

THE CHURCHES OF PROVENCE.

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A LAND of the South, yet not of the tropical South, Provence should be seen in the spring or the summer-time. It is hot in summer, except when the wild wind called the *mistral* blows, but not unpleasantly hot if judged by American standards; the air is very pure and dry by day, and always cool at night. Drougts and mosquitos, I was told, come toward the end of August, but earlier than that only the homesick for heaven can quarrel with Provençal weather. Strong, shimmering light and a warm depth of purple shadow are needed to glorify, and at the same time to blend, the colors of these green lowlands and arid yellow hills, to silver the bosoms of their Rhone and their Durance, and to accentuate the cobalt of their sky. And only mellow sunset and moonlit midnight hours can reveal the sociable out-door habits, the merry tempers, the singing voices, of the people of the land.

I.

THIS was the portion of transalpine Gaul first conquered by the Romans, and so they often called it simply The Province—*Provincia*. Their old title, preserved through so many years and changes, means nothing to-day in a political sense, although much with regard to language and human characteristics; and in mediæval days it meant something special in an artistic sense. The titular boundaries of Provence shifted as often and as widely then as under Roman rule; but as an architectural district it extends from Lyons to the Mediterranean, and from the Alps nearly to Le Puy in the northwest and nearly to Narbonne in the southwest, while its most interesting parts lie between Orange and the coast.

Long before Rome was born, the merchants of Phœnicia founded colonies near the mouths of the Rhone, and about the year 600 B. C. they were followed by Greeks from Phocæa in Asia Minor. Massilia, now Marseilles, became one of the greatest of Grecian cities, and, in its turn, colonized places as far west as Narbonne and such river-sites as Avignon, Tarascon, and

Arles. The civilization thus established remained Greek for centuries; and this long Hellenic possession shows, we may believe, in the features of the modern Provençal no less than in his lively, loquacious temper, and in the character of the art he produced in Roman and again in mediæval times.¹

In the year 154 B. C., some of these Greek cities asked the help of Rome against revolted native tribes. Thus a Roman conquest was begun, and eventually no other portion of Gaul was so radically Romanized, or so splendidly endowed with works of art. When the Visigoths, in the fifth Christian century, established themselves in the south of Gaul, upon the ruins of Roman dominion, they were already Christianized and partly civilized, and the later Frankish conquest of Provence did not affect the character of its population. Its mediæval history is very picturesque, but very confused. After the breaking up of Charlemagne's empire, about the year 900, it became an independent kingdom; later it was a practically independent county, although feudal overlordship was claimed by the emperors of Germany as well as by the kings of France; and even after the last count of Provence had resigned his coronet to Louis XI., and the district was formally annexed to the kingdom of France in the year 1486, it was administered as a separate state down to the time of the French Revolution, and the kings of France called themselves counts of Provence also. Moreover, the feudal tangle, everywhere so hard to read, was complicated in Provence by the fact that its greater towns never forgot the municipal rights which Rome had sanctioned, and about the middle of the twelfth century achieved actual independence as municipal republics. In fact, the mediæval history of Provence is much more like the corresponding Italian story than like that of the Frankish districts of the North.

In the thirteenth century the cruel religious conflicts called the Albigensian wars or crusades, which may best be told about when I

¹ I have been told that the lingering, dragging accent of the Provençal, so musical in his own language, but less agreeable when he speaks French, is very closely reproduced when a modern Greek speaks French.

take you to Toulouse and to Albi itself, desolated Provence as well as all neighboring Southern lands, and during this century its cities lost their freedom. But our especial interest in them expires before the year 1200. Only their Romanesque churches are wholly and characteristically Provençal.

II.

ONCE very much in and of the world, Provence now seems very much out of the world. To the eastward its coasts have been invaded by shifting winter crowds, recruited from all the nations of the earth; Marseilles is one of the principal cities of France; Nîmes is a big and busy town; Avignon has a certain industrial importance, and agriculture and horticulture flourish along the banks of its rivers. But many of its sea-coast and hilltop towns — lively and truculent enough in medieval times — are moribund to-day, and some of them are actually as dead as empty sepulchers, their buildings still largely preserved, but their inhabitants vanished and forgot. There is not enough death and decay to bid us weep over the past, but there is not enough modern activity to make us forget it. So the breath of the middle ages seems still to pervade Provence, poetically vague traditions of their wars and quarrels mingling with memories of the *gai savoir*, and of the minstrels, gallants, and delightful dames who were its devotees. Daudet's "Numa Roumestan" and "Tartarin of Tarascon" will show you certain sides of the modern Provençal character, and you will recognize their truly medieval flavor. Mistral and his singing brethren explain its fairest side — its poetical, musical, laughter-loving, and tender side — in that lovely local tongue which is not a dialect or patois, but the medieval *langue d'oc*, once dominant from the Pyrenees to the Loire. And in Janvier's "Embassy to Provence" these modern troubadours and their picturesque festivities are delightfully painted against the beautiful background of their unmodernized land.

Everything here is on a smaller scale than in Italy — historical facts, as well as those of nature and of art; but thus we are offered a more intimate quality of charm, while we are not saddened by the tragedy of a world-possessing empire gone to wreck. "History meeting legend with a kiss," we feel ourselves happily enchanted as in a land of pure romance; and the beauty and the gaiety of its living people do but complete the illusion. Every foot of this country, every name on its map, is romantically suggestive of Greeks or Romans, Saracens, Visigoths or Franks, Aquitanians or Spaniards, hermits, crusaders, heretics, in-

quisitors, exiled popes, famous poets, or earliest Christian martyrs. With Petrarch you may go to Avignon and Vaucluse, with Dante to the ancient cemetery called Les Aliscamps in Arles, with Dumas to the islands of the coast, and to Aix with René of Anjou — king, poet, painter, and historian of tournaments. The first monasteries of Gaul were founded upon Provençal islands, and one of them, St. Honorat, long played the prominent civilizing part that was played in Britain by the island of Iona. And Christian legend, calling to you at every step, carries you as far back as it could in Palestine itself.

There is a real town in Provence with the impossibly poetic name of Les Saintes Maries. By the time you reach it on its ultimate point of sea-coast, you should be in the right Provençal mood; and this is the mood of him who saith, "Surely these things are true, else they had not been told."

Just here, we are told, there landed a little company of the friends of Christ, set adrift by their persecutors from the shores of the Holy Land. They were Mary Jacobi, the sister of the Blessed Virgin; Mary Salome, the mother of the apostles James and John; their servant Sarah; Maximin, to whom Christ had restored his sight; Lazarus with his sister Martha; and Mary Magdalene. Where and why they had left behind them Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, or whether Provençal belief confounds her with the erring and repentant Mary — this I could not get explained. But I know that Mary Jacobi and Mary Salome remained at their landing-place, for the beautiful name they bequeathed it is a witness. St. Louis caused their bones to be fittingly honored: you may see their tombs to-day in an ancient church tower, as, in the crypt beneath, the tomb of their servant Sarah; and the medieval pilgrimages still continue, in crowding streams, on an anniversary day in May.

I likewise know that Martha journeyed to Tarascon, between Avignon and Arles, for there she slew the *tarasque*, a terrific dragon that was devouring the land: the name of the town is again a proof, and the name of the old church of St. Martha, the effigy of the *tarasque*, which you may behold, and the festival which year by year is celebrated yet in honor of the prowess of the good housewifely saint. Then at Arles you will learn that Christ himself consecrated for Christian burial the famous pagan Aliscamps (its name is a corruption of *Elysii Campi*), and at Vienne you will be informed that St. Paul brought thither the first Christian tidings when on his way toward Spain, and will be shown a Roman tomb under which the body of Pontius Pilate was laid. And you might just as well have stayed in

America as to doubt that such things, told in such ways for nearly two thousand years, must be veritably true.

III.

THE pagan advanced no farther than the portico of his temple: only the statue, the priests, and the treasures of his god found room within it. The Christian entered his church, and took part in its services, and so the old architectural form could not be fitted to his new needs. But the civic basilica of the Romans, wherein they administered their laws, transacted their business, and listened to displays of oratory, must have seemed as though specially designed for Christian services. When, in the fourth century, Constantine's conversion brought the faithful from their private chapels and subterranean retreats, they took possession of the old basilicas, or imitated them closely in new churches which we call by the same name. Round churches, inspired by the circular temples or mausoleums of the Romans, were also constructed in the West, and certain hybrid forms grew out of the union of the Byzantine and the basilican types. But the latter was the dominant type, the characteristic type, in every Western land; and the most complex plans and forms to be found even in the latest Gothic cathedrals had their germs in the civic basilica—in its nave and aisles divided by colonnades, in the galleries above its aisles, in its tall nave-wall pierced by clear-story windows, its short transept where legal contestants and clerks had sat, and its little apse, prepared for the magistrate's throne.

Of course the magnificence possible in such places as Rome, Ravenna, and Constantinople was not often possible in Gaul, where decline had begun even before the period of barbarian conquest; and after this period, all through the Merovingian time, from the fifth to the ninth century, the art of architecture fell lower and lower. The old pagan buildings furnished for a while quarries of ready-made columns and sculptured decorations; but when these were exhausted, or wherever they could not be found, wood was frequently employed, or low piers of unsculptured stone replaced the columns and bore semicircular arches.

Gregory of Tours, the chief historian of the sixth century, says that the church of St. Martin in his town, built in his time, was 150 feet in length, 60 in breadth, and 45 in the height of its nave; and that it had 52 windows, 8 doorways, and a metal roof. This does not sound very imposing, yet St. Martin's was one of the most famous churches in France, and Gregory's other descriptions suggest no nobler proportions elsewhere. Then, in the northeastern part of France certain little

churches, one of them the ancient cathedral of Beauvais, still exist, showing that here, in the sixth or seventh century, the plainest possible fashioning of low piers and arches, without capitals, bases, moldings, or the slightest touch of architectural or sculptural decoration, was all that could be compassed. And the Roman knowledge of vaulting had so nearly died out that only very small areas could be covered with stone; over all wide areas flat wooden ceilings were employed.

When Charlemagne tried to re-civilize the world, in the latter part of the eighth century, he specially encouraged the restoration and construction of churches. But in the North the art had sunk so low that he borrowed the design of his chapel at Aix-la-Chapelle from Ravenna, and brought his architects and his columns from this place and from Rome. His principal achievement was to introduce, to some degree, a knowledge of the skill and taste of Constantinople and the Saracenic lands. But we can scarcely do more than guess about even this part of his work; for, as we shall see, there were other reasons why the art of Byzantium deeply impressed the art of certain parts of France.

In most of their constructions the Romans used the old native Italian scheme of pier and semicircular arch in connection with the Greek scheme of column and horizontal entablature, skilfully uniting them, but not fusing them together—building with piers and arches, ornamenting with columns and entablatures. In some of their late-classic constructions (as in certain basilican interiors) they did indeed support a series of arches on a range of columns; but even then a great decorated feature, plainly revealing itself as a short slice of an entablature, intruded itself between the capital of the column and the foot of the arch.

In a palace built at the end of the third century at Spalato, in Istria, for the emperor Diocletian, columns and arches seem for the very first time to have been combined with frank forgetfulness of the entablature; and the fact is picturesque, for Diocletian was the most determined imperial persecutor of Christians, while his architect's experiment prophesied all the mediæval forms of Christian art. It meant the abandonment of the entablature, and thus of the classic accentuation of horizontal lines, and it meant that all classic canons of proportion as well as of relationship had been broken through. Roman pier and Grecian column were alike retained, but with a new freedom to shape and place them as might seem best in a pure system of arched construction. Even in the interests of poetical justice, however, we can hardly believe that all the freedom eventually claimed, all the mediæ-

val styles eventually developed, sprang directly from the experiment made in Diocletian's palace; for surely many early Christian builders must have been forced rather than persuaded to adopt a similar method of construction—borrowing columns from ancient structures, and, with only small stones or only unskilful chisels at command, starting plain, round arches from their caps. But the main point is that—with the exception of a few Southern examples—any church in which entablatures are used must be called Roman or Gallo-Roman or Early Christian, while any in which piers or columns immediately support the arcades may be called Romanesque.

Tentative for centuries, and more or less alike in all parts of western Europe, Romanesque art began its fully equipped and vigorous career soon after Hugh Capet succeeded the descendants of Charlemagne on their Parisian throne—immediately after the year 1000, when the world awoke from the paralysis caused by its belief that in this year it would utterly be destroyed. Then the Romanesque art of different lands put on different national shapes, developed with splendid energy, and lived for nearly two hundred years.

But there is more than this to be said about it in France. Here it was national in the sense of native—it sprang directly from local Roman roots. But it was not national in the sense of being everywhere the same. It was not French in the modern meaning of the word, for as long as it lived there was no France in the modern meaning. Until the thirteenth century France was a small royal domain, with Paris as its capital; its rulers had a feudal claim upon other parts of the land, but this claim was always disputed, and often with a success which meant absolute independence. In different districts the blood of the people had been compounded, in greatly varying proportions, of Gallic and of Roman blood, and of several dissimilar barbarian Teutonic strains. Of course these ethnological and political diversities affected the development of architecture; upon one district and another the impress of Byzantine art was more or less forcibly set; climate also had conspicuous effects; and thus the architectural history of France, all through the Romanesque period,—all through the reign of the round arch,—must be read by provinces or parts.¹

In the thirteenth century Gothic art, born

¹A map published by the *Société des Monuments Historiques* shows France to have been the home of thirteen provincial styles—the style of the Ile-de-France, or old *domaine royal*, and those of Champagne and Picardy, bordering upon it toward the east; the styles of Burgundy, Provence, and Auvergne; those of Languedoc, Poitou, Périgord, and Saintonge, all included in the old Aquitanian land; the style of Anjou,

and developed in the old *domaine royal*, spread in the wake of political conquest, and the various provincial styles gave way before it. But they had already produced many churches of the greatest interest and beauty. Therefore, as I try, with Mr. Pennell's help, to show you the most characteristic churches of France, I shall more than once be forced to begin afresh at the birth of a Romanesque style. And for our first beginning I have chosen, not the true French district, but Provence, because here the impress of the mother-art of ancient Rome was most forcibly felt and most persistently retained.

IV.

VERY much the best way to approach the heart of Provence is by steamer down the Rhone, leaving Lyons or Vienne in the early morning, and reaching Avignon at sunset. This is no summer sluggard of a stream, like the German Rhine, but a brimming, impetuous Gallic tide, often dashing its clear waters high against very needful dikes of stone. Its shores are everywhere as beautiful as those of the Rhine, and toward the south in a much more wildly picturesque and surprising way. And they bear no ugly modern towns, hotels, or villas, and no half-plausible restorations of ancient church or castle, but a various multitude of sunburned, crumbling churches, ruined castles, and quaint and curious little yellow towns, stretched upon narrow ledges against the steep cliffs, or so compactly built on naked, spiky hilltops that one cannot tell what is native rock and what is masons' handiwork.

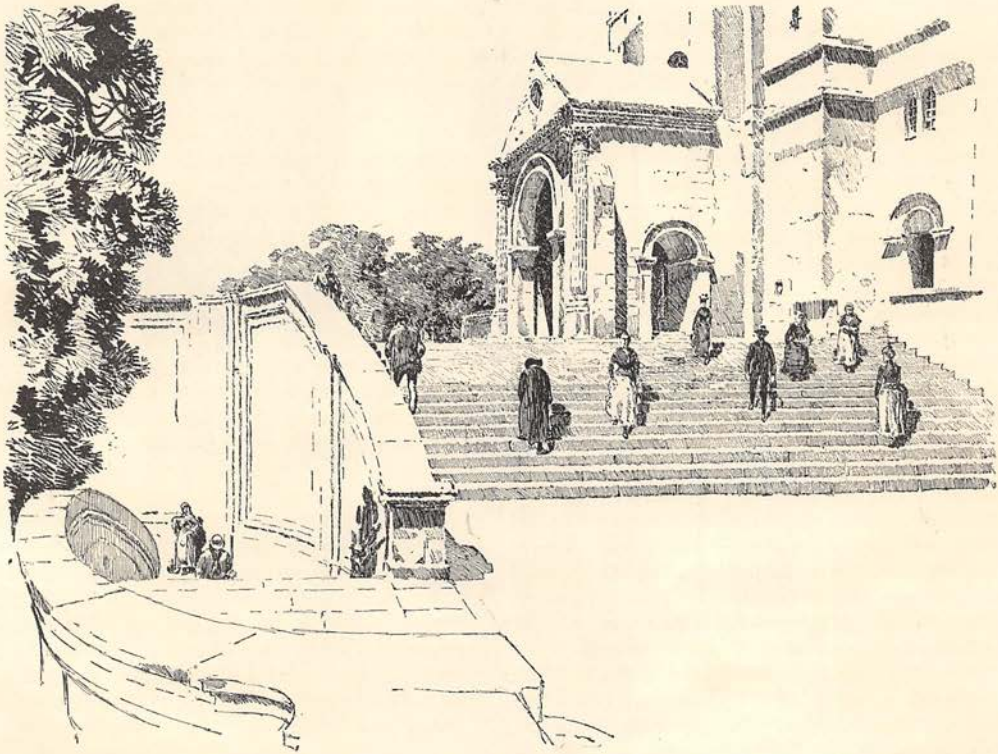
The boat will be filled with trafficking peasants—no tourists at all; at every village almost it will make a landing; every time the whole population will gather, like "supers" at the theater, to behold the process; and their laughing shrieks, with the thunderous protest of the river itself, will make you think that boat and pier are surely to be dashed into bits. But they never will be; you will pass unharmed, with your heart pleasurably in your mouth, through the whirlpools under the many old stone bridges; for ten incomparably swift, exciting hours you will realize your childhood's dream of an uninjured medieval world; and you will see, as in a sliding panorama, the change from Northern to Southern picturesqueness—from river landscapes such as Corot painted, to such as only a Monet or Pissaro could translate.

marking a small district on both sides of the Loire between Aquitaine and Normandy; the Norman style; and that of the borders of the Rhine. Their boundaries are explained, not by sharp lines, but by tints which gradually blend into one another; for of course the influence of each provincial manner of building was felt by its neighbors, and most forcibly in frontier regions.

After a few hours the vegetation grows sparse on the near and towering mountains, but you do not regret the lower, greener hills of the North, for the modeling of the bare rock is too vigorous, its tones of amber, red, and orange-brown are too superb. Blossoming oleanders spring like big pink bouquets, like great pink fountains, from gardens and street-corners; then come glossy fig-trees clambering over walls

gnon, tall and crenelated, yellow at other hours, but rosy red in the sunset, then you may possibly think you are about to arrive at the New Jerusalem.

Your first desire, perhaps, will be to take the night train back to Vienne, so that to-morrow you may once more spin down the stream. But there are plenty of fine things to detain you in Avignon, in Tarascon, in Nîmes, in Arles, and in



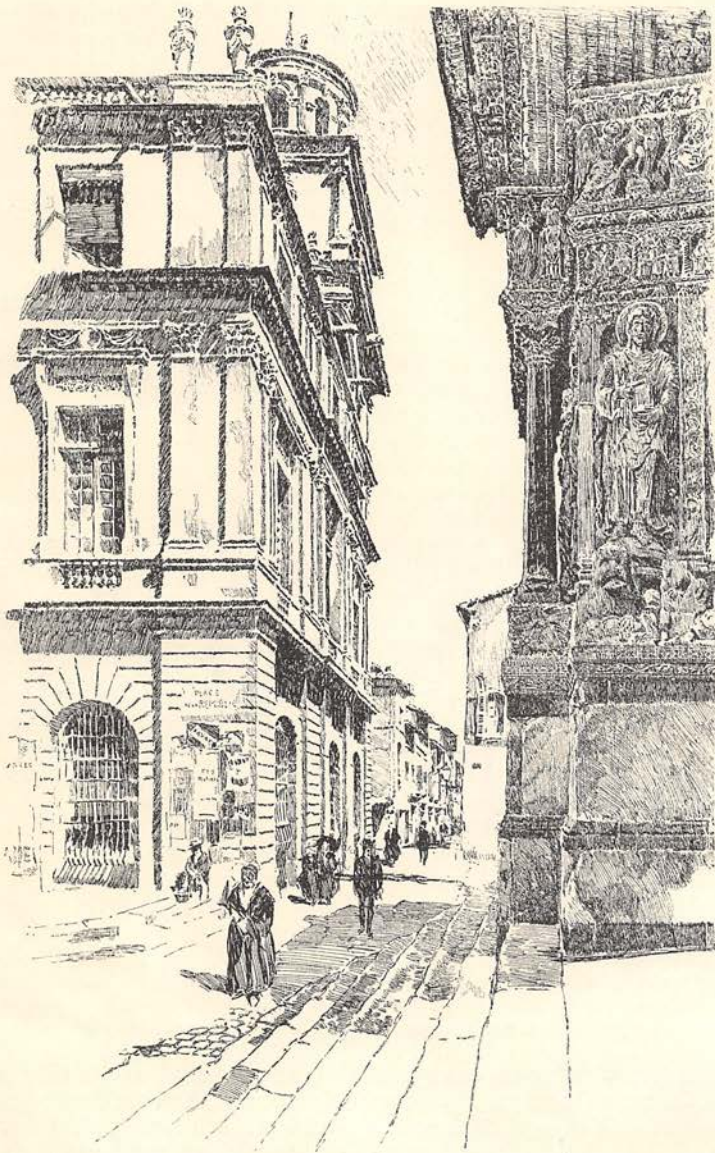
PORCH OF THE CATHEDRAL OF NOTRE-DAME DES DOMS, AVIGNON.

of pale-hued plaster up to brown, corrugated roofs of tile; and then you know you are indeed in the South — in the *Midi* — when the olive-trees begin to twinkle in long and silvery rows.

As the landscape changes so does the architecture. The villages look like Italy or Spain, and the churches are Romanesque, with compact square bodies, sturdy central towers, semicircular apses, and round-headed windows and arcades. You cannot look fast enough or long enough, the river carries you so swiftly past so many imposing accidents of nature and ancient devices of art; and yet all this is merely a preparation: the wonderful voyage has a still more wonderful ending. When you sweep around the base of a huge projecting mountain, and — in the middle of a vast golden amphitheater of hills, close above the broad and brilliant ribbons of the Rhone encircling flat, green islands — you see the walls and towers of Avi-

gnon, tall and crenelated, yellow at other hours, but rosy red in the sunset, then you may possibly think you are about to arrive at the New Jerusalem. Most conspicuous are the medieval castles and fortifications, frowning with great machicolated eyebrows, more numerous than in any other corner of France, and often looking as though they were still in wholly serviceable shape. Did I try to describe them I should merely overwork the adjectives yellow and enormous; and I should need many pages for even a mention of the endless monuments bequeathed by ancient Rome.

If you remember what floods of Teutonic barbarism, what oceans of semi-barbarized indifference, what new floods of Saracenic and of Norman blood and fire, swept over Gaul even in its southernmost parts, what damage was wrought upon classic structures by the zeal of the first Christian missionaries and the needs of early church-builders, and how many centuries have since elapsed with all their vicissitudes



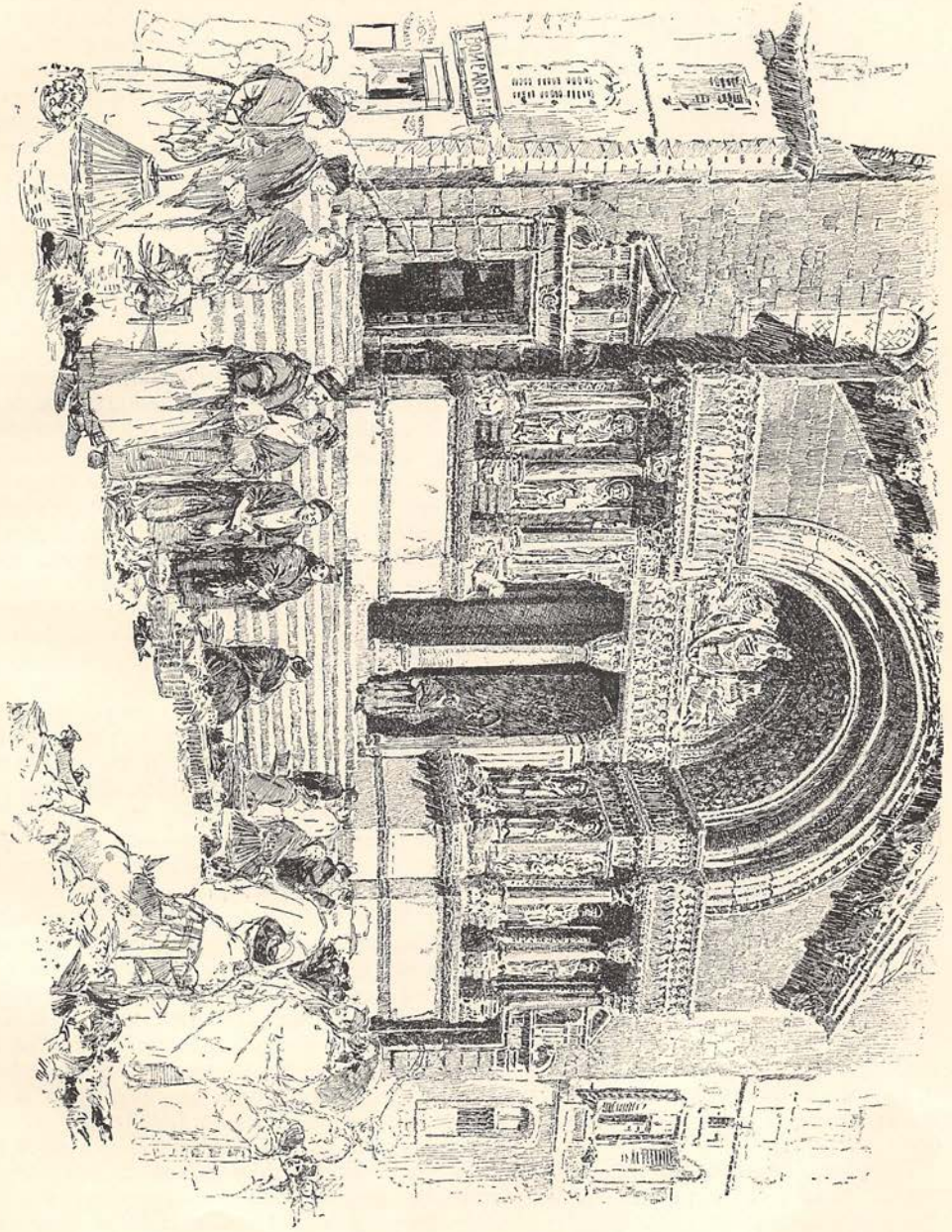
FROM THE PORTAL OF ST.-TROPHIME, ARLES. (RENAISSANCE TOWN HALL.)

of warfare, covetousness, and neglect, then you are amazed indeed to see how thickly the soil of Provence is bestrewn with the handiwork of Rome—theaters and amphitheaters, temples, baths, and tombs, aqueducts, bridges, fortifications, statues, columns, and triumphal arches, usually injured, often actually ruined, but sometimes astonishingly well-preserved. When you see these, and the fragments which crowd the local museums, you realize why, upon Provençal soil, architecture never forgot the whole of its skill; and you are prepared to meet with a puzzle that does not confront you in the North: you are warned that it may be hard to

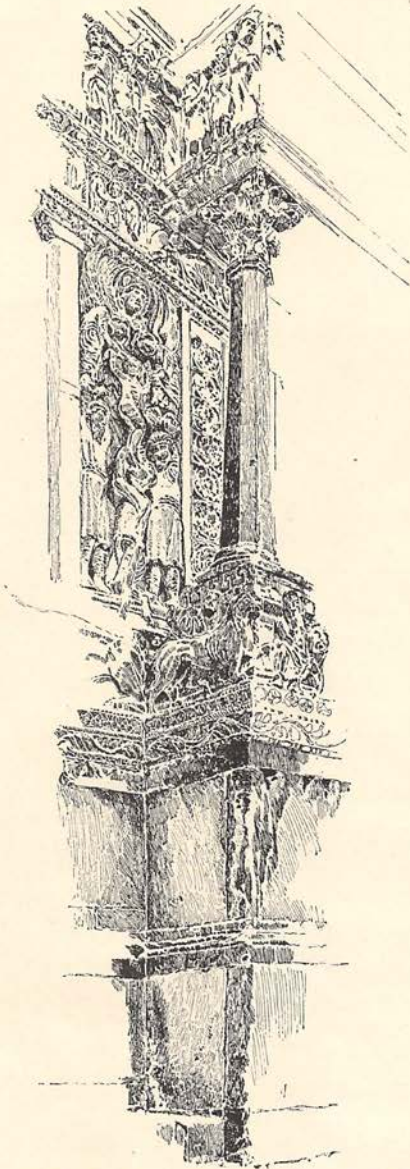
give dates to Provençal stones, or even to draw a line between Gallo-Roman work and that which, if measured by generally accepted dates, ought to be called Romanesque.

V.

LOOK at our first illustration, the porch of the cathedral of Notre-Dame des Doms at Avignon. A Roman work, you may say, or, at all events, a quite early Christian work; and many a learned antiquary has said the same, while others have declared for Charlemagne's time. But the most modern criticism puts it at



PORTAL OF ST.-TROPHIME, ARLES.



DETAIL OF THE PORTAL OF ST.-TROPHIME, ARLES.

the beginning of the eleventh century — brings it down to a time when, in other lands, Romanesque styles were well and individually developed.

In conception, as in treatment, this porch is not Romanesque, but pseudo-classical: arch and pier, column and entablature, still play their old Roman rôles. Indeed, one can scarcely doubt that its front was copied, with the omission of some sculptured features and a certain weakening of proportions, from the two slender Roman arches which stand guard over the bridge of St. Chamas on the Provençal coast. The pediment above the porch is clas-

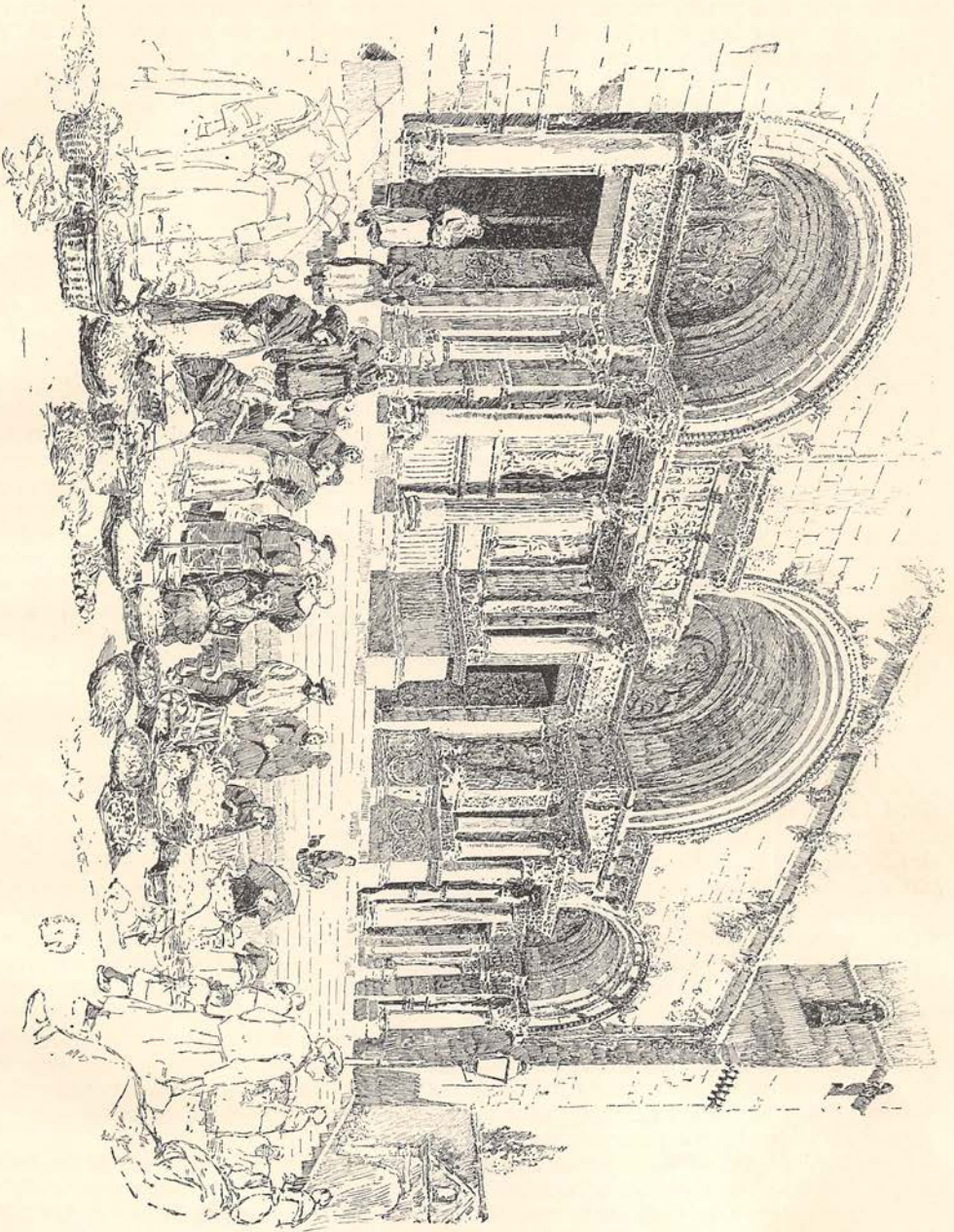
sical, too; only the bull's-eye window is a novelty, predicting, with far-away voice, the splendid wheel and rose windows of true Romanesque and of Gothic art.

A number of other Provençal structures — including an entire church at St. Paul-trois-châteaux, which is thought to have been built in the twelfth century — are as pronouncedly classical as this porch; and there, as here, even the direct imitation of Roman art at so late a time seems less remarkable than the refinement, simplicity, and reserve which mark the result. These qualities had by no means been conspicuous in the later works of Rome; but when the Romans built on Provençal soil they sometimes exhibited them in so delightful a way that transmitted Grecian influence seems clear; and to the persistence of the local strain of Grecian blood their revival in these early mediæval works may, I think, plausibly be laid.

The cathedral church to which the porch at Avignon admits us is a century later in date than the porch itself, and is Romanesque, not pseudo-Roman, in style; yet it differs almost as widely from the Romanesque types which we know best as from the contemporaneous classic-looking church at St. Paul-trois-châteaux. In the early part of the twelfth century the triforium and clearstory and the cruciform ground-plan were well developed in Northern lands, and noble proportions were the rule in important churches. But this cathedral is only about two hundred feet in length; it had no choir between apse and transept; its apse was small and polygonal; and its narrow transept did not spread beyond the line of the main walls. And it had no aisles, although, as the great buttresses which support its vaulted ceiling were set inside the nave-walls, an aisle-like effect was produced by the range of rectangular recesses between them. This ceiling, and the dome above the transept, show that, despite the small size and primitive plan of his cathedral, the Provençal architect was, in one very important respect, distinctly in advance of his Northern contemporaries. But Notre-Dame des Doms has been so altered and defaced that its Romanesque features can hardly be understood until we have seen another church of a similar kind at Arles.

It would be difficult to fancy a more mutilated interior than this of Notre-Dame des Doms, or one more perplexingly crowded with features and fittings of eight successive centuries. It has now a choir and apse of the seventeenth century. Heavy Renaissance balconies project between the pier-like buttresses of the nave, forming a succession of little galleries which look quite like modern opera-boxes; Gothic chapels have been thrown out on each side; and the windows are blocked,

THE PORTAL OF ST. GILLES.



so that little light enters except through the dome above the crossing, and obscurity is added to the other elements of confusion.

One hundred and fifty-seven cardinals and prelates are buried in Notre-Dame des Doms; two popes lie in two very magnificent Gothic sepulchers; and in the crypt, on the tomb of Crillon, who was born in Avignon and whom Henri Quatre called *le brave des braves*, you may read a very lordly epitaph: *Passant, l'histoire l'en dira davantage*. But the most interesting object of all is the episcopal chair of white marble, for although it was wrought in the twelfth century, it is extremely classic in general effect and in the handling of its sculptured motives.

Exiled popes and anti-popes lived in Avignon all through the fourteenth century, and one of them actually purchased the town, which remained papal property until the time of the French Revolution. Notre-Dame des Doms played the part of their St. Peter's. I wish that I could tell you how finely it is perched on the high cliffy rock called the Rocher des Doms, and show you the view from the platform in front of it, where the pontiffs used to lift their fingers when the people assembled below to be blessed. You would see the doubled stream of the Rhone and its central islands, the huge castles of Ville-neuve on the opposite shore, a splendid landscape beyond them, a circle of golden hills enfaming your own side of the alluvial plain, and the broken bridge of St.-Benezet, of which the famous nursery rhyme has told you:

Sur le pont d'Avignon
Tout le monde y danse en rond.

But I have no time for all this, or for the still more stupendous castle which the popes erected close to the Rocher des Doms, and which Froissart called the strongest and most beautiful house in the world; or for the lovely gardens on top of the rock itself, the late-Gothic dwellings with warlike towers built by the cardinals who clustered around the popes, the fine Renaissance house which bears the name of Crillon, or the remains of the many churches from which three hundred bells once rang out over Avignon. I have no time even for Petrarch's Laura, who lived here, or for her poet's neighboring Vaucluse, one of the most surprisingly beautiful spots in all the world. I may only say that in the museum there are a number of Greek inscriptions dug from local soil; that I hope it is true that the name of the town comes from its Greek name Aouenion; and that I likewise hope that this Greek term was a version of an earlier Celtic one meaning "sovereign of the waters," because no sea-coast town ever better deserved than this river-side town a name of such fine significance.

Now we must go down the river, past the point where its branching mouths diverge, and look at the church of St.-Trophime in Arles.

At one corner of the principal square a narrow street brings us suddenly to its portal. This is a perfect flower of Provençal Romanesque, and quite unlike any architectural product of any other land. It seems remarkably, even radically, different from the porch at Avignon; yet little more than a century can lie between them, for it was built soon after the year 1100, and intermediate types may be discovered in other towns. Despite its individuality, we perceive that it is a hybrid flower; another influence has affected it besides the Roman tradition and the impulses common to Romanesque art in general, and this is clearly a Byzantine influence.

Colonies of Syrians had settled in the center and south of France before the time of Charlemagne; some knowledge of Byzantine art must have been introduced by the long-continued Saracenic invasions; there was always commerce between Constantinople and Provence, and pilgrimages to the Holy Land became popular after the year 1000. Moreover, Antioch was captured by the first crusaders in the year 1096, and until 1268 it was the capital of a Syrian kingdom ruled by Western princes; the ports near the mouths of the Rhone were the natural gateways of intercourse between this kingdom and the French lands which were dominant in crusading enterprises; and thus, shortly before the portal of St.-Trophime was built, a greatly strengthened current of Eastern influence had swept directly into Provence.

In a future chapter I shall have to explain the characteristics of Byzantine art, for in some districts south of the Loire it played a more prominently formative part than even in Provence. Now, I need merely say that its crowning triumphs, achieved in Constantinople in the sixth century, had been based upon beginnings made on Syrian soil; and that a direct Syrian influence shows in the architectural conceptions of Provence, while ornamental methods were affected by the delicate flat carvings and the richly ornamented stuffs imported from Constantinople.

In the portal of St.-Trophime¹ Syrian lessons speak from the plentifully repeated moldings of the arch, but the traditions of Gallo-Roman work from their adornment with carvings, and the spirit of a new artistic dispensation from the way in which the architectural and the sculptural motives are combined on the lateral walls. The central column of the door-

¹ There is a fine little model of this portal in the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

way, supporting the carved tympanum, has no precedent in Roman or in Syrian art; but it is a slender column of Oriental marble, not a pier or a stumpy shaft bearing a statue such as Northern Romanesque preferred. The broad lintel, again, is common to the Romanesque of

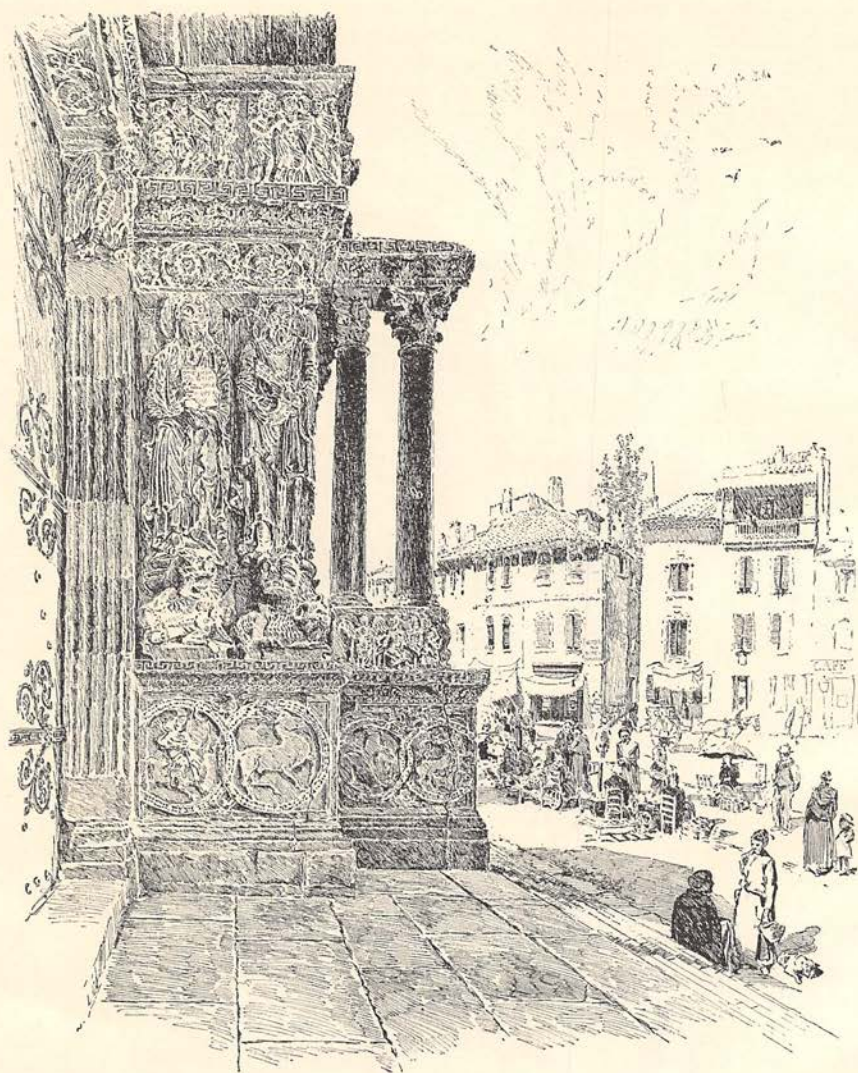
pediment above the portal, while the corbels which bear this cornice are grotesque, and therefore Romanesque, in character. So are the bases and some of the capitals of the colonnade; other capitals are Corinthian; the door-jambs recall the Roman pilaster; and the large figures are



SOUTHERN DOORWAY, PORTAL OF ST.-GILLES.

all countries, but its prolongation, as a sort of frieze above the colonnades, reproduces those bands of figure-sculpture which were often used in late-Roman days, as, for example, on the Arch of Constantine in Rome itself. In the minor enrichments we find Roman-looking leafage, but carved in a sharp, spiky way that reminds us of the East; and we also find more purely classic motives, like the Greek fret and the egg-and-dart, even in the cornice of the

distinctly the offspring of Gallo-Roman art — they are pseudo-classic in effect and general treatment, although Byzantine details appear in the rich ornamentation of their robes, and a new Christian ideal is expressed in their attitudes and their expression. Long before Romanesque art was born, the iconoclastic revolution had banished statuary from the churches of the East, and those of the Syrian towns show no slightest trace of it. But the

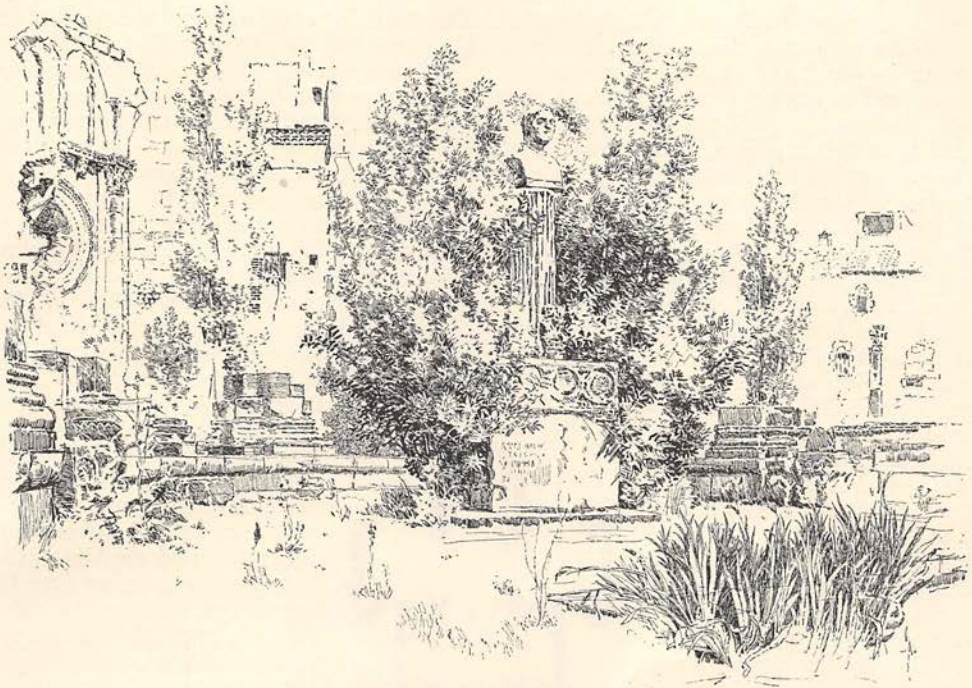


FROM THE CENTRAL DOORWAY, PORTAL OF ST.-GILLES.

Provençal sculptor had teachers enough in the products of his own Romanized soil.

Art alone did not guide the choice or the arrangement of the sculptured motives in a portal like this. The only "Bibles of the poor," their only books of saintly legend and ghostly counsel, medieval figure-decorations of every sort were largely ruled by the interpretative wishes of the Church. These wishes varied from age to age, but at any given time the Church was always of the same mind over the whole of western Europe; and so we may find the general iconographic scheme of this eleventh-century Provençal architect, at least as regards the upper portion of his portal, very closely repeated in the conceptions of his most Northern contemporaries.

This portion represents the hopes and terrors inspired by the prospect of the Judgment Day. Christ the Judge, seated in a glory with uplifted hand, occupies the center of the tympanum, and is encircled by the symbols of the four evangelists. Two tiers of little angels are carved, at half-length, amid the classic ornaments in the soffit of the arch above him. Below, on the lintel, are the twelve apostles. To their right, on what I may call the frieze, is the procession of the blessed dead, received by Abraham, and to their left the naked forms of the wicked, chained together, and dragged by a demon through the flames of hell. Lower down, local devotion to a special class of saints is expressed. In the deep embrasure of the doorway stand large figures of St. Peter, St.



IN THE CHOIR, ST.-GILLES.

John, St. Andrew, and St. Paul, and corresponding figures of other apostolic saints stand behind the colonnades of the front, completing the proof that the Provençal believed the Christianity of his land had spread from the teachings of Christ's immediate followers. There is only one figure with episcopal crook and miter, and this represents St.-Trophime, the special patron of the city of Arles. Bible stories, including scenes from the early life of Christ, are woven into the minor enrichments; but you will notice, the Virgin nowhere plays a symbolical part. And it would be the same were you looking at a Northern portal of this epoch. Not until a later day did the worship of Mary so develop that it almost overshadowed the worship of her Son.

A singular quality of texture and color adds to the charm of this portal. No sharp Northern frosts have split or eaten into it, but centuries of sun and rain have mellowed its contours and surfaces, and, at some far-away time, the sculptures seem to have been rubbed with oil, so that many among them look more like bronze castings than like carvings in a fine-grained stone. All of them are finely monumental in pose and in the classic-looking disposition of their robes. But inexperience shows in the rather undue size of their heads, as well as in technical points. Nor have they the vitality, the energy, which mark the beginnings of an art that is destined to develop along

new lines toward maturity of a fresh and individual sort. This wonderful school of Provençal sculpture was at its best when it stood nearest to classic art. It was born full-grown at a time when Northern schools were crudely adolescent, and was born of imitation, not of spontaneous effort. Therefore it died sterile while the Northern schools were ripening fruits more personal and more vigorous than it had produced when in its prime.

VII.

DRIVE, now, for a couple of hours toward the southwest, across the edges of that vast, moist, grassy, reedy delta of the Rhone which is called the Camargue, they say, because once it was called the Campus Marii. On the way you may catch glimpses of troops of wild-eyed, long-horned cattle, and of those small Provençal horses which, after the romantic fashion of their land, claim descent from the steeds of Saracenic pirates; and then you will arrive at the poor and shabby village of St.-Gilles. Once it was a famous town, and in front of its abbey church, overlooking the market-square, stands a portal that is still one of the most famous in the world.

Its three doorways are three times as striking and splendid as the single one at St.-Trophime; much of its ornamental work is even more exquisite in design and finish, and its large

statues are more freely and skilfully handled in a nobler, more truly classical way. Examine it piece by piece, and you will think that nothing could be more delicate. Look at it from a distance, and you will feel sure that nothing could be more sumptuous, more imperially exuberant. It has the size and stateliness of a Roman work, and it is wrought with the lavish elaboration of a little Byzantine triptych. The finest thing in all Provence, you will often be told, and you will easily believe the verdict if you do not stop to think. But if you do — well, I hope that you may then prefer the portal of St.-Trophime.

At St.-Trophime all the diverse elements, architectural and sculptural, have been fused into a clear, vigorous composition which, from end to end and down to the smallest detail, shows no disconnected feature or weak device. But the bold, simple plinth, bearing its symmetrical colonnade, which solidifies and dignifies this composition is poorly replaced at St.-Gilles by the range of great columns varying in the heights of their bases (evidently because antique shafts had lain ready to hand), and by the projecting plinths which, on each side of the central door, support shorter isolated columns, as shown in the picture on page 128; the external molding of the central arch is continued as awkward bits of cornice, which protect nothing and end nowhere; the carved frieze has also no logical termination, while its lower member is carried on by itself as an inadequate support for the arches of the lateral doors; in certain minor features the same lack of clear coherence in design appears; and thus, if you rate architectural merit higher than all else in a work of architecture, you will not be so dazzled by the lordliness or the lavishness of St.-Gilles that you will rank it above its more modest rival. But, all the same, you will cross yourself with a little prayer that its stately saints may forgive you for your criticisms.

Here the sculptor's scheme is historical, not symbolical: only the Christ who sits again as judge of the world in the central tympanum is conceived in an imaginative way. The Crucifixion occupies the southern tympanum; and now, in the northern one, the Virgin has been made conspicuous — yet not as the Queen of Heaven, after the fashion of a later day. It

is the babe in her lap to whom the kings of the East bring tribute and adoration.

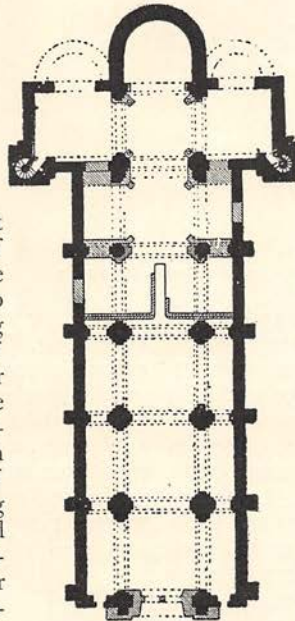
On many an old grant or decree, issued by some abbot or bishop who was a feudal lord, it is written that his words had been spoken *inter leones*; his judgment-seat was the doorstep of the temple, and here great lions, symbols of the church militant, had been carved. You will find them beside the main doorway of St.-Gilles, and again at Arles, supporting the apostolic figures.

In early medieval days the abbey of St.-Gilles, founded in the sixth century in a town which once had borne the Grecian name of Rhode and then the Roman name of Vallis Flaviana, was the chief "house" of the knights of St. John; and in those days the great counts of Toulouse were glad when they could call themselves counts of St.-Gilles as well. But decline approached when the Albigensian heresies began, soon after the year 1150, and the new abbey church, founded in 1116, was never completed. Behind its fully finished portal rises a much narrower field of wall, singularly blank and forlorn-looking, and the church of which this forms the western end is a cheap, weak, and uninteresting makeshift, run up in Gothic days long after the original scheme had been abandoned.

Beneath it, however, is a very fine Romanesque crypt, well lighted, and with a central range of columns; and above ground fragmentary beginnings prove the splendor of the original design. The existing church is far from small, yet its apse does not reach to the end of the intended nave;

and to the eastward of it, half buried in the verdure of a little public garden, are beautifully designed and ornamented bases which show where the piers of choir and transept were to rise, portions of the wall of one arm of the transept and of the adjacent aisle, and, in the angle thus formed, a wonderful little spiral staircase. This was so famous all through medieval times that gilds of stone-cutters from far-away lands made pious pilgrimages to behold it, and its nickname, *le vis de St.-Gilles*, was borrowed for all similar constructions. Near by is part of a rich bull's-eye window,¹ representing, probably, the intended fashioning of all the windows of the

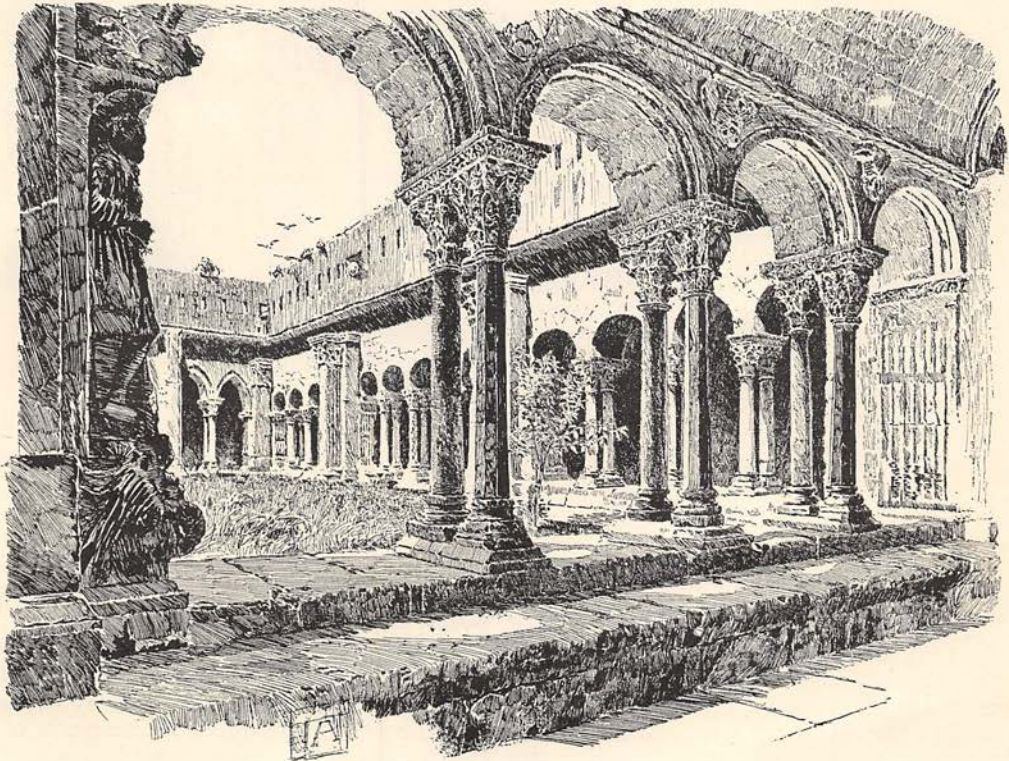
¹ This window is shown in the illustration on p. 129. The bust in the center of the picture is a modern memorial placed on a base composed of ancient fragments.



PLAN OF THE CHURCH OF ST.-TROPHIME, ARLES. FROM CORROVER'S "ARCHITECTURE ROMANE."

aisles. The passion of the South for ornament shows in the sculptural completeness of each and every stone: the Northern custom was first to build, and then to set the sculptor at his tasks. It is a pity indeed that such beginnings were balked, and that time and vandalism should have left them to us even scanted than they were at first; and a double, a treble pity because there is no other church in Provence to tell us what this one might have been.

gorgeous piece of theatrical scenery. We fancy that we are about to witness in front of it some mimic drama of peasant life—the woes and tragedies of some new *Santuzza*, perhaps; and that shortly, when the over-bright stage sunshine is extinguished, it will carefully be rolled away. But the gamins who slide, shouting, down the wide, flat balustrades at each end of its steps are real enough, and their “act” is commonplace enough; and the past also



THE CLOISTER, ST.-TROPHIME, ARLES.

A larger town than St.-Gilles, owning so fine and so peculiar a work of art as its portal, might considerably enrich itself from the tourist's purse, but St.-Gilles is too little and too dirty to keep him overnight. Yet the Provençal sun shines as brightly here as elsewhere, and the Provençal folk seem as lively and content. The portal is so much too grand for its church and its town, and, when the people fill the market-place with their queer vividly colored vegetable wares, they address themselves so wholly to the business of living and bargaining, and take their royal work of art so simply for granted,—as though every shabby village on earth might own one precisely like it,—that, for the moment, it assumes a secondary place in our eyes, too. It grows as unreal, as unsubstantial, as little to be believed in, as a

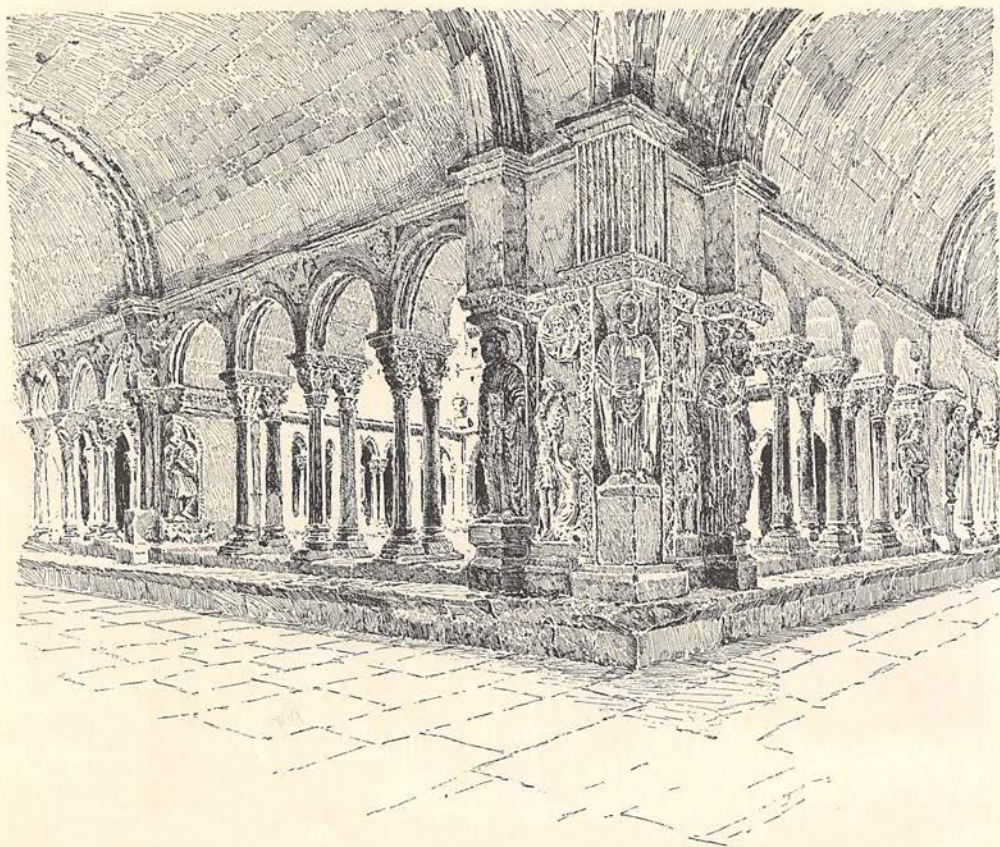
seems real, and just as commonplace and human as to-day, when we notice the broad and shallow grooves which have been worn in these balustrades. For what can they possibly mean if not the cheerful friction of many generations of juvenile trouser-seats?

VIII.

TURN back again to Arles, and you will find that the church of St.-Trophime is not at all what the church of St.-Gilles should have been.

Here the upper part of the façade has some form and dignity, but it is plain that the portal evidently does not belong to it,¹ and the interior is plain to the point of extreme sever-

¹ The small doorways beside the portal are, of course, Renaissance reconstructions.



NORTHEASTERN ANGLE OF CLOISTER, ST.-TROPHIME, ARLES.

ity. Above the very tall pier-arcade between the nave and its aisles there is only a range of little round-headed windows near the ceiling; there are no bases, no capitals, no moldings on the square-sectioned piers and arches, nowhere any figure-sculptures, and nowhere any ornamental features or details except narrow cornice-strings of classical design, certain little columns which flank the aisle-windows, and others which spring from the top of the lateral members of the piers to support those of the vaulting-ribs. Nevertheless, the design is good and the construction very solid and skilful; this is no makeshift piece of work, and we are told that it was built within the same half-century as the portal which so radically contradicts it in idea and effect. Monastic divergencies explain the seeming puzzle.

In Romanesque times all branches of art were in the hands of monks alone. The thousands of monasteries which sprinkled every part of France, and had been the only repositories of knowledge and skill during the dark ages, conceived and fostered the ideas embodied in Romanesque art, and also trained the men who gave them material form. The ornate round-

arched styles translate the ambitious, intellectual, luxury-loving lives of the monks of the great Burgundian abbey of Cluny and its myriad offshoots and dependencies. But early in the twelfth century the rigorous ascetic tenets of the Cistercian order, whose mother-houses were at Citeaux and Clairvaux, and whose mighty apostle was St. Bernard, began to speak through an architectural gospel of economy, severity, and stern self-denial, especially opposed to that wealth of fantastic figure-sculpture which, St. Bernard declared, had nothing Christian about it. Wherever we find a very plain Romanesque church we may feel pretty sure that Cistercians built it.

The churches at Avignon and Arles are both Cistercian, but each exhibits a local type of construction. The aisleless plan adopted for Notre-Dame des Doms (possibly inspired by the exceptional plan of Constantine's basilica in Rome) persisted in Provence and Languedoc even after the introduction of the Gothic style; and the very lofty aisles of St.-Trophime are still more characteristically Provençal. They forbade a triforium, or even an effective clearstory; but with their vaults in the shape

of quarter-spheres, they strongly buttressed the barrel-vault of the nave; and there is nothing more Provençal than this type of nave-vault, which is shown in Notre-Dame des Doms as well as in St.-Trophime.

In their later works the Romans often used intersecting vaults, but their typical form was the barrel-vault, with or without cross-ribs. Fine examples of Roman cross-ribbed barrel-vaults still exist in Provence, and in early Christian days must have been much more numerous; and their teachings, together with lessons from the East, kept stone-vaulting alive even during

style. Pointed arches had already long been used by the Saracens, likewise with no thought of those methods of construction which characterize the true Pointed styles of a later day in the North. Perhaps from them, perhaps from his own instinct, the Provençal architect learned that a Pointed vault is more easily built and sustained than a semicircular one; moreover, he preferred to lay his outer roof of tiles directly on the exterior of his vault without any framework of wood between, as the Syrians had done with their roofs of stone slabs, and, in such a case, roof and vault may be



THE TOWER OF ST.-TROPHIME, FROM THE CLOISTER, ARLES.

ENGRAVED BY J. TINKEY.

the darkest architectural periods. The rudest little Provençal churches, built as early, perhaps, as the seventh century, are unskilfully vaulted, and broad naves were very skilfully vaulted as soon as the teachings of Syrian architecture had been thoroughly absorbed.

But the cross-ribbed nave-vaults of St.-Trophime and of Notre-Dame des Doms are not semicircular in shape — they are conspicuously pointed; and this, of course, was a variation from the precedents of Byzantium and of ancient Rome. It was a local device, and it was a Romanesque device; it was inspired by purely practical reasons, and had nothing to do with the advent of a consistent Pointed

brought into closer relationship if the latter assumes a pointed shape.

Provençal nave-vaults seem to have assumed this shape at least as early as the end of the eleventh century; and after the year 1100 they were never semicircular, although, until Gothic influences entered from the North in the thirteenth century, the style as such remained Romanesque. Whether we examine it in its florid national or in its stern Cistercian type, we find round arches in the pier-arcades, the portals, the window-heads, and the decorative details, and usually in the aisle-vaults too. The great arch of the portal of St.-Trophime is, indeed, slightly pointed, but so very

slightly, so imperceptibly, almost, that we may lay the breaking of its curve to accident rather than to design. Nor amid this retention of round-arched forms do we see any sign of the advent of Gothic constructional ideas. In the Pointed barrel-vault of St.-Trophime there is no more concentration of weight and thrust upon special points of support than in the round-arched barrel-vault of a Norman twelfth-century church.

No Provençal churches of later date than St.-Trophime demand attention in a sketch like this. Along the sea-coast Saracenic invasions had fostered, in very early days, a fortified type of church, and this was brought into greater prominence by the Albigensian wars and the constant attacks of Mediterranean pirates; even the church which enshrines the bones of the holy Marys has military-looking walls and machicolations. But, common to all the southerly parts of France, fortified churches may best be studied to the westward of Provence; and when Northern Gothic penetrated the land, the attempt to unite its characteristic ideas with Provençal ideas in regard to ground-plan and proportions, produced results which are interesting rather than attractive. The Pointed work of Provence has a distinct local flavor than that of most of the other provinces of France, but it appeals to the lover of architectural history more than to the lover of architectural beauty.

The late-Gothic choir of St.-Trophime is not even interesting. Turn from it as quickly as you can to the cloister which lies against the south side of the church. Here, to your delight, you will find two walks built in those lavish old Romanesque days when Cistercian dogmas had not congealed the Provençal love for beauty, and two built in Gothic days with an exceptional effort to conform to the spirit and effect of the earlier work.

In the north of France Gothic cloister-walks, with great, traceried windows, have almost everywhere replaced the unglazed Romanesque arcades; but these are still numerous in the south; they are even more beautiful; and none of them all is quite as beautiful as St.-Trophime's. In Languedoc you may find examples almost as luxuriant and picturesque, but they are less graceful, less refined, and they lack St.-Trophime's profuse display of figure-sculpture, while the trail of the Cistercian is over most of the other cloisters of Provence itself, and a charming one at Aix is semi-Italian in character.

But there is nothing more thoroughly Provençal than the cloister of St.-Trophime. Mr. Pennell shows you the difference between its Romanesque and its Gothic arcades, and suggests their opulent beauty. But even he could not show all the charm of the varied shafts and

storied capitals and subordinate decorations now so classical in spirit and again so quaintly grotesque; could not explain the historic, dramatic, imaginative, or purely artistic interest of the multitudinous figures; and could not hint at the color of the delicately grayish embroidery of stone, based on the green central square and over-arched by a burning blue sky whose snowy cloudlets seem to stoop and break as flocks of snow-white doves swirl swiftly down upon the grass. If one wanted to dream out his days in the soft, slumberous atmosphere of a dead and yet still-living past, and to feed his dreams upon poetry made tangible, he could not do better than beg for the shoes of its doddering old guardian, and shut himself in the cloister of St.-Trophime. Even a conscientious tourist's day, spent in careful examination of the four contrasting arcades, takes on a semblance of poetic reverie when one looks back upon it — seems a medley of things Greek and Roman and Byzantine, Northern and Southern, Romanesque and Gothic, historic, legendary and fantastic, all woven into a magical mesh of loveliness.

The older of the two Romanesque walks (the northern one, which is matched by a corresponding blank arcade against the wall of the church) is the finest of all; for exquisite skill in chiseling it is the very finest thing in Provence, and, I think, the very finest thing of its date in the whole of the Western world. The Gothic walks are inferior to both the others; but when we think how classic was the mood of Provençal sculpture, and how rudely it was checked, how wholly it was suppressed, by the followers of St. Bernard, we wonder only that in after days, and in conjunction with exotic Pointed forms, it should have recovered, in this exceptional case, so large a part of its old Romanesque spirit and skill.

IX.

LISTEN, now, and the doves of St.-Trophime may tell you of the hundred thousand people that Arles contained when, in its port, Cæsar built the galleys with which he conquered Massilia; they may tell you why Ausonius called it the "Little Rome of Gaul"; why Constantine made it the capital of all the Gallic provinces; why, even in Charlemagne's time, a history-writing bishop named it "Arles the opulent"; and why, after commerce and liberty had made it rich and beautiful again in the twelfth century, and religious wars had caused it to languish again, its old prosperity revived when Provence was united to the crown of France. Then, if you can follow them as, with a rush like winds, they fly out of their enchanted cloister, they will show you many things, Roman, medieval, and Renaissance,

which in the wakeful nights of all the rest of your life you will rejoice to remember.

One of the most impressive will be the Aliscamps, with its ranges of poplars, and its rows of tombs once filled by the bodies of thousands of souls which had flitted to the Elysian Fields of the pagan or to the Christian's paradise. Another will be the vast deserted monastery of Mont Majour, baking in hot sunshine on its rocky island in a sun-dried plain, and showing chapels, churches, fortifications, dwelling-places, as early as the rock-hewn cell in which St.-Trophime once prayed, and as late as the palatial halls which were never completed because of the Revolution of 1789. Another, in the city itself, will be the Roman amphitheater, the largest ever built in Gaul; and still another, the ruined Roman theater whence, beyond two magnificent columns which still stand erect, you will see the tower that springs above the crossing of the church of St.-Trophime.

Mr. Pennell shows us this tower from the cloister-roof instead. It is earlier in date than the Cistercian nave of its church, but is less typically Provençal than towers which reproduce the circular shape of Roman sepulchral monuments.¹ In its outline as in its decoration it resembles the campaniles of the so-called Lombard churches of northern Italy, with the addition of a more classic touch in the pilasters encircling its attic story. There is no domical ceiling beneath it, as there is beneath the central one of Notre-Dame des Doms, but, nevertheless, it proves the influence of the East; its form is Italian, but its station is Byzantine. The Roman basilica suggested no towers at all, and when early Christian builders wanted them they sprang up beside the doorway, or, as in Italy, took independent station near the church. But Christian builders in the East conspicuously marked the crossing, even in very early days; and every Western feature which performed this service in medieval times

¹ One of these, the tower of a little church at Mollèges, likewise built early in the twelfth century, and evidently copied from the famous Roman tomb at St.-Remy, which stood very close at hand, is reproduced in our initial letter.

was, directly or indirectly, inspired by their central domes.

When you have seen all these things, and when the doves have gone to bed, you will discover—listening from the window of your hotel to the babble of word and song and laughter that comes up through the moon-lit plane-tree branches which thickly roof a little square—you will discover that, in the summer-time at all events, Arles itself never goes to bed. There is a pump in this square; it regularly begins to clang and spout at three in the morning; and I could not decide whether, to the pumpers, this was a late hour of to-day or an early hour of to-morrow.

But there is one thing in Arles that you will need no guides of any kind to show you. I mean the beauty of its women, who are still naïve or wise enough to wear the little Arlesian cap and voluminous fichu. Of course they have always been famous for loveliness all over the world, yet nothing in other parts of the world will have helped you to imagine them. The type is peculiar to Provence—much more delicate than Italian types, the very dark eyes and hair contrasting with the whitest of skins; a spirited and yet an extremely poetic type, and so refined, so aristocratic, that its charm is not lost in old age. Nevertheless, not the type itself, but the frequency of its perfect presentation is the most surprising, the most delightful fact. Here an ugly woman, a commonplace-looking girl, is the exception; where five or six are gathered together, three at least will be beauties and the others will be comely. Surely, if these people are as Greek as they like to think, the sculptors of ancient Greece needed their imagination less than we are accustomed to think.

Scores of times I cried to myself, "This one is the most beautiful of all." But best of all I now remember a girl who, with the true Arlesian face, had unbelievable riches of red hair. She was more beautiful than, in our unequal world, any woman has any right to be. It was bearable to look at her only because one felt that, very likely, every man and woman in Arles, including her splendid self, thought the redness of her hair distressingly unfortunate.

M. G. Van Rensselaer.



ON THE STEPS OF ST.-TROPHIME, ARLES.