A FEAST-DAY ON THE RHÔNE.

WITH PICTURES BY LOUIS LOEB.

A FLYING GLIMPSE OF PONT SAINT ESPRIT.

I.

THIS water feast-day was a part of the biennial pilgrimage to the Sainte Estelle of the Félibrige and the Cigaliers, the two Félibrien societies maintained in Paris by the children of the South of France. Through twenty-three dreary months these expatriated ones exist in the chill North; in the blessed twenty-fourth month—always in burning August, when the melons are luscious ripe and the grapes are ripening, when the sun they love so well is blazing his best and the whole land is a-quiver with a thrilling, stimulating heat—they go joyously southward upon an excursion which has for its climax the great Félibrien festival: and then, in their own gloriously hot Midi, they really live!

By a semi-right and by a large courtesy, we of America were of this gay party. Four years earlier, as the official representatives of an American troubadour, we had come upon an embassy to the troubadours of Provence; and such warm relations had sprung up between ourselves and the poets to whom we were accredited that they had ended by making us members of their own elect body, the Society of the Félibrige—wherein are united the troubadours of these modern times. As Félibres, therefore, it was not merely our right but our duty to attend the festival of the Sainte Estelle; and our official notification in regard to this meeting—received in New York on a chill day in the early springtime—announced also that we were privileged to journey on the special steamboat chartered by our brethren of Paris for the run from Lyons to Avignon down the Rhône.

II.

WE were called at five o'clock in the morning. Even the little birds of Lyons were drowsy at that untoward and melancholy hour. As I slowly roused myself I heard their sleepy twitterings out in the trees on the Cours du Midi—and my sympathies were with them. There are natures which are quickened and strengthened by the early day. Mine is not such. I know of nothing that so numbs what I am pleased to term my faculties as to be *particeps criminis* in the rising of the sun.

But life was several shades less cheerless by the time, an hour or so later, that we got down to the waterside. Already the mists of morning had risen, and in their place was the radiant sunshine of the Midi: that penetrating, tingling sunshine which sets the blood to dancing, and thence gets into the brain and breeds extravagant fancies there which straightway are uttered as substantial truths—as M. Daudet so often has told us; and so often, when writing about his birthland, has demonstrated in his own text.

Yet even had we come to the boat while still in the lowering mood begotten of our intemperate palterings with the dawn, we must have yielded quickly to the infectious cheerfulness which obtained on board the *Gladiateur*. From end to end the big steamboat was bright with bunting; and the company thronging on board of her was living up to the brightness of the sunshine and the flags.

For they were going home—home to their dear South, these poet-exiles; and their joy was so strong within them that it almost touched the edge of tears. I could understand their feeling because of a talk that I had had three days before, in Paris, with Baptiste Bonnet, up in his little apartment under the mansard, with an outlook over the

DRAWN BY LOUIS LOEB. ENGRAVED BY M. HAIDER.

AN EARLY START—COFFEE ON BOARD.

flowers in the window-garden across roof-tops to Notre Dame. Bonnet could not come upon this expedition—and what love and longing there was in his voice while he talked to us about the radiant land which to him was forbidden, but which we so soon were to see! To know that we were going, while he remained behind, made us feel like a brace of Jacobs; and when Mme. Bonnet made delicious tea for us (« because the English like tea,» as she explained with a clear kindliness that in no wise was lessened by her misty ethnology) we felt that so to prey upon their hospitality in the very moment that we were making off with their birthright was of the blackest of crimes. But because of what our dear Bonnet had said, and of the way in which he had said it, I understood the deep feeling that underlay the exuberant gaiety of our fellow-passengers; and it seemed to me that there was a very tender note of pathos in their joy.

They were of all sorts and conditions, these passengers: a few famous throughout the world, as the player Mounet-Sully, the painter Benjamin Constant, the prose poet Paul Arène; many famous throughout France; and even in the rank and file few who had not raised themselves above the multitude in one or another of the domains of art.

Most of the poets—for, in a way, they all were poets—came to the boat breakfastless, and their first move on board was toward the little cabin on deck wherein coffee was served. The head waiter at the improvised breakfast-table—as I inferred not less from his look and manner than from his ostentatiously professed ignorance of his native tongue—was an English duke in reduced circumstances; and his assistants, I fancy, were retired French senators. Indeed, these dignified functionaries had about them an air of high comedy so irresistible, and so many of the ladies whom they served were personages of the Odéon or the Comédie Française, that only the smell of the coffee saved the scene from lapsing into the unrealism of the realistic stage.

Seven o'clock came, but the *Gladiateur* remained passive. At the gang-plank were assembled the responsible heads of the expedition—who were anything but passive. They all were talking at once, and all were engaged in making gestures expressive of an important member of the party who had been specially charged to be on hand in ample time; who had outraged every moral principle by failing to keep his appointment; whose whereabouts could not be even remotely surmised; whose absence was the equivalent of ruin and despair—a far less complex series of concepts, I may add, than a southern Frenchman is capable of expressing with his head and his body and his hands.

It was the pianist.

A grave majoral, reaching down to the kernel of the matter, solved the difficulty with the question, « Have we the piano? »

« We have.»

« Enough! » cried the majoral. « Let us go.»

In a moment the gang-plank was drawn aboard; the lines were cast off; the big paddle-wheels began to turn; the swift current laid hold upon us—and the *Gladiateur*, slipping away from the bank, headed for the channel-arch of the Pont du Midi. The bridge was thronged with our friends of Lyons come down to say good-by to us. Above the parapet their heads cut sharp against the morning brightness of the western sky. All together they cheered us as we, also cheering, shot beneath them: and then the bridge, half hidden in the cloud of smoke from our huge funnel, was behind us—and our voyage was begun.

III.

Of all the rivers which, being navigable, do serious work in the world, the Rhône is the most devil-may-care and light-hearted. In its five-hundred-mile dash downhill from the Lake of Geneva to the Mediterranean its only purpose—other than that of doing all the mischief possible—seems to be frolic fun. And yet for more than two thousand years this apparently frivolous, and frequently malevolent, river has been usefully employed in the service of mankind.

It has served under many masters. In the Rhône Valley of the present day Celtic flints and pottery underlie Roman ruins; here and there a bit of Roman magnificence remains almost intact; on the hilltops still stand the broken strongholds of the robber nobles who maintained their nobility upon what they were able to steal. Naturally, these ruined castles, and the still-existent towns of the same period, being so conspicuously in evidence, the flavor of the river is most distinctly medieval; but everywhere, to the discerning eye, are traces of the barbarism, of the civilization, and of the semi-barbarism which successively were plowed under before what we have the temerity to call our own civilization began.

Indeed, the *Gladiateur* had but little more than swung clear from Lyons, around the long

DRAWN BY LOUIS LOEB.

EN ROUTE—A SOLOIST.

curve where the Saône and the Rhône are united and the stream suddenly is doubled in size, than we were carried back to the very dawn of historic times: for before us, stretching away to the eastward, was the broad plain of Saint Fons—once covered with an oak forest to which came Druid priests at Yuletide to gather with their golden sickles mistletoe for the great pagan feast; later, the battle-field on which Clodius Albinus and Septimius Severus came to a definite understanding in regard to the rulership of Gaul; and, later still, the site of a pleasure-castle of the archbishops of Lyons and of the Villa Longchêne to which light-hearted Lyons nobles came. Palace and villa still are there—the one a Dominican school, the other a hospital endowed by the Empress Eugénie; but the oaks and the Druids and the battle are only faint legends now.

I am forced to admit that never a thought was given to this aggregation of antiquities by the too frivolous passengers aboard the *Gladiateur*. At the very moment when we were steaming through the Gallo-Roman and medieval latitudes there was a burst of music from the piano that fired our light-headed company as a spark fires a mine—for the air was our Félibrien anthem, «La Coupe,» and instantly a hundred voices took up the song. And when this rite was ended, the music shifted to a livelier key and straightway a farandole was formed.

On the whole, a long and narrow steamboat is not a specially good place for a farandole; but the leader of this one—a young person from the Odéon, whose hair came down repeatedly, but whose prodigiously high spirits never came down at all—was not one of the sort whom difficulties deter. At the head of the long line of dancers—a living chain linked together by clasped hands—she caracoled and curveted up and down the narrow passes of the boat; and in her wake, also caracoling and curveting, came the chain, which each moment grew in length as volunteers joined it, or (in keeping with farandole customs) as the less vivacious members of the party were seized upon and forcibly impressed into its ranks. And so we farandoled clear away to Givors.

In fact, in the thick of our farandoling, Givors slipped by almost unnoticed: a trim little town hung out to sun in long strips upon terraces ascending from the waterside; its walls and tiled roofs rising above gardens, and so making a general effect of warm grays and yellows dashed with vivid greens. It is a town of some commercial pretensions, the gateway of a canal a dozen miles long leading up through the valley of the little river Gier to iron-works and coke-works and glass-works tucked away in the hills. The canal was projected almost a century and a half ago as a connecting-link between the Rhône and the Loire, and so between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean; wherefore the Canal of the Two Oceans was, and I suppose continues to be, its high-sounding name. But the Revolution came, and the digging never extended beyond that first dozen miles; and so it came to pass that the Canal of the Two Oceans, as such, is a delusion, and that the golden future which once lay ahead of Givors now lies a long way astern. Yet the town has an easy and contented look; as though it had saved enough from the wreck of its magnificent destiny to leave it still comfortably well to do.

Before we fairly had passed it, while the farandole was dying out slowly, there crashed down upon us such a thunderous outburst of song as might have come from an exceptionally large-lunged seraph afloat above us in the open regions of the air. But the singer was not a seraph. He was an eminent professor in one of the greatest of French universities, who in sheer joyousness of spirit had betaken himself to the top of one of the big paddle-boxes, and thence was suffering his mountain-cleaving voice to go at large. So quickening was the company in which he found himself; so stimulating was the racy fervor of his own Southern sun!

IV.

From Givors the river runs almost in a straight line to Vienne. On both shores rise softly wooded hills—the foot-hills of the parallel ranges of mountains by which the wide valley is shut in. Down this perspective, commandingly upon a height, is seen the city, misty and uncertain at first, but growing clearer each moment as the distance lessens, until the stone-work of man and the rock-work of nature become distinct and the picture is complete: the time-browned mass of houses on the hilltop; the tower of Philip the Fair; over all, the huge façade of Saint Maurice—an ogival wonder that for centuries was the cathedral church of the Primate of Gaul.

After Marseilles, Vienne makes as handsome pretensions to age as are asserted by any French town. The tradition of its founding lies hidden in the mists of heroic legend, and is the more momentous because it is so

DRAWN BY LOUIS LOEB. ENGRAVED BY M. HAIDER.

THE BOTTLE WITH THE VERSES.

impressively vague. Over its very name the etymologists wrangle with such violence that one is lost in amazement at their ill-tempered erudition; and the archæologists, though a bit more civil to each other, are almost as much at cross-purposes in their own way. The best esteemed of these too learned gentry (at least the one whom I esteem the most, because I like the boldness of his claim) is the Dominican chronicler Lavinius, who says flatly that Vienne was founded thirteen centuries before the Christian era by a contemporary of Moses, one King Allobrox, a Celtic sovereign descended from Hercules in a right line. This is a good beginning; and it has the merit of embodying the one fact upon which all of these testy antiquarians are agreed: that Vienne the Strong—as folk called it in those days—was a flourishing town long before Lyons was builded or Paris so much as thought of, and an age or two before the Romans came over into Gaul.

When the Romans did come, they made over Vienne to suit themselves, and so magnificently that its name was changed to Vienne the Beautiful. One temple has survived almost perfect from that time, and one statue,—the famous Crouching Venus,—and

it seems fair enough to accept Vienne's beauty as proved by these. In the dark ages of medieval Christianity most of the beauties vanished, being destroyed outright, or made over into buildings pertaining to the new faith that then rode down the old. And then it was that Vienne was called Vienne the Holy: because, while losing nothing of her splendors temporal, she gained great store of splendors spiritual—whereof the culmination was that famous council, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, which crushed the Templars and gave over their possessions to the crown. And now, being but a mean little town, a withered kernel in the shell of its former grandeur, they call it Vienne the Patriotic; for a city must be something, of course, and patriotism is an attribute that may be had for the claiming in these days.

Here the river cuts its way narrowly through the rock, and on each side the banks lift high above the stream. Of the town—far above us, rising in terraces—we had only a flying glimpse as we flashed past it; and then the valley widened again, and tender green meadows, bordered by lines of poplars and gay with yellow flowers, lay between us and the mountain ranges rising to right and left against the sky.

It was the most peaceful of landscapes; but there was endless fighting hereabouts in ancient times. In an Early Christian way the archbishops of Vienne ravaged among the Protestants; between whiles the robber counts, without respect to creed, ravaged among the traveling public with a large-minded impartiality; and, down in the lowest rank of ravagers, the road-agents of the period stole all that their betters left them to steal. But I do not think that it could have paid any of them very well, this ravaging. The business was overcrowded in all its branches. Indeed, the more that I look into the history of that time, the more am I convinced that medievalism, either as an institution or as an investment, was not a success.

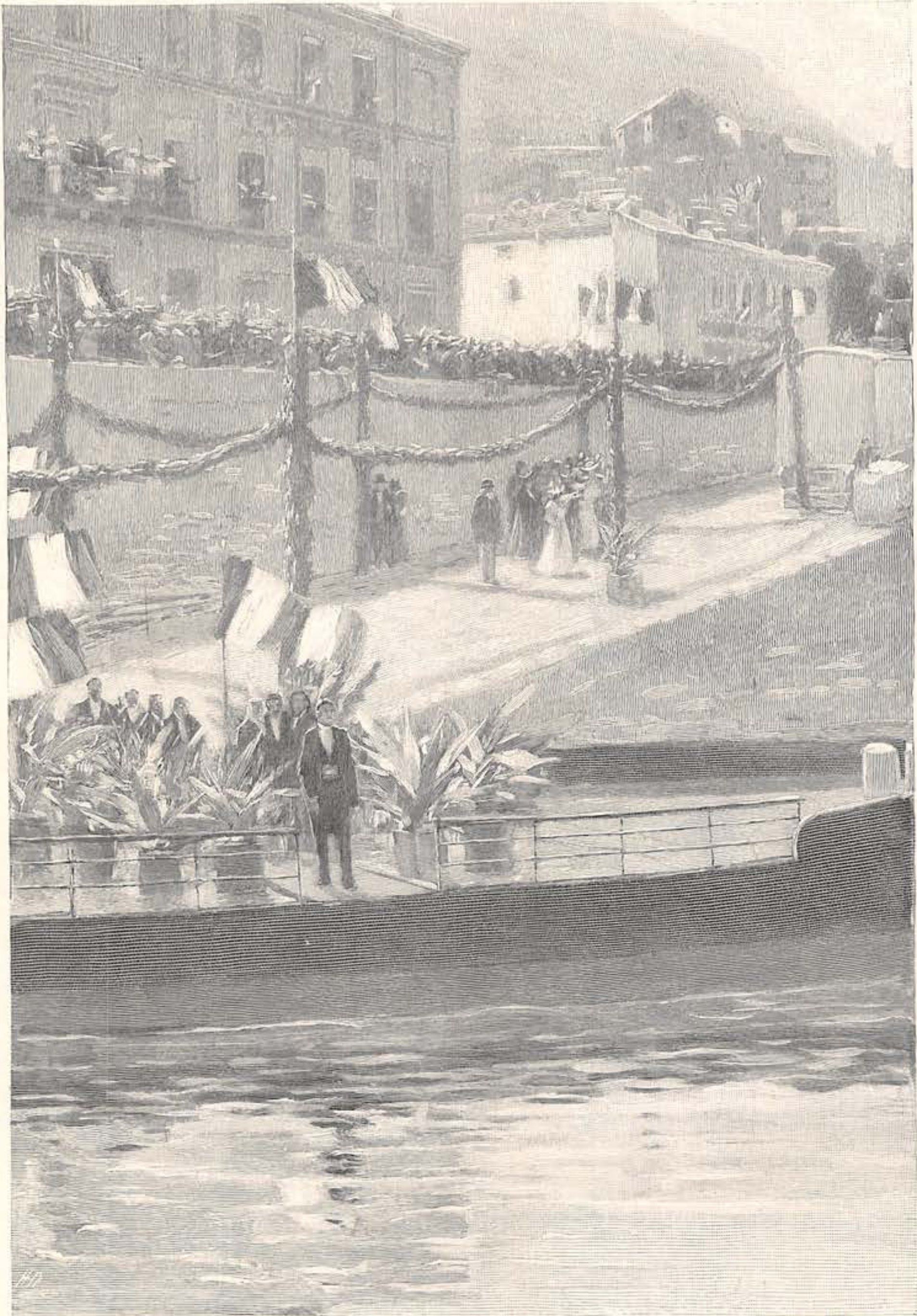
V.

As we approached the bridge of Serrières it was evident that some sort of demonstration in our honor was imminent. Above the rail rose a swarm of heads and shoulders, an animated crenellation, and while we still were a hundred yards away a bouquet, swinging at the end of a light line, was lowered swiftly, the bright flowers flashing in the sunlight as they swayed and twirled. It was only by a fluke that this offering reached us. It went forty feet wide of our bows, but came aboard us by a lucky swing to starboard of our stern; and when the discovery was made that a bottle was enshrined amidst the flowers, and that upon the bottle was an inscription,—necessarily a sonnet, as we impulsively decided,—our feeling toward Serrières was as warm as it could be. But the impatient group that surrounded the majoral who held the bottle flew asunder in wrath as he read aloud, in place of the expected sonnet, these words: «Quinine prepared by the pharmacist Cuminat»—and then our feeling toward Serrières became less warm!

But the people of Tournon—to which generous town, and to the breakfast provided by its cordial inhabitants, we came an hour before noon—entreated us with so prodigal a hospitality that the questionable conduct of the Serrières apothecary quickly faded from our minds. In ancient times Tournon had a black reputation for its evil dealing with chance wayfarers along the Rhône; but because, no doubt, of an honest desire to live down its own record—which I mention here rather to its present credit than to its past shame—it now seems determined to balance matters by manifesting toward passing travelers the most obliging courtesy in the world.

As we came galloping around a curve in the river—I cannot insist too strongly upon the dashing eagerness which was the constant buoyant undertone of our voyage—the town shot up before us: a crowd of heavily built houses, a church or two, some bits of crenellated ramparts, all grouped about and below a still serviceable castle perked out upon a bold little hill thrust forward into the stream. The color and composition were so good—the blendings of greens and grays shot with warm yellows, the sweep upward from the river to the castle battlements—that to my American fancy (used rather to medieval semblances than to medieval realities) the whole place seemed to have escaped from an exceptionally well-set operatic stage.

All Tournon was down at the waterside to meet us, and on the landing-stage was the very Mayor, a lean and tricolored man who took off his hat comprehensively to our whole company in a magnificent bow. Notables were with him,—the Sous-Préfet, the Mayor of Tain, the Adjoint, leading citizens,—who also bowed to us, but not with a bow like his. Laurel garlands decorated the landing-stage; more laurel garlands and the national colors made gay the roadway leading up the bank; over this roadway was a laurel-wreathed and tricolored triumphal arch—all



DRAWN BY LOUIS LOEB. ENGRAVED BY H. DAVIDSON.

TOURNON.

as suitable to welcoming poets and patriots, such as we were, as suitable could be. While the *Gladiateur* was drawing in to the bank there was a noble banging of *boîtes*,—which ancient substitute for cannon in joy-firing is still esteemed warmly in rural France,—and before the Mayor spoke ever a word to us the band bounded gallantly into the thick of the «Marseillaise.»

With the *boîtes* banging fitfully, with the band in advance playing «La Coupe,» the tricolored Mayor led off with the most distinguished lady of our company upon his arm; and away we all went, under the triumphal arch and up the garlanded roadway, two by two—as though Tournon were a Rhône-side Ararat, and we were the animals coming out of the ark. Our entry was a veritable triumph, and we endeavored (I think successfully) to live up to it, walking stately through the narrow streets, made narrower by the close-packed crowd pressing to see so rare a poetic spectacle; through the long cool corridors of the Lycée; and so out upon a prettily dignified little park, where, at a triad of tables set within a garlanded inclosure beneath century-old plane-trees, our breakfast was served to us to the accompaniment of bangs from the *boîtes* and musical remarks from the band. And the Tournon townsfolk, the while, stood above us on a terrace and sympathetically looked on.

With the filet, the band struck up «La Coupe,»—and away we all went with it in a chorus that did not die out entirely until well along in the galantine. The toasts came in with the ices, and on the basis of the regional Saint Péray (that cracked its corks out with the irregular volleyings of a line of skirmishers firing in a fog); and the tricolored Mayor, on behalf of Tournon, and Paul Arène and delightful Sextius Michel on behalf of the Félibrige and Cigaliers, and M. Maurice Faure, the deputy, on behalf of the nation at large, exchanged compliments in the most pleasing way.

But that was no time nor place for extended speech-making. All in a whiff our feast ended; and in another whiff we were up and off, whisking through the Lycée corridors and the crowded streets, and under the triumphal arch, and so back on board the *Gladiateur*. The Mayor, always heroically ablaze with his patriotic scarf of office, stood on the landing-stage (like a courteous Noah seeing the animals safely up the ark gangplank) and made to each couple of us one of his stately bows; the *boîtes* fired a final salvo of one round; the band saluted us with a final outburst of the «Marseillaise»; everybody, ashore and afloat, cheered; and then the big wheels started, the current caught us and wrenched us apart from all that friendliness, and away we dashed down-stream.

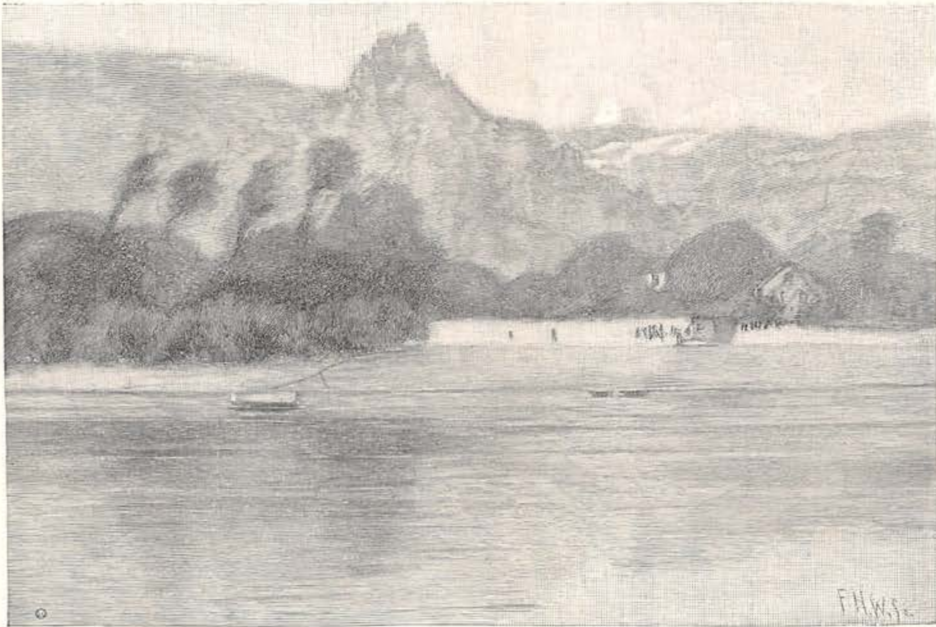
VI.

LONG before we came abreast of it by the windings of the river we saw high up against the sky-line, a clear three hundred feet above the water, all that is left of the stronghold of Crussol—still called by the Rhône boatmen «the Horns of Crussol,» although the two towers no longer shoot out horn-like from the mountain-top with a walled war-town clinging about their flanks. One Geraud Bartet, a vassal of the great house of Crussol,—of which the representative nowadays is the Duc d'Uzès,—built this eagle's nest in the year 1110; but it did not become a place of importance until more than four hundred years later, in the time of the religious wars.

On the issue of faiths the Crussols divided. The head of the house was for the Pope and the King; the two cadets were for God and the Reform. Then it was that the castle (according to an oversanguine chronicler of the period) was «transformed into an unconquerable stronghold»; and a little later the Baron des Adrets—who happened at the moment to be on the Protestant side—conquered it. In the interest of sound doctrine all of its defenders were put to the sword; and tradition declares that «the streams of blood filled one of the cisterns, in which this terrible Huguenot had his own children bathed, ‹in order,› as he said, ‹to give them strength and force, and above all hatred of Catholicism›!» And then «the castle was demolished from its lowest to its highest stone.»

This final statement is a little too sweeping, yet practically it is true. All that now remains of Crussol is a single broken tower, to which some minor ruins cling; and a little lower are the ruins of the town—whence the encircling ramparts have been outcast and lie in scattered fragments down the mountain-side to the border of the Rhône.

It was on this very mountain, a couple of thousand years or so earlier in the world's history, that a much pleasanter personage than a battling baron had his home: a good-natured giant of easy morals who was the traditional founder of Valence. Being desirous of founding a town somewhere, and willing—in accordance with the custom of his time—to leave the selection of a site a little to chance, he hurled a javelin from his moun-



DRAWN BY LOUIS LOEB. ENGRAVED BY F. H. WELLINGTON.

CRUSSOL.

tain-top with the cry, «Va, lance!» and so gave Valence its name and its beginning, on the eastern bank of the river two miles away, on the spot where his javelin fell. At a much later period the Romans adopted and enlarged the giant's foundation; but nearly every trace of their occupation has disappeared. Indeed, even the ramparts built only a few hundred years ago by Francis I. have vanished; and the tendency of the town has been so decidedly toward pulling down and building up again that it has now quite a modern and jauntily youthful air.

Valence was our next stopping-place, and we had a world of work to do there during the hour or so that we remained ashore. Very properly believing that we, being poets, could dedicate their local monuments for them far better than they could do such work for themselves, the excellent people of this town had accumulated a variety of monuments in expectation of our coming; and all of these it was our pleasant duty to start upon their immortal way.

Our reception was most impressive. On the suspension-bridge half the town was assembled watching for us, and the other half was packed in a solid mass on the bank above the point where our landing was made. The landing-stage was ablaze with tricolor—and so was the Mayor, who was standing on it waiting for us in the midst of a guard of honor of four firemen, whose brazen helmets shone resplendent in the rays of the scorching sun. A little in the background was the inevitable band; that broke with a crash, at the moment of our landing, into the inevitable «Marseillaise.» And then away we all marched for half a mile, up a wide and dusty and desperately hot street, into the heart of the town. The detachment of welcoming townsfolk from the bank closed in around us; and around them, presently, closed in the detachment of welcoming townsfolk from the bridge. We poets (I insist upon being known by the company I was keeping) were deep in the center of the press. The heat was enormous. The dust was stifling. But, upheld by a realizing sense of the importance and honor of the duties confided to us, we never wavered in our march.

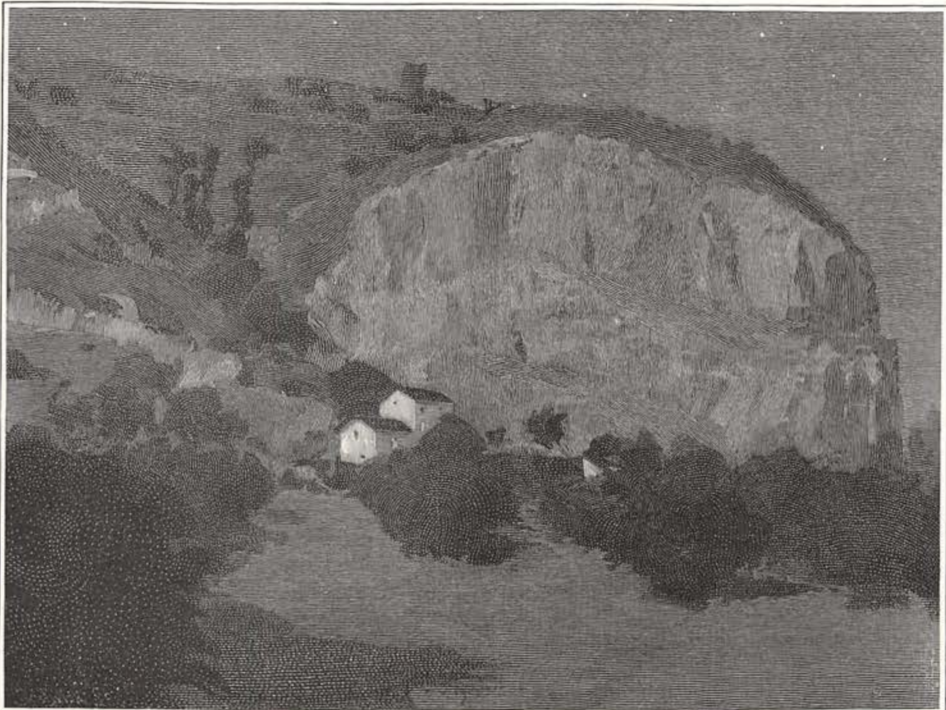
We made that day what I believe to be the dedicatory record: a score of three (out of a possible four) monuments in a trifle less than an hour. With two of our deceased worthies, military semi-celebrities of the first Napoleon's time, it seemed to me that we poets really had very little to do; but we cheered at the proper places, and made appropriate and well-turned speeches, and contributed valuable collections of autographs to the lead boxes in the corner-stones: and did it all with the easily offhand air of thorough poets of the world. But in the case of the monument to Émile Augier we had obvious rights in the premises; and there, naturally,

M. Jules Claretie came to the fore. In the parlance of the Academy, Augier was «his dead man»; and not often does it happen that a finer, a more discriminating, eulogy is pronounced in the Academy by the successor to a vacant chair than was pronounced that hot day in Valence upon Émile Augier by the director of the Comédie Française.

It was at the end of our third monument that we were cantered off to the Hôtel de Ville to be refreshed and complimented with a *vin d'honneur*. This ceremony came off in the council-chamber, a large and stately room, and was presided over by M. le Maire, a tall man, with a cherubic face made broader by wing-like little whiskers, who wore a white cravat, a long black frock-coat and appositely black trousers, and a far-reaching white waistcoat over which wandered tranquilly his official tricolored scarf. The speech which he addressed to us was of the most flattering. He told us plainly that we were an extraordinarily distinguished company; that our coming to Valence was an event to be remembered long and honorably in the history of the town; that he, officially and personally, was grateful to us; and that, in both capacities, he would have the pleasure of drinking to our very good health. And then well-warmed champagne was served (most appropriately by the brass-helmeted firemen); and in this cordial beverage, after M. Édouard Lockroy had made answer for us, we pledged each other with an excellent good will.

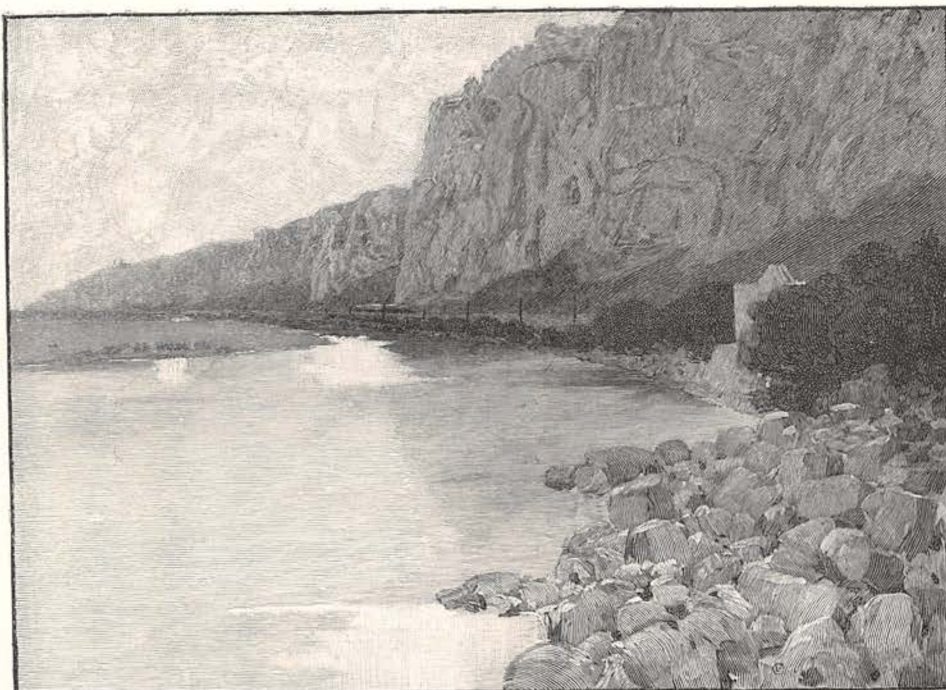
I am sorry to say that we «scamped» our last monument. To be sure, it was merely a tablet in a house-front setting forth the fact that Augier had been born there, and Augier already had had one of the best speeches of the day. But that was no excuse for us. Actually, we scarcely waited to see the veil of pink paper torn away by a man on a step-ladder before we broke for the boat, and not a speech of any sort was made.

Yet they bore us no malice, those brave Valençois. All the way down to the river, under the blaze of the sun, they crowded closely around us,—with a well-meant but mistaken friendliness,—and breathed what little air was stirring thrice over before it had a chance to get to our lungs. They covered again in a black swarm the bank and the bridge in our honor. Their band, through that last twenty minutes, blared steadfastly the «Marseillaise.» From his post upon the landing-stage the cherubic Mayor beamed to us across his great tricolored stomach a series of parting smiles. The brass-helmeted



DRAWN BY LOUIS LOEB. ENGRAVED BY C. W. CHADWICK.

LA TOUR MAUDITE.



DRAWN BY LOUIS LOEB. ENGRAVED BY CHARLES STATE.

THE DEFILE OF DONZÈRE.

firemen surrounded him (a little unsteadily, I fancied), smiling, too. And as we slipped away from them all, into the rush of the river, they sent after us volley upon volley of cheers. Our breasts thrilled and expanded, —it is not always that we poets thus are mounted upon high horses in the sight of all the world,—and we cheered back to those discriminating and warm-hearted Valençois with the utmost possible good will. To the very last the cherubic Mayor, his hat raised, regarded us smilingly; to the last—rivaling the golden glory of the helmet of Mambrino —the slightly wavering head-gear of his attendant firemen shot after us golden gleams.

VII.

We drew away into calmer latitudes after leaving that whirlwind of a town. For the time being our duties as public poets were ended, and there was a sense of restful comfort in knowing that for the moment we were rid of our fame and celebrity, and were free, as the lightest-hearted of simple travelers, to enjoy the charms of that delectable river as it carried us—always at a full gallop— downward toward the sea.

In this tranquil spirit we came presently to the leaning Tour Maudite, and found further restfulness, after our own varied and too energetic doings, in looking upon a quiet ruin that had remained soberly in the same place and under the same sedative curse for more than three hundred years.

The Cursèd Tower is an architectural curiosity. It is almost as far out from the perpendicular as is the tower at Pisa, and is far more impressive, because it stands upon an isolated crag which drops below it sheer to the river in a vast precipice. Anciently, before it went wrong and its curse came upon it, the tower was the keep of the Benedictine nunnery of Soyons. Most ungallantly, in the year 1569, the Huguenots captured the abbey by assault; and thereupon the abbess, Louise d'Amanze (poor frightened soul!), hurriedly embraced the Reformed religion, in dread lest, without this concession to the rather decided opinions of the conquerors, still worse might come. Several of her nuns followed her hastily heterodox example; but the mass of them stood stoutly by their faith, and ended by making off with it intact to Valence.

I admit that an appearance of improbability is cast upon this tradition by the unhindered departure from the abbey of the stiff-necked nuns, who thus manifested equally toward the victorious Huguenots and the Reformed religion an open scorn. But, on the other hand, there are the ruins of the

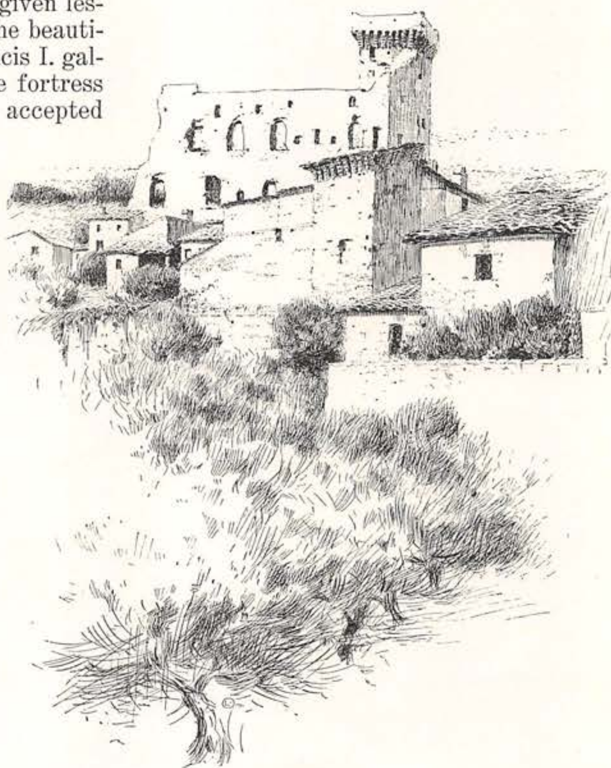
abbey to prove that it truly was conquered; and there, slanting with a conspicuously unholy slant high up above the ruins, bearing steadfast witness to the wrath of heaven against that heretical abbess and her heretical followers, is the Cursèd Tower!

While the Abbess of Soyons, being still untried by the stress of battle, went sinless upon her still orthodox way, there lived just across the river on the Manor of l'Étoile a sinner of a gayer sort—Diane de Poitiers. The Castle of the Star dates from the fifteenth century—when Louis XI. dwelt there as Governor of Dauphiny and was given lessons in how to be a king. Diane the beautiful—«the most beautiful,» as Francis I. gallantly called her—transformed the fortress into a bower, and gave to it (or accepted for it) the appropriately airy name of the Château du Papillon. There she lived long after her butterfly days were over; there, even, she received the visit of Henry II., her dead lover's son. And in a way, although the Castle of the Butterfly is a silk-factory now, she lives there still, just as another light lady beautiful, Queen Jeanne of Naples, lives on in near-by Provence. For Diane's legend still is vital in the country-side; and the old people still talk about her as though she were alive among them; and call her always, not by her formal title of the Duchesse de Valentinois, but by her love title of «la belle dame de l'Étoile.»

Of this joyous person's family there is found a ghastly memento at the little town of Lène, a dozen miles down the river, below the great iron-works of Le Pouzin. It is the Tour de la Lépreuse, wherein a leper, a lady of the house of Poitiers, was shut up for many years in awful solitude, until at last God in his goodness permitted her to die. I suppose that this story would have pointed something of a moral, instead of exhibiting only another case of a good moral gone wrong, had Diane herself been that prisoner of loathsome death in life.

But aboard the *Gladiateur* our disposition was to take the world easily and as we found it—since we found it so well disposed toward us—and not to bother our heads as to whether morals fell out right or wrong. With cities effervescing in our honor, with mayors attendant upon us hat in hand, with brazen-helmeted firemen stimulating our poetic fires, with *boîtes* and bands exploding in our praise, —and all under that soul-expanding sun of the Midi,—'t is no wonder that we wore our bays and laurel jauntily and nodded to each other as though to say: «Ah, you see now what it is to be a poet in these days!» In this comfortable mood we went onward, being graciously pleased to accept with our tribute of homage the panorama along the river-banks which opened for our delight.

Off to the right, hidden behind the factory smoke of Lavoulte, was the sometime home of Bernard de Ventadour, a troubadour whom the world still loves to honor, quite one of ourselves; to the left, commanding the valley of the Drôme, were Livron and Loriol—tough little Huguenot nuts cracked all to pieces (as their fallen ramparts showed) in the religious wars; a little lower down was Cruas, the famous fortified abbey, surmounted by a superb donjon and set in the midst of a triple-walled town, whereof the Byzantine-Romanesque church is one of the marvels of southern France; still farther on, around a bend in the river, was Rochemaure the Black, a



DRAWN BY LOUIS LOEB.

CHÂTEAUNEUF DU PAPE.

DRAWN BY LOUIS LOEB. ENGRAVED BY H. DAVIDSON.

THE ROUMANILLE MONUMENT, AVIGNON.

ruinous black nightmare of a basalt-built castle set on an isolated black basalt rock rising six hundred feet above the stream, and having below it a little black nightmare of a basalt-built town—a place to which one would go by preference to commit a murder, though't is said that its inhabitants are kindly disposed; and close beside Rochemaure, tucked in at the foot of a limestone cliff, was the spectral little town of Le Teil, the town, the cliff, and the inevitable castle on the cliff-top, all shrouded in a murky white cloud of mingled dust and vapor rising from the great buildings in which a famous hydraulic cement is made.

And then, passing beyond a maze of islands, we came to Viviers. From afar we saw its tall bell-tower, its beautiful cathedral, its episcopal palace; and as we drew nearer the whole environment of ancient houses and fortifications spread out around these governing points in a great amphitheater. But what held us most was the gay dash of tricolor on its bridge, and the crowd there evidently waiting for our coming to manifest toward us their good will. They cheered us

and waved their hats and handkerchiefs at us, those poet-lovers, as we approached them; and as we passed beneath the bridge a huge wreath of laurel was swung downward upon our deck, and a shower of laurel-branches fluttered down upon us through the soft sunlit air. In all the fourteen centuries since Viviers was founded I am confident that nothing more gracious than this tribute to passing Poetry is recorded in the history of the town.

The line of one hundred and thirty bishops who in succession reigned here ended a century back, in the time of the Revolution, in a veritable lurid flame, yet with, I think, a touch of agonized human nature too. The church historian can see only the diabolical side of the situation; and in a horror-struck way tells how this last bishop, «being overcome by the devil, abjured the episcopacy; with his own hands destroyed the insignia of his sacred office; and thereafter gave himself up to a blasphemous attack upon the holy religion of which he had been for a long time one of the most worthy ministers.»

It certainly is true that the devil had things largely his own way about that time here in France; but it does not necessarily follow that in this particular matter the devil directly had a hand. To my mind a simpler and more natural explanation presents itself: That the iconoclastic bishop was a weak brother who had suffered himself to be forced into a calling for which he had no vocation, and into an apparent championship of a faith with which his inmost convictions were at war; that for years and years the struggle between the inward man and the outward bishop had gone on unceasingly and hopelessly, until, as readily might happen to one strong enough to resent, yet not strong enough to overcome, restraint, the galling irksomeness of such a double life had brought madness near; and that madness did actually come when the chains of a life and of a faith alike intolerable suddenly were fused in the fierce heat of the Revolution and fell away.

VIII.

BELOW Viviers the Rhône breaks out from its broad upper valley into its broader lower valley through the Defile of Donzère. Here the foot-hills of the Alps and the foot-hills of the Cévennes come together, and behind this natural dam there must have been anciently a great lake which extended to the northward of where now is Valence. The defile is a veritable cañon that would be quite in place in the Sierra Madre. On each side of the sharply narrowed river the walls of rock rise to a sheer height of two hundred feet. The rush of the water is tumultuous. In midstream, surrounded by eddies and whirling waves, is the Roche des Anglais, against which the boat of a luckless party of English travelers struck and was shattered a hundred years ago. Indeed, so dangerous was this passage held to be of old, when faith was stronger and boats were weaker than in our day of skepticism and compound engines, that it was customary to tie up at the head of the defile and pray for grace to come through it safely; but nowadays (with the same practical result) they put extra men at the tiller and clap on more steam.

The cliffs bordering the cañon, being of a crumbling nature, are known as the Maraniousques; but usually are called by the Rhône boatmen the Monkey Rocks—because of the monkeys that dwelt in them in legendary times and stoned from their heights the passing travelers. It was a long while ago that the monkeys were in possession—in the time immediately succeeding the Deluge. During the subsidence of the waters it seems that the ark made fast there for the night, just before laying a course for Ararat; and the monkey and his wife, desperately bored by their long cooping up among so many uncongenial animals, took advantage of their opportunity to pry a couple of tiles off the roof and get away. The tradition hints that Noah had been drinking; at any rate, their absence was not noticed, and the ark went on without them the next day. By the time that the Deluge fairly was ended, and the Rhône reopened to normal navigation, a large monkey family was established on the Maraniousques, and these monkeys thenceforward illogically revenged themselves upon Noah's descendants by stoning everybody who came along.

Later, the ill-tempered apes were succeeded by more ill-tempered men. In the fighting times the Defile of Donzère was a famous place in which to bring armies to a stand. Fortifications upon the cliffs entirely commanded the river; and at the lower end of the defile the castle and walled town of Donzère, capping a defiant little hilltop, commanded both the river and the plain. Even the most fire-eating of captains were apt to stop and think a little before venturing into the defile in those days.

All of these perils are ended now. The dangers of the river are so shorn by steam that the shooting of the cañon rapids yields only a pleasurable excitement, that is in-

DRAWN BY LOUIS LOEB. ENGRAVED BY JOHN W. EVANS.

AVIGNON.

creased by the extraordinary wild beauty of that savage bit of nature in the midst of a long-tamed land; and the ramparts and the castle of Donzère, having become invitingly picturesque ruins, are as placable remnants of belligerency as are to be found anywhere in the world. Indeed, as we saw them, with the afternoon sunlight slanting down in a way to bring out delectably the warm grays and yellows of the stone-work, and to produce the most entrancing effects of light and shade, it was not easy to believe that people had been killing one another all over them not so very long ago.

Having escaped from the Defile of Donzère, the river wanders away restfully into a wilderness of islands—a maze so unexplored and so unexplorable that otters still make their home in it, and through the thick foliage poke out their snub noses at passing boatmen now and then. Thence onward for a long way islands are plentiful—past Pierrelatte and Bourg Saint Andéol, a very ancient and highly Roman-flavored town, and the confluence of the Rhône and the Ardèche, to the still larger archipelago across which the Bridge-Building Brothers, with God himself helping them, built the Pont Saint Esprit.

Modern engineers, possibly exalting their own craft at the expense of that of the architects, declare that this bridge was the greatest piece of structural work of the middle ages; certainly it was the greatest work of the Frères Pontifes, that most practical of brotherhoods, which, curiously anticipating what has become a favorite phase of our modern doctrine, paid less attention to faith than to works, and gave itself simply to ministering to the material welfare of mankind. In the making of it they spent near half a century. From the year 1265 steadily onward until the year 1307 the Brothers labored; and then the bridge was finished—a half-mile miracle in stone.

In view of the extraordinary difficulties which the engineer in charge of the work overcame, it is not surprising that the miracle theory was adopted to explain his eventual victory. Nor is it surprising that the popular conviction presently began to sustain itself by crystallizing into a definite legend—based upon the recorded fact that the Brothers worked under the vocation of the Holy Spirit—to the effect that the Spirit of God, taking human form, was the designer of the fabric and the actual director under whose guidance the work went on. And so the genesis of the bridge was accounted for satisfactorily; and so it came by its holy name.

Personally, I like miracles; and this miracle is all the more patent, I think, now that the bridge has been in commission for almost six hundred years, and still is entirely serviceable. In a sentimental way, of course, the radical changes made in it in order to adapt it to the requirements of modern traffic are to be regretted; but I am sure that the good Brothers, could they have been consulted in the premises, would have been the first to sanction any alteration that would have increased the utility of their work. For they were not sentimentalists; they were most practical Christians, and what they wanted was that their bridge, conforming to their own concept of duty, should do the greatest amount of good to the greatest number of men.

IX.

ALMOST as we came out from beneath this monument to practical Christianity, we saw over on the left bank two monuments to the theoretical Christianity of three hundred years ago—the grisly ruins of Mornas and Mondragon, each on a hill dark green with a thick growth of *chêne vert*, and each having about it (not wholly because of its dark setting, I fancied) a darkly sinister air. And, in truth, the story of Mornas is somber enough to blacken not merely a brace of hilltops, but a whole neighborhood.

In the early summer of the year 1565, a day or two before the Fête Dieu, the Papists surprised and seized the town and castle of Mornas and put the entire Huguenot garrison to the sword. Then, as now, it was the custom in honor of the Fête Dieu to adorn the house-fronts with garlands and draperies; and by way of variant upon this pretty custom «certain of the conquerors, more fanatical than the rest, flayed the dead Huguenots and draped their houses bravely with Protestant skins.» Thereupon the Baron des Adrets sent one of his lieutenants, Dupuy-Montbrun, to avenge this deviltry. At the end of a three days' siege Mornas was conquered again, and then came the vengeance —«for which the castle of Mornas, whereof the battlements overhung a precipice falling sheer two hundred feet to broken rocks below, offered great advantages.» In a grave and orderly fashion, the survivors of the garrison were assembled in the castle courtyard, were taken in orderly squads of ten up to the battlements, and thence were thrust over into that awful depth. And so the account was squared.

It is instructive to note that Des Adrets,

who ordered the vengeance on Mornas, a little later abjured the Reformed religion and became a Papist; and that Dupuy-Montbrun, who carried out his orders and who succeeded him in the command of the Protestant forces, but a little while before had renounced Papacy to become a Huguenot. So the leaders, the worst of them, shifted from side to side as they happened to be swayed by pay or policy; and to such creatures of no faith were due the direst of the atrocities of those hideous times. But the Huguenots of the rank and file were of another sort. Their singleness and sincerity in their fight for their faith were beyond question. They died for it willingly. Failing the happiness of death, yet being conquered, they held fast to it resolutely. In the end, rather than relinquish it, they unhesitatingly elected—at a stroke giving up country, rank, fortune—to be outcast from France.

For me the history of those desperate wars has a very vital interest; for my own ancestors took the share in them that was becoming to faithful gentlemen vowed to the Reform, and I owe my American birthright to the honorable fact that they fought on the losing side. As I myself am endowed with an overliberal allowance of stubbornness, and with a strong distaste to taking my opinions at second hand, I certainly should have been with my kinsfolk in that fight had I lived in their day; and since my destiny was theirs to determine, I am strongly grateful to them for having shaped it so well.

But I was glad when Mornas, vivid with these bitter memories, dropped out of sight astern. Sleeping dogs of so evil a sort very well may lie; though it is difficult not to waken a few of them when they lie so thickly as here in the Rhône Valley, where almost every town and castle has a chapter of nightmare horrors all its own.

Even Châteauneuf du Pape—which we saw a half-hour later off to the eastward, rising from a little hilltop and thence overlooking the wide vineyard-covered valley—came to its present ruin at the hands of Des Adrets, who, having captured and fired it, left standing only its tall square tower and some fragments of its walls. This was an unfairly lurid ending for a castle which actually came into existence for gentle purposes and was not steeped to its very battlements in crime; for Châteauneuf was built purely as a pleasure-place, to which the popes, when weary with ruling the world and bored by their straight-laced duties as St. Peter's earthly representatives, might come from Avignon with a few choice kindred spirits and refreshingly kick up their heels.

It was in those easy-going days that the vineyards were planted which were destined to make the name of Châteauneuf du Pape famous the toping world over long after the New Castle should be an old ruin and the Avignon popes a legend of the past. Indeed, only within the present generation did those precious vines perish, when the phylloxera began among them its deadly work in France; and even yet may be found, tucked away here and there in the favored cellars of Provence and Languedoc, a few dust-covered bottles of their rich vintage, which has for its distinguishing taste a sublimated spiciness due to the alternate dalliance of the bees with the grape-blossoms and with the blossoms of the wild thyme.

It is a wine of poets, this bee-kissed Châteauneuf, and its noblest association is not with the popes who gave their name to it, but with the seven poets—Mistral, Roumanille, Aubanel, Mathieu, Brunet, Giéra, Tavan—whose chosen drink it was in those glorious days when they all were young together and were founding the Félibrige, the society that was to restore the golden age of the troubadours and, incidentally, to decentralize France. One of the sweetest and gentlest of the seven, Anselme Mathieu, was born here at Châteauneuf; and here, with a tender love-song upon his lips, only the other day he died. The vineyards have been in part replanted, and in the fullness of time may come to their glory again; but the greater glories of Châteauneuf, which belonged to it once because of its popes, and again because of its sweet-souled poet, must be only memories forevermore.

X.

THE castles over on the right bank, Montfaucon and Roquemaure, are of the normal painful sort again. Roquemaure is a crooked, narrow, up-and-down old dirty town, where old customs and old costumes and old forms of speech still live on; and, also, its people have a very pretty taste in the twisting and perverting of historic fact into picturesque tradition, as is shown by the way in which they have rearranged the unpleasant details of the death of Pope Clement V. into a bit of melodramatic moral decoration for their own town. Their ingeniously compiled legend runs in this wise:

Clement's death in the castle of Roquemaure occurred while he was on his way homeward from the Council of Vienne, where

(keeping with the King the bargain that had won for him the papal throne) he had abolished the Order of the Templars and had condemned their Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, to be burned alive. When that sentence was passed, the Grand Master in turn had passed sentence of death upon the Pope: declaring that within forty days they should appear together in the spirit to try again this case, misjudged on earth, before the Throne of God. And the forty days were near ended when Pope Clement came to Roquemaure, with the death-grip already so strong upon him that even the little farther journey to Avignon was impossible, and he could but lay him down there and die. While yet the breath scarce was out of his body his servants fell to fighting over his belongings with a brutal fierceness, in the midst of which fray a lighted torch fell among and fired the hangings of the bed whereon lay the dead Pope; and before any of the pillagers would give the rest an advantage by stopping in their foul work to extinguish the flames the body was half consumed. And so was Clement burned in death even as the Grand Master had been burned in life; and so was executed upon him the Grand Master's summons to appear before the judgment-seat on high!

All of which, it will be observed, does very little violence to the individual facts of the case, and yet rearranges them in such a fashion that they are at sixes and sevens with the truth as a whole.

The day was nearly ended as we passed this town with a stolen moral history, and so swept onward, in and out among the islands, toward Avignon. Already the sun had fallen below the crest of the Cévennes, leaving behind him in the sky a liquid glory, and still sending far above us long level beams which gilded radiantly—far off to the eastward—the heights of Mont Ventour. But we, deep in the deep valley, threaded our swift way among the islands in a soft twilight which gently ebbed to night.

And then, as the dusk deepened to the westward, there came slowly into the eastern heavens a pale luster that grew brighter and yet brighter until, all in a moment, up over the Alpilles flashed the full moon—and there before us, almost above us, the Rocher des Doms and the Pope's palace and the ramparts of Avignon stood out blackly against the moon-bright sky. So sudden was this ending to our journey that there was a wonder among us that the end had come.

ALL the Félibres of Avignon were at the waterside to cheer us welcome as the *Gladiateur*, with reversed engines, hung against the current above the bridge of Saint Bénézet and slowly drew in to the bank. Our answering cheers went forth to them through the darkness, and a stave or two of «La Coupe» was sung, and there was a mighty clapping of hands. And then the gang-plank was set ashore; and instantly beside it, standing in the glare of a great lantern, we saw our Capoulié, the head of all the Félibrige, Félix Gras, waiting for us, his subjects and his brethren, with outstretched hands. From him came also, a little later, our official welcome, when we all were assembled for a *ponch d'honneur* at the Hôtel du Louvre, —in the great vaulted chamber that once served the Templars as a refectory, and that has been the banquet-hall of the Félibrige ever since this later and not less honorable order was founded, almost forty years ago.

Not until these formalities were ended could we of America get away to receive the personal welcome to which through all that day we had been looking forward with a warm eagerness—yet also sorrowing, because we knew that among the welcoming voices there would be a silence, and that a face would be missing from among those we loved. Roumanille was dead; and in meeting again in Avignon those who had been closest and dearest to him, and who to us were close and dear, there was heartache with our joy.

T. A. Janvier.

THE INTERPRETER.

NOT his alone the gift divine
Who understands how, line by line,
To recreate a dream with all
Its wonder-world ethereal:

Something of that same gift has he
Who, reading, through the lines can see
The dream itself—the secret thing
That stirred the poet's heart to sing.

Frank Dempster Sherman.