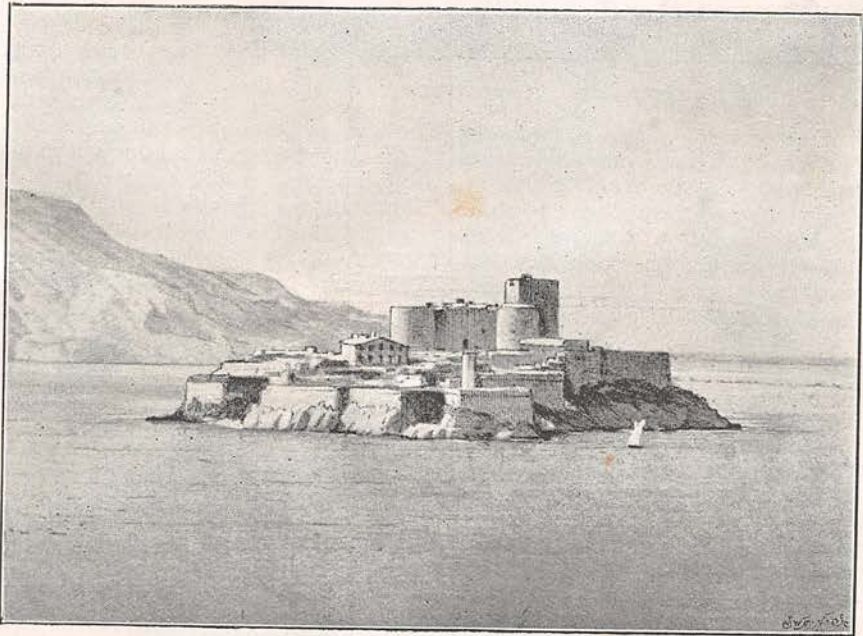


THE CHÂTEAU D'IF.

By WALTER HERRIES POLLOCK.

THE Château d'If has as many aspects as Edmond Dantès assumed after his escape from it, when, emerging from long confinement in "a loathsome dungeon," he swam six miles in a stormy sea as a foretaste of the entrancingly impossible adventures that followed. You may look at the Château all day and every day from the same place or from different

shifting colours, bewildering to the eye in their very harmony, and charged with the beautiful terror of a coming storm. Yet again, in another aspect of storm, backed by the heavy clouds that portend the "mistral," the penetrating wind that sweeps down the Rhone Valley, still the castle retains, under all the sea-changes that it takes on, its air of command and



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places, and never weary of looking. It seems as imposing and picturesque whether it is seen dominating a quiet sea, blue as only the Mediterranean (and sometimes the sea of the English west coast) can be, or whether on a grey, quiet day it lies flat against the background of hills, and seems within reach of one's hand as one leans over the parapet of the Corniche Road. Again, it assumes majestic proportions when a wind is blowing up, while the clouds on the horizon are a mass of angry,

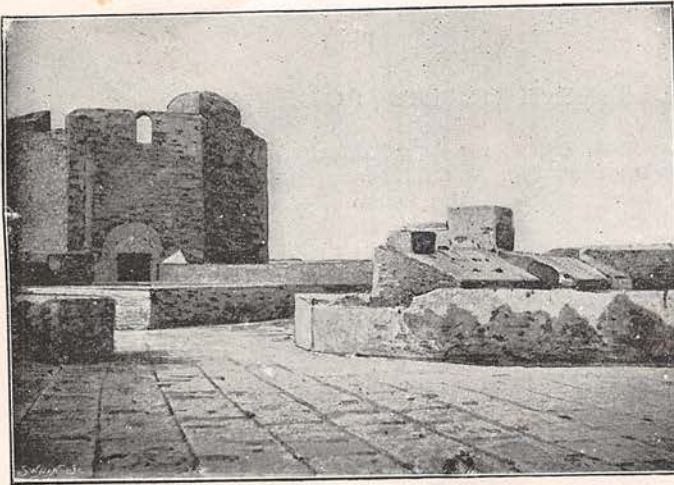
dignity. To him looking seawards from the land, it is always the one point sought for, and it never fails to satisfy the desire of the eye, not even when, having made close acquaintance with it and found its glories diminish as he sails nearer and nearer to it, the voyager returns to shore possessed with a dread that when he looks again over the waves the wondrous fantasy of the thing may be killed by the remembrance of nearer intimacy. But, in truth, nothing can kill it. On the contrary, the

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moment one arrives again on the hill of Endoume, one falls under the spell anew : the mean aspect that the poor old fortress affords to him who is close under its walls

that charming romance?" Yes, I had, but I did not possess a copy with images, and, of course, I should dearly like to see her book. Whereon two much thumbed

volumes were produced and turned over from beginning to end, each illustration forming a stopping-place, and giving Angéline an opportunity of showing not only her close and accurate knowledge of the book, plot, and characters, with details of names, dates, and places, but also exhibiting her strong dramatic talent in re-telling the familiar story as if it had really happened yesterday, and in explaining what in each case were the

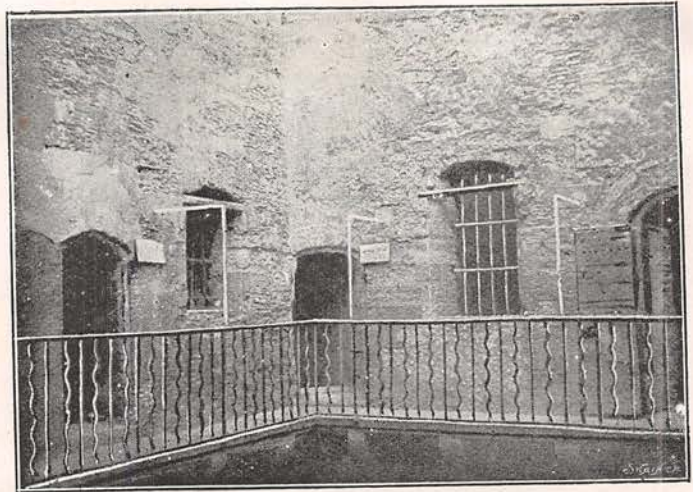


THE CHÂTEAU D'IF : TOP PLATFORM.

or standing on its ramparts is forgotten ; the Château d'If is once more a castle of fantastic glory, and the reality of imagination triumphs over the pretence of fact.

Who thinks of the Château d'If thinks of Edmond Dantès, who is in some ways more real in Marseilles than he is to those who read the great romance in all the other quarters of the world. The cook and housekeeper of my kind host and hostess is a delightful old Italian who has lived so long out of Italy as to have forgotten all Italian save here and there a stray proverb or legend, and to have become to all intents and purposes a Marseillaise. She is a person of very marked and decided character, and she cannot read. Knowing that I had been at the Château d'If yesterday, she had many questions to ask me when her work for the day was over, and presently informed me that she had a copy of "Monte Cristo" with "images." "Had I read

salient points of the situation that the illustrator had tried to bring out in his old, old pictures of the period when book-illustrations resembled nothing so much as fashion-plates of to-day. It was an entertainment that had all the charm of simplicity and unexpectedness, and was



GALLERY IN INTERIOR OF THE CHÂTEAU D'IF.

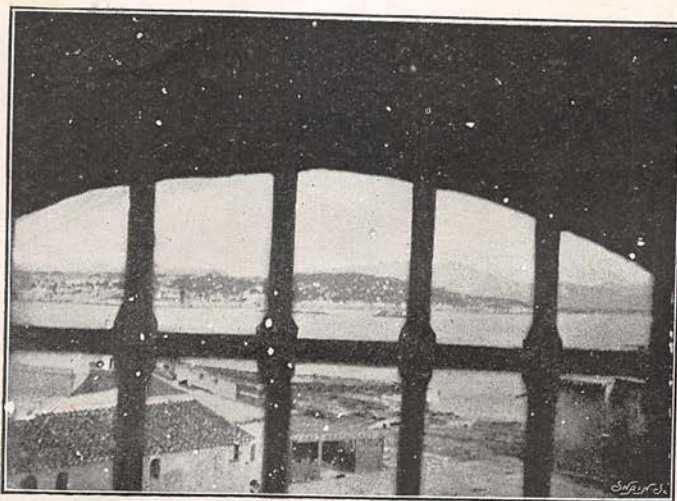
not only "as good as the play," but very much better than any play that I have seen staged on the subject of "Monte Cristo."

In other ways of less personal and

touching interest, the fame of Edmond Dantès (as far as can be ascertained by converse with the learned, Dantès is not and was not ever a Marseillais name) is kept alive in the town. There is a house still pointed out, and still believed in by people of such simple faith and fine instinct as Angéline's, as the very house in which the elder Morrel dwelt before the fortune of his argosies failed him. In what remains of the "Catalans'" quarter there are several *cabarets* which lay claim here to being the identical tavern in which the letter of accusation was written, there the wine-shop in which Dantès was arrested. It seems probable that in one case the site of the building is indeed the site that the great Alexandre pitched upon as a suitable place for the conspiracy which the Abbé Faria laid bare by his monstrous discovery that all writing performed with the left hand is alike—a discovery which, according to Alexandre's manner, leaves one too breathless for protest, and panting in that breathlessness for further revelations of equally astounding import. It is only in the cynical moods that belong to the small and doubting hours that anyone who has felt the touch of Romanticist fever can demur to any assertion of the Abbé Faria. As to *cabarets*, other than the particular one just referred to, flaunting the name of Monte Cristo, their pretensions may be gauged by a brief conversation with the driver of a *voiture de place*, a driver who loves the best part of Marseilles, who knows more about it than any of the people who might be expected to know, who resents the modern vandalism which, municipally supported, ruthlessly tears down fine old buildings and scatters the fragments to the four winds to make room for nasty new ones—a driver whose appropriate name is Raphael, and of whom there will be more to say when we come to consider some aspects of the old and new town.

Coming back from Marseilles to Endoume through the Catalans in Raphael's *voiture de place*, we passed one of these

mushroom Dantès *cabarets*, which had been run up a short time after one of our party had become a resident at Marseilles. The driver, with a flourish—a half-hearted one, it is just to him to add—of his whip, pointed to this shanty and called the attention of Space to the "Monte Cristo" inscription over its door. Getting no response, he addressed himself particularly to me, presumably as a newcomer and a person evidently anxious for information, and appealed to me in feeling terms concerning the famous story of which I surely must have heard. "Did it not interest me to see one of the actual places where—?" I cut him short, feeling sure that he would like the interruption, with "Mon ami, il y en a tant!" The



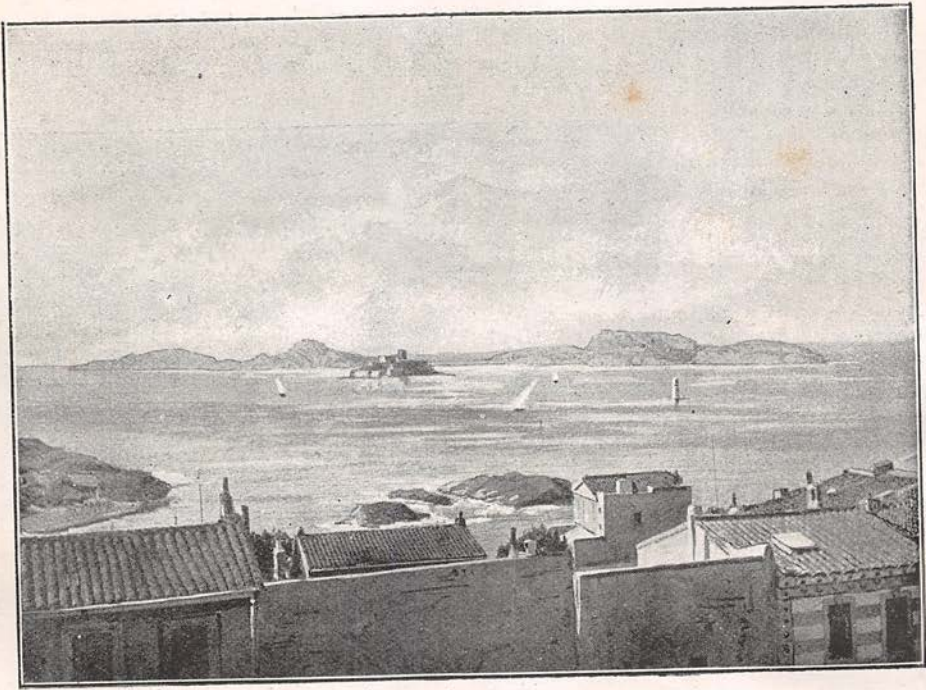
VIEW FROM PHILIPPE EGALITÉ'S CELL IN THE CHÂTEAU D'IF.

result was, as I expected, entirely and frankly sympathetic laughter, and in the talk that followed it became evident that professionally artistic respect for convention had overpowered other considerations in Raphael's mind. He knew his own attainments and hoped that we recognised them, but he was not yet on sure ground, and until then he was driving a *voiture de place*, and was bound to let off the patter proper to each occasion as it arose, whether impelled merely by a sense of tiresome duty, or by a lurking hope of discovering for certain that we could join him in smiling at false pretensions, or, as is more likely, by both. Anyhow, the occurrence enabled him to throw off light-heartedly the trammels from which till then he had not dared altogether to free himself. After that we talked as those who drew

distinctions between old and new, good and bad, and who could dispense with any mere tokens of words between guide and traveller.

But this was not on the way to the Château d'If, and that is the way we have now to find. Supposing that you have not a private boat of your own, you can go by one of the *bâteaux-mouches* which ply from the old port; and if you do this you will go with a more or less large and incongruous crowd (Sunday is naturally the worst day in this respect) on board a

in Endoume to go by a shorter way from the Vallon des Auffes, a picturesque old fishing-village at the bottom of the hill. But this involves ordering a boat beforehand, and thereby tempting Providence in the matter of weather. Besides which, by taking this route you would miss the views of Marseilles seen from the harbour—views of which the beauty could not but be partly lost in a black-and-white presentment. The picturesqueness of form and of light and shade are of great import, and it is to be noted that in looking at the



THE CHÂTEAU D'IF SEEN FROM ENDOUME.

floating restaurant, whereby hangs a piece of a tale. There are four men resident on the island—the *gardien*, his assistant, the lighthouse-keeper, and the restaurateur, who, on being asked if he could give us wine and a siphon, replied with an engaging smile that to his great regret he had not the key of the cellar, which would not arrive for an hour and a half—the fact obviously being that the cellar is the *bâteau-mouche*, and the key is the Company's manager on board. We had, as may be inferred from this, taken the alternative course to the *bâteau-mouche*, and chartered a sailing and rowing-boat, rigged with the usual lateen sails, from the old port. It is possible for one quartered

old town from the New Quay or from across the harbour, one is reminded now of Venice, now—and this especially in looking down from a height—of the old town of Edinburgh; just as in seeing certain parts of the new town on the sea-front one thinks of Torquay. In all cases you must end, however, by thinking that there is nothing quite like the place except itself. One point where the want of colour matters comparatively little is in the harbour near La Tourrette, formerly an old light-station, now a look-out station; to photograph which it is worth while to stop for a moment, even in that part of the harbour where stinks most congregate. Soon after this one

gets into the open, and on a favourable day the sail to the Château d'If is as pleasant as can be, with blue sea beneath, blue sky above, and just enough breeze to carry the boat on and freshen the hot air.

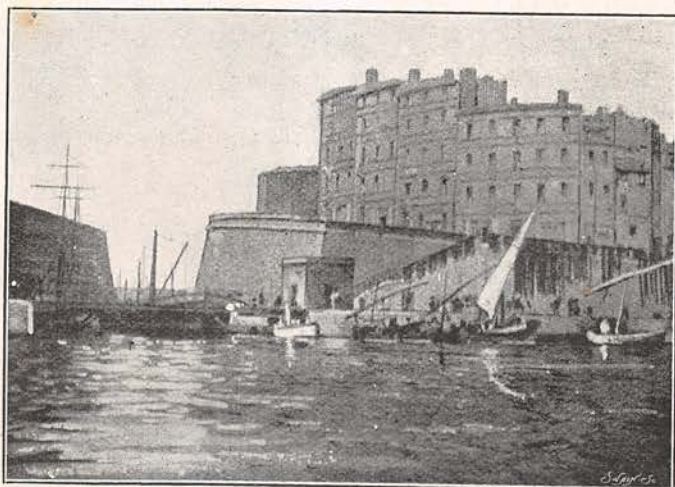
I have confessed already that in the actual approach to the Château it loses in grandeur both of size and of impressiveness, insomuch that when the boat is made fast to the rough landing-place you feel, wrongly as it afterwards turns out, that a beautiful illusion has been hopelessly dispelled. But the feeling is with you as you ascend the rugged steps up to the restaurant at the top of the plateau, happily deserted in the absence of the *bâteau-mouche* crowd.

Here is a fine view of Notre Dame de la Garde, commonly known as La Vierge de la Garde, and the Villa landscape underlying it with the Baume hills on each side.

When the *gardien* is ready you go under the conduct of that excellent old soldier, who looks like a sublimated Colonel Damas, and speaks beautiful French, into the Château itself, passing through a picturesque little courtyard with a well in the centre, and a terrace running round it, from which open the cells with the names of the most distinguished prisoners who inhabited them on labels over the doors. In our view of this terrace the cells once occupied by Philippe Egalité and the Comte de Mirabeau are seen. The Abbé Faria's cell is the first shown, and is remarkable chiefly for some curious marks on the wall, which represent, or are supposed to represent, the calculations with which he amused his enforced leisure. It is not without a curious look underlying a grave demeanour that the *gardien* shows the remains of the tunnel constructed between Faria's cell and that of Edmond Dantès, the which, it is fair to add, finds no place beyond this passing reference in the information which the *gardien* bestows upon us. (The date of Faria's imprisonment given by Dumas is

correct, and it is a fact that he died in prison.) The Abbé's night-quarters were in a veritable *cachot*, with a small grating in the door between it and the day-cell.

From among other cells I pick out some of the most interesting. Alberto del Campo, poisoner, was imprisoned on Dec. 4, 1588, and burnt at Aix-en-Provence on Dec. 16. Prince Casimir of Poland was imprisoned at his brother's request in 1638, and afterwards set free; and in the same year one Bernardot, *négociant* of Marseilles, was imprisoned on an accusation "of intrigue against the Cardinal," and starved himself to death. In 1686 a brief time was passed here by the Man in



THE PORT OF MARSEILLES NEAR LA TOURRETTE.

the Iron Mask. The legend as to his being the King's brother is dismissed lightly by the *gardien*. It may be added that recent researches of a French author have made him out a certain colonel or general of artillery whom it seemed advisable to keep out of the way.

The Comte de Mirabeau was imprisoned on Sept. 20, 1774, and Philippe d'Orléans was committed to the Château d'If on April 7, 1793, and through the bars of his cell there is, and no doubt was, an exceptionally good view of Marseilles, a poor consolation at best, and more probably an aggravation of wretchedness. Just before him were imprisoned two highway robbers and murderers named Martel, who were executed at Aix. Lajolais, one of the followers of Georges Cadoudal, was imprisoned in August 1804, and died in the Château in 1808, possibly as others of

his party were supposed to have died in the Temple.

The *cachot* for those condemned to death is a dark and grisly place, from which it is agreeable to emerge on to the roof, where is an ancient donjon, long used as a chapel, and afterwards as a place of detention for political prisoners in 1848 and 1871. These prisoners, especially those of 1848, have left traces of their sojourn in various gravings and inscriptions on the stones which form the plateau.

Altogether, if the outside of the place loses on close view the singular charm that it borrows from distance, yet is there much of interest within the walls, including the room in which the Revolutionary Tribunal used to deliberate, a room which in itself is worth neither remembrance nor

photographic record. The view from the plateau, however, over the islands of Pomégue and Ratonneau, with the quarantine port and buildings of Le Frioul, is striking enough. There is a beacon about half-way across which was put up by the widow of a mariner commanding the *Canonbier*, wrecked on a rock *à fleur d'eau*. Perhaps its principal use is to afford in summer time a resting place on its platform for numberless people fishing gravely and hopelessly *à la ligne*.

So, if there is still a breeze, the sail is hoisted again to take the visitor back over the quiet sea to Marseilles or to Endoume, as the case may be, to gaze at the Château d'If and to doubt, in gazing, if it could possibly have seemed so mean a thing when seen at close quarters.

