the Ambassadors, his mind was all at sea. There seemed to be no reasonable connection between the messengers, who apparently were his own country-folk, and the message that they brought from friends who certainly belonged in a distant part of the world. Not until the message had been repeated and explained a little, and the opening of the package had discovered the well-known faces, was the whole matter clear to him. And then what a welcome we received!

Madame Roumanille was summoned, and their daughters Mademoiselle Thérèse and Mademoiselle Jeanne, to take part in welcoming the representatives of the friends who had come and gone eleven years before—but who were remembered as freshly and warmly as though their visit had been upon the previous day.

From the shop we were led through the dining-room to the salon—a large room at the back of the house, facing south and flooded with sunshine, which gained individuality from delightful old-fashioned furniture, interesting pictures and curious antique bric-à-brac, and a Provençal tambourine and pipe hung upon the wall. Instantly our photographic credentials were ranged along the front of the piano-forte, and the whole family burst forth into eager exclamations and questionings.

“It is Monsieur and Madame to the very life! Just as they were eleven years ago!”

“And the children—how lovely they are! There was only one then. Can it be that it was this one—this tall boy? Impossible! He was but a baby. We gave him cakes!”

“And the gentle young lady who was with them—so quiet and so sweet. Why is not her photograph with these?”

“Heavens! How huge a dog! A St. Bernard—is it not so?”

“Ah, if only it were not their pictures, but themselves!”

Naturally, it was the elders whose talk was reminiscent and comparative. When the American troubadour came with his train to Avignon Mademoiselle Thérèse was but a slip of a girl, and Mademoiselle Jeanne was but a baby of two years old. But we found a pleasant proof

of how well the visit had been kept alive in the elders' hearts, and of how much it must have been talked about, in the fact that the little Jeanne was quite sure that she herself remembered it all very well!

No one can refuse to credit the people of the south of France with warm hearts. But it is customary with travelers of a certain sort—possessors of acrid souls incased in thin-blooded bodies—to seek an apology for their own genuine coldness by aspersing this genuine warmth with such terms as “impulsiveness” and “emotional effervescence,” and by broadly denying that its source is more than a momentary blaze. Let such as these observe that we found that day in Avignon still burning warmly and steadily a fire of friendship lighted at a chance meeting and fed only by half a dozen letters in eleven years!

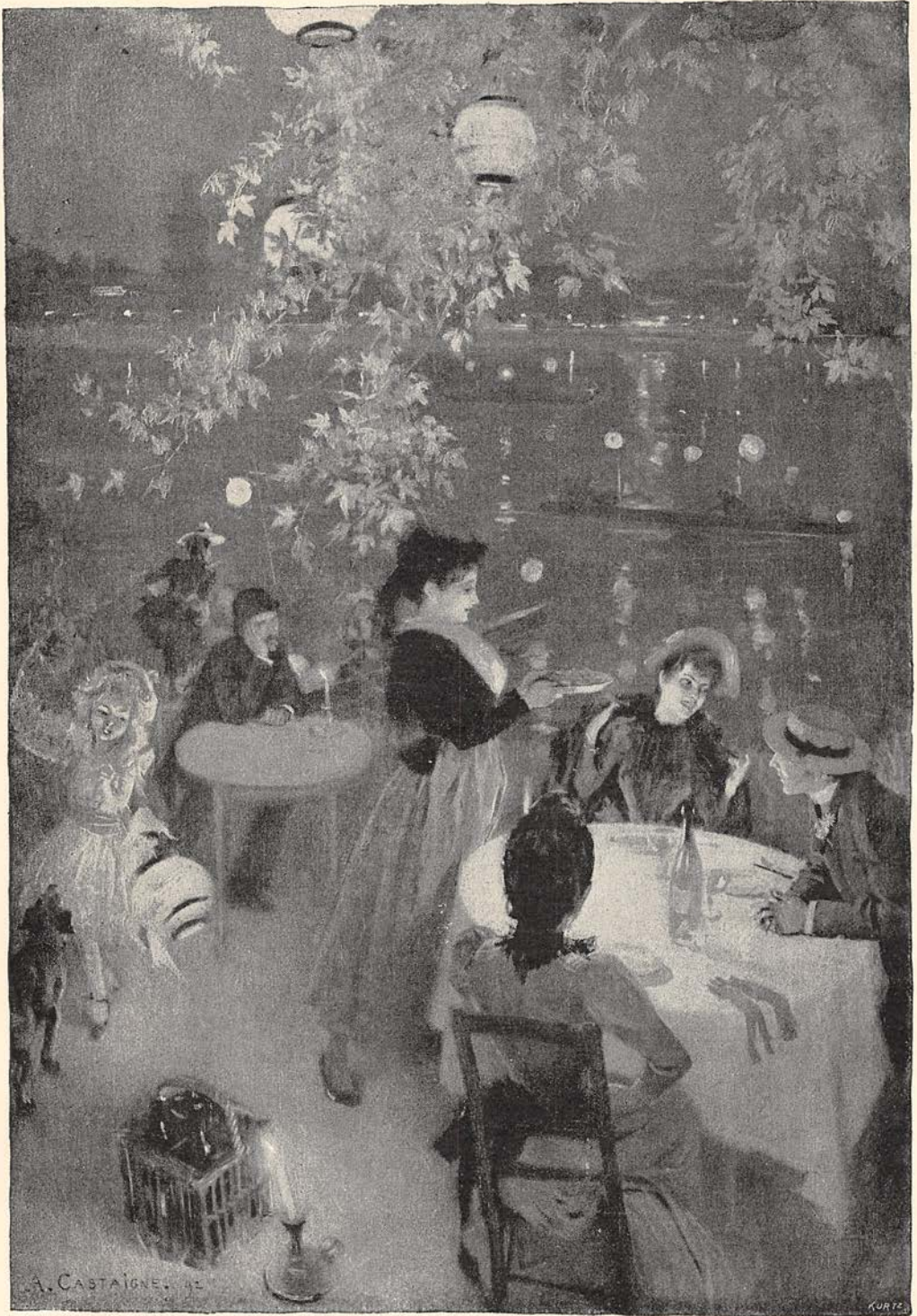
## v.

WHEN these kindly souls in part had satisfied their eager desire for news of the American troubadour and of those belonging to him, they diverted their interest in a hospitable fashion to his ambassadors, and with a genuine heartiness pressed us with questions concerning ourselves.

They were delighted when we told them that we had preferred to shun Paris, and to come directly from America to their own beautiful city of Marseilles; and more delighted to find that our plan for a whole summer of travel was a circuit of not much more than a hundred miles in Languedoc and Provence. As to our method of traveling,—in the shabby little carriage drawn by the infinitely lazy little mare,—they set our minds at rest in a moment by protesting that it was nothing less than ideal. And then they listened with great sympathy to the narrative of our small adventures by the way since our departure from Nîmes. When we came to our entanglement in Vers, and the vast commotion with which our cyclonic passage had filled that very little town, dear old Roumanille fairly held fast to his comfortably fat sides and laughed until his cheeks were a-stream with tears. It was better, he vowed, than any farce!

When we touched upon the more serious side of our undertaking, our desire to study the new literature that in these latter days had blossomed so vigorously in Provence, their interest took a correspondingly serious turn; and the pleasure that our purpose gave them obviously was deep and grave.

Roumanille was gratified when we told him that his “Oubreto en Vers” was the cornerstone of our Provençal library; the book that we had bought first of all. Speaking of it naturally brought to our minds the other volume that we had bought in the same shop and on the same day, and in very emphatic terms we



ON THE ISLE DE LA BARTHELASSE.

expressed our admiration for "Lou Rouman-cero Prouvençau," and for its author, Monsieur Félix Gras. Before our eulogy was half concluded the entire family broke in upon us in chorus.

"*Mon frère!*" from Madame.

"*Mon beau-frère!*" from Roumanille.

"*Mon oncle!*" from the girls together.

Mademoiselle Jeanne sprang up and brought us a photograph of this dear uncle. "Ah!" she said, "you must hear him sing his poems—then you will know what they really are!"

This discovery that we had in France, as well as in America, a common center of affection brought our hearts still more closely together: it was almost as though we had discovered—as was not impossible—a relationship of blood.

In truth, all this warm friendliness stirred me curiously. More and more the feeling was pressed in upon me that I was returning—after a long, long absence—to my own people and my own home. A like feeling surprised me when I first drifted across our southwestern border and found myself among the semi-Latins of Mexico; but the feeling was far stronger—from the very moment of my landing in Marseilles—among these my kinsfolk of the Midi. Truly, I was of them. The old tie of blood was revived strenuously by the new tie of affection. For all the two centuries and a half of separation, in coming back to them I was coming home.

## VI.

In the evening of this happy day these new friends of ours—who already seemed to be such old friends—carried us with them to the pleasure-place dear to every soul in Avignon, but especially dear to the *Félibres*: the Isle de la Barthelasse.

Through the narrow streets we walked together: Roumanille bubbling over with wit; Madame abounding in kindness; the demoiselles like merry little birds. They apologized (quite as though it were a personal matter) because there was no moon—and we assured them that no apology was necessary; that we were more than satisfied with the mellow radiance of the Provence stars.

The Isle de la Barthelasse extends along nearly the whole front of Avignon in the middle of the Rhone. From the high causeway crossing it (and so uniting the suspension bridges which here span the divided river) pathways descend to the low, wooded island, but little above the level of the rapid stream. In among the trees is a restaurant; and in front of it, directly upon the river-side, are ranged many little semicircular booths of wat-

tered cane—mere shelters against the wind, which lie fairly open toward the water and have no roofs but the sky. Into one of these Roumanille led us—that we elders might have coffee and cognac together, while the demoiselles drank syrup and water as became their fewer years.

It is the gayest and sweetest place for merry-making, this Isle de la Barthelasse, that ever a poet found. Our booth, and all the booths about us, shone bright with the light of candles guarded by tall, bell-shaped glass shades; among the trees gleamed lanterns, lighting up the winding paths. At our very feet was the dashing river. Half seen in the starlight, across the tumbling and swirling dark water that here and there was touched with gleams of reflected light, were the walls and the houses of the ancient city. There was a constant undertone of sound made up of the rustling of the wind in the branches above us, and the gay chatter of the river with its banks, and the gurgle and hissing of little breaking waves; above this confused murmur, there came floating to us across the water strains of music from a military band playing on the Promenade de l'Oulle; all around us was a rattle of talk and a quiver of laughter; and, as the spirit moved them, one or another of our light-hearted neighbors, or a whole group of them together, would burst forth into song. It was as though an opera had broken its bonds of unreality and had become real.

In keeping with our joyous surroundings, Roumanille's talk was of the festivals of the *Félibres*; and mainly of the great annual festival, whereof the patroness is the blessed Sainte Estelle, whose symbol is the star of seven rays. On this notable occasion the four great divisions of the organization—corresponding with the four great dialects of the Langue d'Oc—are convened at one or another of the towns of southern France for the celebration of floral games; which games are competitions in belles-lettres, and derive their name from the fact that the prize awarded to the victor is a gold or silver flower. They have come tripping down lightly through six centuries, these games, being a direct survival of troubadour times.

At the banquet which follows the literary tournament, the sentiment of amity and comradeship which is the corner-stone of the organization is emphasized by the ceremony of the loving-cup. Holding aloft the silver vessel—the gift of the *Félibres* of Catalonia to the *Félibres* of Provence—the Capoulié sings the Song of the Cup, whereof the words are by Mistral and the setting a ringing old Provençal air, and the chorus is taken up by all the joyous company; after which the cup is passed from lip to lip and hand to hand.



A FESTIVAL OF THE FÉLIBRES—“TO MISTRAL.”

ENGRAVED BY HENRY WOLF.

A. CASTAIGNE  
1872

Henry Wolf sc.

With due deference to the mystic influence of their star of seven rays, the Félibres celebrate each recurring seventh annual festival with increased dignity and splendor. Then great prizes are contended for; and the winner of the chief prize wins also the right to name the Queen whose reign is to continue during the ensuing seven years. The requirements of the royal office are youth, beauty, and faith in the ascendancy of the Provence poets' star. It was at Montpellier, in 1878, that the first queen was chosen: the bride of the then Capoulié, Mistral. The second, Mademoiselle Thérèse Roumanille, was chosen at Hyères, in 1885. We bowed to this sovereign, as Roumanille spoke, in recognition of the accuracy with which in her case the conditions precedent to poetic royalty had been observed.

But these light-hearted poets do not limit themselves in the matter of festivals to times

and seasons. The joy that is within them may bubble up into a festival at any moment; and when their spirits thus are moved, a gay company, presided over by seven ladies and by seven poets, is convened—as Boccaccio might have ordered it—in the pleasure of some grassy and well-shaded park.

“Nor is even this much of formality necessary,” said Roumanille in conclusion. “It is a festival when two or three of us, or half a dozen of us, are met together—as we are met together now. Behold! Madame, here, is a Félibresse, and I, I am the Capoulié, the head of all. As for Thérèse, she is our queen. What more would you have?”

And so, without knowing it—there on the Isle de la Barthelasse, in the midst of the dashing Rhone waters, in sight of the twinkling lights of Avignon—we had taken part in our first félibrien festival!

*Thomas A. Janvier.*

(To be continued.)



## SILENCE.

DEAR, there has grown between us day by day  
 A silence like the breathless pause of night,  
 And all our words have seemed to speed away  
 As birds that soar to glories out of sight.  
 Now, while my lonely heart cries out for you,  
 With lips that move with prayers unsaid I go;  
 I shield my eyes lest they should dumbly sue—  
 And yet, sometimes, I almost think you know.

I will not speak! See how the cliff drops down  
 To meet the sea, and leaves us here above:  
 So, now, one step our finite selves would drown  
 In depths as infinite of boundless love.  
 The silent sun his heart of glory veils  
 Where clouds reveal him by their rosy glow;  
 I speak not, though your fair cheek blooms and pales—  
 And yet, I wonder if perhaps you know.

The trees behind us thrill with faint alarms  
 Where small wood-creatures from their fellows start;  
 The shadows creep and steal like loving arms,  
 And clasp us closely to the twilight's heart;  
 The wind breathes gently as a child asleep;  
 The waves with dreamy kisses stir below;  
 The tender hush about us grows more deep—  
 Yet, in the silence, love, at last you know.

*Maria Bowen Chapin.*

## AN EMBASSY TO PROVENCE.

BY THOMAS A. JANVIER, SÒCI DÒU FÉLIBRIGE,

Author of "Stories of Old New Spain," "The Uncle of an Angel," "Color Studies," etc.,

WITH PICTURES BY A. CASTAIGNE.

### PART THIRD.



RUINS OF THE CASTLE OF FONTSÉGUGNE.

#### I.

NEARLY a month later, when we were established in Avignon for a long visit, we took part in another festival,—this was in Roumanille's home,—whereof the motive was our meeting with Félix Gras. During our hurried first visit of only four days, when we were hurtling across the Midi at the heels of the Ponette, Madame Roumanille's brother was out of town—he is a *juge de paix*, and his absence from Avignon was connected in some way with the issuing of licenses for the shooting season, which just then was opening.

They are tremendous fellows for shooting, the men down there. Daudet has told about it. When lions are about, they shoot lions. During the close season for lions, they shoot hats. It is all one to them. They have the true feeling. What they care for is the sport, not the game.

Fortunately, when we came again to Avignon the shooting season was well under way, and the magisterial duties of Monsieur Gras sat upon him lightly. It was arranged that on the second evening after our arrival the meeting which we so much desired should come to pass. Yet while we longed for this meeting we also a little dreaded it—knowing, by more than one

disheartening experience, that highly idealized personalities have a tendency to come tumbling down from their pedestals when encountered in the flesh; and we knew that if this particular idol fell he would fall a long way. In the interval since we had bought his "Roumancero Prouvençau" in Marseilles, we had bought and read his "Tolosa" and "Li Carboundié." With the reading of these poems,—in which he manifests his power of sustained flight, though not always with the dramatic fervor of the shorter poems which had so entranced us,—the pinnacle whereon we had placed him had grown perilously high.

But happily, as we came to know that evening, our ideal had not exceeded the reality. As fine and as sympathetic as his poems is Félix Gras himself. The graciousness of his person, his gentle nature that also is a most vigorously manly nature, his quick play of wit, his smile, his voice—all were in keeping with, even exceeded, what we had hoped to find.

He sang to us some of his own poems,—including, at our earnest entreaty, "Lou Baroun de Magalouno" and "Lou Papo d'Avignoun,"—set to airs which have come down from troubadour times; curiously vibrant, haunting airs, which fell away in cadences of a most tender melancholy, and rose again with a passionate energy, and were pervaded by a melody sweet and strong. His singing was without accompaniment. Holding in his hand a copy of his "Roumancero,"—it was our own copy, and is beside me now as I write,—he stood up in the midst of our little company, and thrillingly, in a rich barytone, sang forth his verses from his heart. Roumanille, his hands clasped comfortably across his well-filled waistcoat, beat time softly to the music with his foot; and when some passage especially pleased him gave vent to his emotion—and in this also keeping the time of the song—in a subdued utterance compounded of a grunt and a roar. Madame Roumanille, her beautiful brown eyes glistening a little, regarded her brother with an affectionate delight, and turned to us from time to time with a sympathetic smile. Mademoiselle Thérèse sparkled with animation; and the demoiselle

Jeanne—who already is an accomplished musician, with a rare power to command the presence of sweet sounds—listened with a rapt expression in her half-closed eyes. As for ourselves, it was as though a happy dream that we had been dreaming of a sudden had come true—in the land of the troubadours we were hearing a troubadour sing his own lays!

We tried the good-nature of Monsieur Gras sorely that evening. We could not get enough of his music. We continued to demand more and more. At last Roumanille intervened in his brother-in-law's defense by bringing up from the cellar a rare old bottle of Mouscat de Maroussan—a Frontignac which for thirty years had communed with its own soul within the glass. As he carefully uncorked it, and poured it in a fine stream into the little glasses, the long-imprisoned sunshine seemed to escape from its golden flow and fill, as did its fragrance, all the room. There was to me a grave dignity about this wine, that had kept step with me in the life journey through three quarters of the way upon which I had come. Doubtless Monsieur Gras had much the same feeling. But with Roumanille the case was different—he was twice as old as the Mouscat. For all of us there was feeling of a deeper sort as we clinked our glasses, and with our lips drank to each other from our hearts. It means much, this toast, in honest Provence.

Already the evening was far spent. When we had thus pledged each other in aromatic sunbeams, we said good-night. What an evening it had been!

## II.

DURING this long visit we saw Roumanille constantly. Our quarters—in the Hôtel du Louvre, the old house of the Templars, where the poet Anselme Mathieu tried his hand at hotel-keeping—almost adjoined the book-shop in the Rue St. Agricole. But a single house intervened. From our balcony we could look down upon Roumanille through the side-window above his desk; we were in and out of the shop a dozen times a day; we spent delightful evenings in the friendly home which was opened to us so freely; Mademoiselle the Queen of the *Félibres* was our guide to the sights of Avignon and the Ville Neuve.

Our boxes of books had followed us from Nîmes,—coming by the carter, with the legend on each box, half warning, half appeal: “*Craint l'humidité*,”—and Roumanille congratulated us upon the good luck that had attended our literary foraging. Thanks to the zealous assistance of my friend André Catélan, there were many treasures among our two or three hundred volumes. During our stay of two months in Nîmes

we had suffered few days to slip by without spending an hour or so with the good Catélan in his book-shop in the Rue Thoumayne—a little shop packed with books to the ceiling, and having in its center an island of book-covered table, around which was a channel so narrow that only one person could sail along it at a time. When, as usually was the case, Catélan, Madame Catélan, and Toinette all were on duty together, we were compelled to sweep them ahead of us in a procession as we examined the shelves. The dog, whose honorable name was *Ex Libris*, had a freer range—inasmuch as he could go beneath the island as well as around it. The kitten (a most energetic kitten) was freest of all—scampering under the island, and over its book-covered surface, and across the shoulders of any one of us who happened to come in her way. Of all the old book-shops of my acquaintance, none is dearer to me than this in the Rue Thoumayne; and excepting only one in the City of Mexico—which shall be nameless, for I am still using it—none has yielded me better returns.

As Roumanille went over our books with us they served as texts for his discourse. All of them related to Provence and Languedoc, and all of modern date were written by men who were his acquaintances or friends. His commentaries upon them greatly increased their practical usefulness, giving us the personal factor,—the author's political or religious or poetical bias, his reputation for care or for carelessness,—which enabled us to estimate with accuracy the true value of the written words.

Roumanille told us, too, about the beginning of his life-work, and how that work had gone on. It was with no thought of the far-reaching consequences that he began to write in Provençal. His sole motive was his desire that his mother, to whom French was a foreign tongue, might be able to understand what he wrote. He was but a lad of seventeen, a teacher in the school at Tarascon, when—writing in French—he first began to dabble in verse. One Sunday, when he was at home in Saint-Remy, his mother said to him:

“Why, Jousè, they tell me that thou art making paper talk!”

“Making paper talk, mother?”

“Yes, that is what they tell me. What is it thou art putting on the paper? What dost thou make it say?”

“But it is nothing, mother.”

“Oh, yes, my handsome Jousè, it is something. Tell thy mother what it is.”

But when he recited to her his French verses she shook her head sorrowfully, and sorrowfully said to him: “I do not understand!”

“And then,” said Roumanille, “my heart rose up within me and cried: ‘Write thy verses





THE SHOP OF CATÉLAN, NIMES.

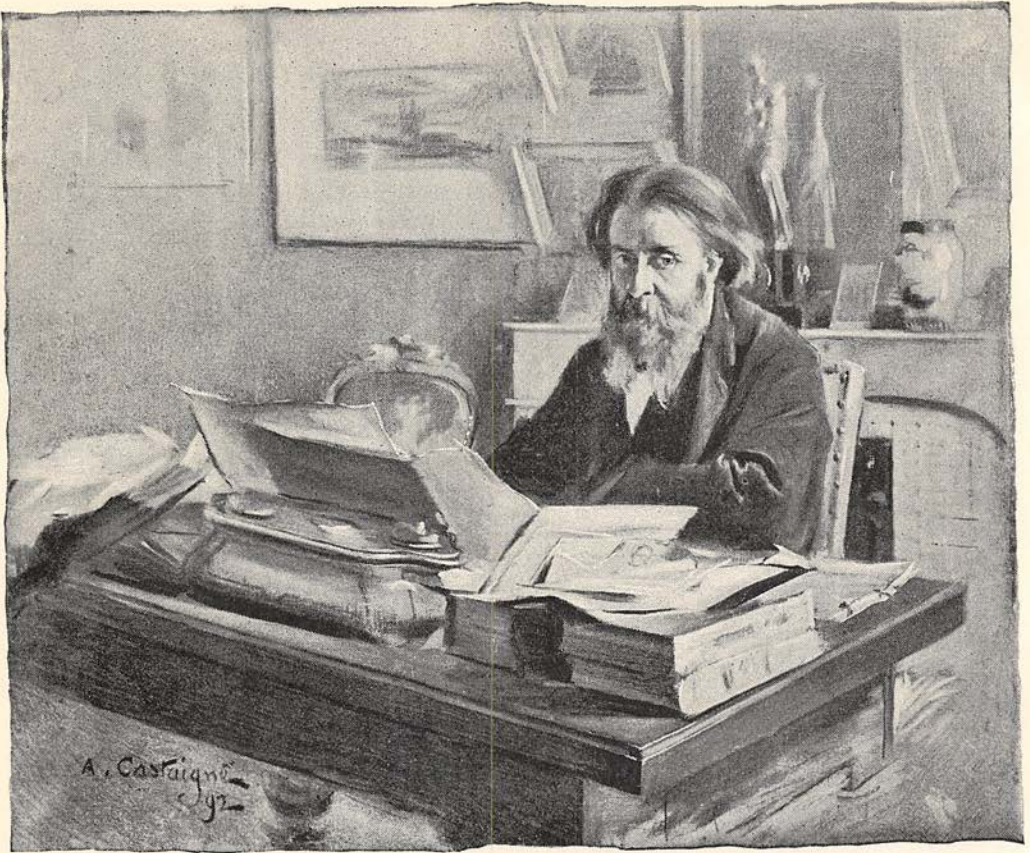
in the beautiful language that thy dear mother knows!' That very week I wrote my first poem in Provençal, 'Jejà'; and, being at home again the next Sunday, I recited it to her. When she wept, and kissed me, I knew that my verses had found their way to her heart, and thenceforth I wrote only in Provençal."

Did ever a school of poetry more beautifully begin?

VOL. XLV.—III.

It was in the year 1835 that "Jejà" was written, and immediately was published in a little journal of Tarascon, the "Echo du Rhône." All the country-side was delighted by this poem in the home language; and Roumanille, being thus encouraged, rapidly followed it with others of a like sort. At a stroke, he had achieved a popular success.

But, as he continued to write,—in prose as



FÉLIX GRAS.

well as in verse,— the larger possibilities which might flow from the revival of Provençal as a literary language presented themselves to his mind.

For centuries, while the north of France had been peopled by semi-savages, the south of France had been the home of a refined civilization. French literature had its birth here in the south. The traditions of that literature were not lost; the descendants of the troubadours still lived; but their songs were hushed because the critics of the north—the ex-savages perched upon the heights of their recently acquired civility—stigmatized Provençal as a dialect unfit for literary purposes—as a patois. Worse than this, with their tacit acceptance of a foreign jurisdiction over their literary affairs, the people of Provence were tending—as were all their countrymen of the provinces—toward an unreserved acceptance of Paris as a dominating center: to the deadening of that local love and local pride in which true patriotism has its strongest roots. And at that particular time—the seething years preceding the revolution of 1848—the sort of doctrine, political and social, that was emanat-

ing from Paris was to the last degree subversive of the manly qualities which are necessary to good citizenship, and to the foundation of a stable state.

### III.

THEREFORE was it in the spirit of the prophets of old that Roumanille settled himself to his life-work: the awakening of a dormant provincial literature, and the reinvigoration of a sturdy provincial manhood, which together would constitute an effective check upon the centralizing tendency whereof the object was to focus in Paris the whole of France. With these facts understood, it is easy to understand also why the press of Paris was united for so long a time in denouncing the purpose and in deriding the work of “the patois poets,” whose melodious verse, telling not less imperiously than sweetly of the reawakening of that beautiful language in which French literature was born, was a defiant proclamation of local rights as opposed to central power. In the broad sense of the word political, the literary revival in Provence has been a political force that already has made itself felt throughout the whole of

France, and of which the future will have much more to tell.

Having grasped the possibilities of the situation, Roumanille never lost sight of them nor ceased to work for their realization. In prose and in verse he delivered his homilies — droll stories of the country-side, quaint dialogues between country-folk, poems of country life, scintillating with a sharp wit which ever was mellowed with a kindly humor, or tender with a touch of simple pathos that went straight to the heart; and at the end always whipping out some earnest truth, as though by accident, which made in favor of the honest country life and a manly morality. They circulated wherever the Provençal tongue was spoken, these sermons — in newspapers, in broad sheets, in little volumes; and wherever they were read the seed which they carried presently began to grow. When Roumanille published his first collection of poems, "Li Margarideto" ("The Daisies"), his fellow-countrymen already were sufficiently independent of Paris in their opinions to be proud of this their own poet who wrote in their own sweet tongue.

Two years before "Li Margarideto" was published, — that is to say, in the year 1845, — a disciple was raised up to this prophet in the person of Frédéric Mistral. He was literally a disciple, for Roumanille was a teacher, and Mistral a pupil, in a school at Avignon when the friendship was formed between them that was to last throughout their lives. Mistral, a born poet, entered with enthusiasm into the project for making Provençal live again as a literary language; and it was he who sounded — when, in 1859, he published his "Mirèio" — the first strong poetic note which challenged the attention of the Paris critics, and which suddenly gave dignity to the whole movement by winning the hearty admiration of the critic whose opinion, still respected, at that time carried with it an overwhelming weight of authority — Lamartine.

But the Provençal movement, gaining force steadily, had assumed substantial shape five years before Mistral's "Mirèio" appeared. In 1847 a fresh impetus had been given to it by the publication of Crousillat's first collection of poems. In 1852 a congress of Provençal poets was held at Arles; and in the same year there was published at Avignon, with a striking preface by Saint-René Taillandier, a collection of poems by forty poets d'Oc — including Jasmin, Bellot, Castil-Blaze, Mouquin-Tandon, Crousillat, Aubanel, and Mistral. In 1853 an assemblage similar to that of the year before at Arles was held at Aix; and the sixty-five poems recited at this gathering were published under the title: "Roumavàgi dei Troubaire." Finally, in 1854, came the crystallization —

when, on the 21st of May, being the Feast of Sainte Estelle, the Félibrige, the brotherhood of Provençal poets, formally was founded at Fonségugne by Joseph Roumanille, Frédéric Mistral, Theodore Aubanel, Anselme Mathieu, Jean Brunet, Paul Giéra, and Alphonse Tavan.

They were of various estates, these seven poets. Roumanille (he became a publisher and book-dealer a year later) was a proof-reader in the house of the Seguins; Mistral was the son of a yeoman; Aubanel was a publisher — the last in Avignon to bear the official title of "Printer to the Pope"; Mathieu, who became a hotel-keeper later, was a vine-grower — and so on. Over in Nimes, soon to become a member of the fraternity, was the baker Jean Reboul — to whom, being dead, his fellow Nimois have erected a statue to serve as a perpetual memorial of the glory which his fame reflects upon their town. It was a poetical democracy. The manner in which its members earned a livelihood was immaterial, for the writing of poetry was the real and important business of their lives.

On these same lines the organization is maintained. Poetry is the first and the highest consideration; after that come the ordinary affairs of life. Thus, in his off time, the poet Félix Gras is a judge; the winner of the first prize in the floral games of 1891 at Carpentras, Monsieur Lescure, devotes his leisure to charcoal-burning; Monsieur Huat, when not writing poetry, is architect to the city of Marseilles; Frère Savinien, author of the Provençal grammar, absents himself occasionally from the society of the Muses, and attends to his minor duties as director of the school of the Christian Brothers at Arles — it is the same all down the line. Truly, the Félibrige is one of the very noblest fraternities in the whole world: the single, but tremendous, condition of admission to the ranks of its membership is the possession of an inspired soul!

But underlying the poetry of these poets is their strong desire to foster a patriotism which best can be defined to American readers as a love of country based on state rights. The first article of the constitution of 1863 declares: "The Félibrige is established in order that Provence shall forever preserve her language, her local color, her personal charm, her national honor, and her high rank of intelligence — because, just as she is, Provence delights us. And by Provence we mean the whole of southern France." In the existing constitution (adopted in 1876) the wording is changed, but not the substance: "The Félibrige is established in order to unite in brotherhood, and to inspire, those men whose efforts are directed toward preserving the language of the country d'Oc." Yet it is in no narrow spirit that these apostles

of individuality carry on their propaganda. They insist upon being individual themselves, but they seek to encourage a like individuality in others. Roumanille spoke with the same hearty satisfaction of the spread of the *félibrienne* idea throughout France, and even into foreign countries, as he did of its triumph in Provence.

In its organization, the *Félibrige* is practical; but in its systems of feasts, its awards of merit, its symbolism, it is poetical to a high degree. Doubtless its beautiful ritual—a large part of which it owes to its distinguished Irish member, Mr. Bonaparte-Wyse—has had much to do with its practical working success. In all this delicate fancifulness, which so vividly reflects the poetic temperament, there is found an irresistible appeal to poetic souls. The brotherhood has substantial strength because flowers are its prizes, the passing of the loving-cup a necessary part of its feasts, *Ste. Estelle* its patroness, and its device her star of seven rays.

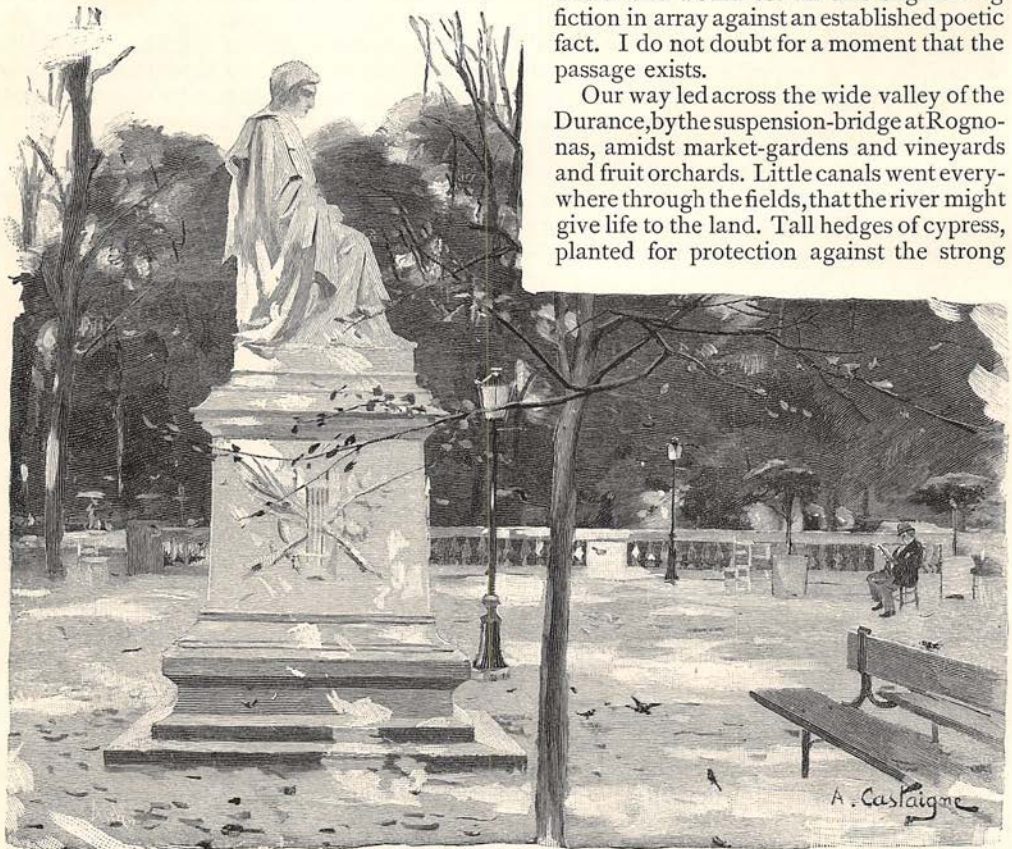
## IV.

It was during our longer stay in Avignon that we presented ourselves—formally, as an

Embassy; and very informally, as individuals—to Mistral at his home in the village of Maillane. Close by this village he was born, and here always, save for short absences, he has lived.

From Avignon to Maillane the distance is not more than six or eight miles. We made it half as long again by fetching a compass round-about by way of Château-Renard—a very ghost of a castle, its two tall, round towers, and a part of the wall which once stood solidly between them, rising ruinously from a mass of ruins scattered over the top of a stiff little conical hill. Tradition declares that a subterranean passage, dipping beneath the Durance, connects Château-Renard with the Palace of the Popes in Avignon. Mistral has used the legend in a thrilling fashion—sending his lovely *Nervo* flying through this dismal place, and making very real the fear that besets her as she hears the rush of the river above her head, and the grinding and pounding of the great stones which are whirled along the rocky bed of the stream. Modern engineers have had the effrontery to assert that the passage is impossible; but I am the last person in the world who would set an idle engineering fiction in array against an established poetic fact. I do not doubt for a moment that the passage exists.

Our way led across the wide valley of the Durance, by the suspension-bridge at Rognonas, amidst market-gardens and vineyards and fruit orchards. Little canals went everywhere through the fields, that the river might give life to the land. Tall hedges of cypress, planted for protection against the strong



STATUE OF REBOUL.

ENGRAVED BY P. AITKEN.

mistrals of winter, cut the landscape with long lines of dark green. Upon the road we passed flocks of sheep returning for the winter from the high pastures in the French Alps; and with one of these was a sedate ass who carried in broad shallow panniers the lambs too young or too tired to walk. We accepted these flocks gratefully, not in the least doubting that they had materialized from "Mirèio" for our benefit. Here was the shepherd *Alari* coming down to the plain; here even was the delicate touch of "l'agneloun qu'es las" — the weary lamb. Indeed, all that country-side seemed familiar to us, so completely has Mistral transferred to his pages its every part.

Maillane is a village bow-ered in trees and girded about with gardens. According to the "Guide Joanne" it possesses three claims upon the attention of the public: a *beau retable* in its ancient church; in its archives a parchment of the year 1400; and — the writer has a proper feeling for climax — "it counts among its 1342 inhabitants the poet Frédéric Mistral."

When we asked the driver of our carriage if he knew where to find the house of Monsieur Mistral, he looked at us with an expression of pitying doubt — it was much as though we had asked him if he knew where to look at noonday for the sun. His manner toward us had been gentle and considerate from the start. After that question it became quite fatherly. His feeling evidently was that people so largely ignorant required protecting care.

Mistral's home is a modest dwelling of two stories, standing on the border of the village, and separated from the street by a little garden, and a low stone wall surmounted by a railing of iron. With a serene indifference to the ordinary scheme of arrangement, the house backs upon the street, and fronts upon a deep garden and the open country beyond. From the windows of the principal rooms — the library, the salon, the chambers above — the outlook is upon trees and flowers and green fields and orchards and vineyards, all roofed over with the blue sky of Provence. Nothing could be better. It is a poet's practical way of keeping the poetry of nature always before his eyes. The deep, wide garden is a delight: sunny and sheltered for winter, with shady alleys for summer idling, uniting the useful with the ornamental by giving room to vegetables

and fruit-trees, as well as to shrubs and flowers, and having as its chief glory a great hedge of nerto, — as myrtle is called in Provençal, — which has a reflected glory because Mistral has bestowed upon his gracious heroine its musical name.

v.

ALL was still as we stopped before the closed iron gateway, — so very still as to suggest the dismal possibility that the poet was off on one of his country walks, and that our coming was in vain. But our fatherly driver, knowing that the front of this house was its back, was more confident. Charging me to be watchful of the horse (it pleased him to maintain the flattering fiction that this sheep-like animal was all energy and fire), he placed the reins in my hands, and then went off around the corner of the house with our cards. We had not brought a letter of introduction; but our visit, though no day had been set for it, was expected — for Roumanille had made known to Mistral that an American Embassy was at large in



the land, and that sooner or later it would present itself at Maillane. We heard the tinkle of a bell inside the house, then a faint sound of voices, then quick footsteps on the gravel walk — and in a moment Mistral was coming toward us with outstretched hands.

What a noble-looking, poet-like poet he was! Over six feet high, broad-shouldered, straight as an arrow, elate in carriage, vigorous — with only his gray hair, and his nearly white mustache and imperial, to certify to his fifty years. In one respect his photographic portraits do him injustice. His face is haughty in repose, and this expression is emphasized by his commanding presence and resolute air. But no one ever thinks of Mistral as haughty who has seen him smile. It is as frank as his manner, this smile; all his face is lit up by the friendliness that is in his warm Provençal heart.

In a flash he had us out of the carriage, around the house, through the wide entrance-hall paved with tiles and hung about with prints, and so into his library — and all to an accompaniment of the most cordial welcoming talk. Roumanille had told him all about us, he said; we were not strangers, we were friends. Heaven bless these Provençaux! What a genuine hospitality is theirs!

Never did a poet have a better work-room

than this library. Overlooking the garden are two wide, high windows, close beside one of which is a writing-table of liberal size; prints hang upon the walls; the side opposite to the windows is filled with a tall case of books. The collection of books is not a large one (not more than a thousand volumes), but it is very rich. For four months I had been making my own little collection on the same lines, and my evil heart was stirred with covetousness as I saw upon these shelves so many volumes which my good Catélan had told me were to be obtained only by some rare turn of lucky chance. But the book which Mistral first selected for us to look at was not one of these prizes in the

the ancient tongues. All this is not the work of chance, nor the result of the effort of a single group of men. It is the natural and inevitable result of the realization by each of these widely scattered peoples that in their national language resides their national soul. The Félibrige is the legitimate and providential child of the epoch in which we live.

"Here in France we have not sought unduly to exalt Provençe or Provençal. We have urged our brethren of the other ancient tongues to do what we have tried to do for ourselves—to add to their own store of literary treasure, to maintain their own customs, to preserve their own traditions; and yet, while thus holding fast to



BIRTHPLACE OF MISTRAL.

literary lottery; it was a beautifully bound copy of Miss Preston's translation of "Mirèio." Before returning it to its place he held it for a moment affectionately in his hand.

In the same earnest strain in which Roumanille had spoken, he spoke of the strong motives underlying the literary movement in Provençe. There was much more in it, he said, than the desire to revive a beautiful language that had fallen into undeserved neglect. The soul of it was the firm purpose to array against centralization the love of locality, of home. "If our movement," he continued, "were restricted to Provençe, it might be regarded without injustice as the last gleam of a dying glory, as the last effort of a nationality about to expire. But it is not so restricted. Languedoc, Dauphiny, Gascony, Brittany are with us. And our revival extends beyond the borders of France. In Catalonia, Aragon, Valencia, Majorca; in Italy, Hungary, Roumania, Bohemia, Flanders, even in Iceland, there is a revival of

their own individuality, to cherish as their most noble possession their right to be a part of France."<sup>1</sup>

## VI.

MADAME MISTRAL joined us: a young and beautiful woman with a peculiarly sweet, sympathetic voice. Our talk turned to Mistral's work. It pleased him to find that we possessed all of his poems, and even his "Tresor dòu Félibrige"—his great Provençal-French dictionary, 2300 triple-columned folio pages, to the compilation of which he devoted nearly ten years.

He sighed as he spoke of the dictionary, as well he might in memory of the labor that he had expended upon it for pure love. Yet has this work repaid him in honor. It has placed him beside Littré among French men of letters, and it has won for him the formal approbation of the Institut Français. In recognition of its high value, the Académie des Inscriptions et

<sup>1</sup> "Whether we speak French or Provençal, 't is all the same. We understand each other. And there is one phrase that has the same sound in both languages; a

phrase we all know, a heartfelt cry. This phrase, this cry, is—"Vive la France!" Speech of the Capoulié Félix Gras, at Carpentras, September 15, 1891.

Belles Lettres of the Institut awarded to him (March 28, 1890) the Jean Reynaud prize of 10,000 francs: a prize—given every five years “to recompense the most important work produced in that period in studies within the compass of the Academy”—that is one of the highest literary honors (short of election to the body whence it emanates) which a French man of letters can receive.

Primarily, the “Tresor” is a dictionary of all the languages of Oc (*i. e.*, the languages in which *oc* is the equivalent of *yes*); but it also is much more than a dictionary, being, literally, a treasury of information concerning the languages, the customs, the traditions of the south of France. It is not, as his poems are, the result of inspiration; it is the product of a profound scholarship backed by indefatigable labor extending over many years. Indeed, it seems impossible that the same man should have distinguished himself so greatly in such widely different ways. As M. Michel Bréal (in presenting to Mistral the prize of the Academy, at Montpellier, May 25, 1890) well said: “A time will come when learned men, finding themselves confronted by this enormous philological work and by Mistral’s poems, will say that there must have been two Frédéric Mistrals, as there were two Plinys—thus evading the tax upon their credulity involved in believing that so much science and so much poetry were contained in the same brain!”

Naturally, his poems stand nearest to the poet’s heart. He spoke of them with a frank pleasure, and of the local material embodied in them—this being a part of his own beloved country—with delight. To gratify our desire to associate the sound of his voice with his written words, he read to us, from “La Reino Jano,” the speech of Aujan de Siste-rourin, in which the troubadour urges the Queen to leave Naples and to come to Provence—“*cette perle royale, l’abrégé, la montre et le miroir du monde.*” It was not a reading at random:

Accédant en général à votre douce autorité,  
Là chaque ville vit de son droit naturel,  
Et librement travaille, ou dort, ou chante, ou crie,

declares the troubadour—precisely the doctrine which Mistral himself had just been advancing, of separate, individual rights united in support of high authority.

All this Provençal poetry gains greatly by being read aloud. There is music in the broad, sonorous sounds, and a rhythm in the composition so marked that frequently it is almost an air. Much of the verse evidently is written, consciously or unconsciously, to music. I noticed that Roumanille—writing a dedication in a volume that he had presented to the

Ambassador—beat time as he put the lines together in his mind; and not until the measure satisfied him did he write them down.

We were conscious of our privilege in hearing Mistral read his own poetry; and this privilege was enlarged when he sang to us the “Song of the Rowers”—as the Queen is borne out upon the bay of Naples in her barge—to an ancient thrilling air of the sort which had so moved us when we had listened to the singing of Félix Gras. I hope that he understood how grateful we were to him. King Louis of Bavaria, listening royally solitary to an opera, alone could be our parallel!

From his own poems we went on to speak of Provençal poetry generally; of the poems which we had read, and of the poets whom we had been so fortunate as to know personally—and especially of the strong friendship which these men had for each other, their freedom from petty jealousy, and their warm appreciation of each other’s work. It was a part of their creed, he said, this friendliness. All were working together, as missionaries, as apostles, to a common end. Under these conditions mutual support was necessary, and jealousy was impossible—and again he insisted upon the sincerity and the depth of purpose which animated their literary movement and made it also broadly humane.

#### VII.

WHILE we talked, a lank dog with a bristling black coat—a creature of no particular breed—jumped up on the wide outer ledge of the window, and peered in upon us. His face had a quizzical cast, and his manner was so bantering that a charge of insolence would have lain against him but for the look of good-humored drollery in his eyes. Having completed his survey, he jumped down from the window-ledge, and a moment later came in through the open door to make us his compliments—with the easy, rather swaggering air of an old campaigner whose habit it was to pass the time of day with all strangers on the chance of a dish of entertaining talk.

The genesis of this dog was as eccentric as himself. He had “come up out of the ground,” as Mistral expressed it; suddenly appearing in the course of one of the poet’s country walks, and immediately adopting him as a master. No one in all the country-side ever had seen him, or one like him. But with the assurance that was so conspicuous a trait in his nature, he had declined to be regarded as a stranger. He had made himself entirely at home in a moment, and had accepted with equanimity the name of Pain-perdu—he was no stickler for names, provided rations went



A. Castaigne.  
1892

MISTRAL.



with them — that was bestowed upon him, partly because of his famished condition, and partly in memory of the troubadour so called. He was a dog of magic, Mistral declared, who had started up from nowhere, and who had thrust himself, either for good or for evil, into his new master's life.

But the poet cherished also the fancy that the dog — supposing him to be a real dog — was a waif from the Wild West Show; which aggregation of American talent had passed northward, from Marseilles to Paris, about the time that Pain-perdu materialized. Mistral has so much the look of Mr. Cody — a resemblance not a little helped by the slouched felt hat that he habitually wears — that in Paris he has been repeatedly pointed out on the streets as “Boofalo”; and he argued that Pain-perdu had adopted him for a master because of this resemblance. He begged that I would speak to the dog in English; and it is a fact that the uncanny creature cocked his head at me with a most knowing look, and did seem to understand my words.

An older and more important member of the family is Marcabrun, a large gray cat of so dignified a habit that he might with propriety wear ermine instead of his own gray coat, and sit upon the bench. We were bidden to observe that he was not a toy cat, — one of those long-haired, bushy-tailed creatures to which the Parisians are devoted, — but a sturdy, mouse-catching, working cat of honest Egyptian descent; a cat whose conscientious discharge of his duties was honorable to himself and useful to his friends. “I have a very sincere affection for cats,” said Mistral, as he gently stroked Marcabrun's jowls. “And I am persuaded,”

he added gravely, “that their knowledge extends to many things too subtle for the human mind to grasp!”

We passed to the salon, where Madame Mistral had a tray of liqueurs in readiness for the ceremony — which on our side certainly had in it much earnestness — of drinking to each other's health, and to the continuance of the friendship that had begun that day. And then we touched glasses again in honor of the poets and poetry of Provence.

The day was waning. It was time for us to come away. We lingered for a few minutes in the garden, while Madame gathered for the Ambassadors a bunch of flowers, to which the poet added (running down to the hedge to get it) a spray of nerto. It is preserved as a precious relic, this bunch of nerto; and though, in truth, it has become dry and yellow, to us it always will seem fragrant and green. Then they came with us to the gate, and stood waving farewells after us until a turn in the street hid them from our view. Here was another case in which ideals had stood the test of comparison with realities.

We drove back by the direct road — through Graveson and Rognonas, and so across the Durance and on into Avignon. Although a strong mistral was blowing, — with which usually goes a brilliantly clear sky, — clouds had gathered in the west. Into these clouds, beyond the line of hills on the farther side of the Rhône, the sun was sinking. To the eastward, the distant Alps loomed shadowy. In their forefront, tipped with red sunlight, towered Mont Ventour — as high above the lesser peaks as a great poet is above the common level of mankind.

(To be continued.)

Thomas A. Janvier.



DEVICE OF AVIGNON.

## ASPIRATION.

I AM the blush of the summer rose,  
The flush of the morn,  
The smile on the face of the dead,  
The song newly born  
From heart of the poet, from shell of the sea,  
From rush of the river that oceanward flows.

I am immortal. Who knows me is glad.  
Men give me the name  
Of passions that kindle the soul —  
Love, faith, beauty, fame.  
I dwell with all these, yet am higher than all.  
Without me the angels of heaven were sad.

Edith Willis Linn.