

MARSEILLES, OLD AND NEW.

By WALTER HERRIES POLLOCK.

THE sojourner in Marseilles who at a certain point of the Quai de la Porte turns up to the right will find that in less than a minute he has moved from glaring light shining on modern white pavement, into picturesque and ancient twilight, from the rattling bustle of to-day into the region of the past, in which the very inhabitants seem touched with an old-time influence, though no doubt under their picturesque, and it must be owned exceedingly dirty, appearance they may be as great rogues as the very modernest and least principled of Marseilles dealers, and that is saying not a little. The Old Town is a place of darkness lit by shafts of sunlight up and down its narrow streets, a place of evil smells and pavements deep in mud, a place where few who are not native to the soil penetrate, and a place in which one could scarce find one's way except under the guidance of one who knows the quarter and can speak its patois well. But its inside is as picturesque as is its outside as seen from across the harbour and, for choice, especially from the open place in front of the old church, formerly an Abbey, of St. Victor; the crypt of which is said to have been a secret meeting-place, while it was still but a grotto, of the early Christians. The church has gone through many vicissitudes—as a monastery, founded by Cassien in the fifth century; destroyed by the Saracens, rebuilt and enlarged between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, and endowed by Pope Urban V., who had been its abbé. After this it became a "select" monastery for priest-nobles, and its power, great at one time, gradually dwindled up to the bursting of the Revolution storms, when it fell into obscurity and was for a time a convict prison. What now remains outside of the more ancient buildings is full of impressive beauty, but of the inside there is not so much to be said; not even of the crypt,

containing the Vierge Noire, a very Eastern-looking Madonna in cedar wood, attributed to the third century. There are still things of beauty contained in the crypt, the recesses of which are in themselves beautiful; but, as almost all over Marseilles where historical interest is concerned, these things have



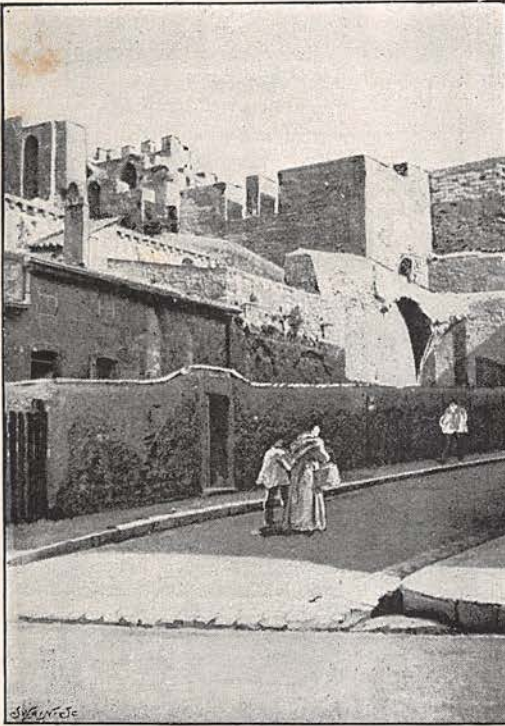
A STREET IN THE OLD TOWN.

been allowed to go to rack and ruin, to the deep regret of the curé, of the sacristan, who shows one over the place, and of all other good folk. Many of the monumental slabs have been removed to the Musée Borély, and he who can find out anything about them in that chaos must assuredly have a fairy godmother at his elbow. The Château Borély is, indeed, as exasperating a museum as can well be conceived. The Château and its grounds—which have something the look of a miniature Versailles—were a magnificent gift to Marseilles from the Borély family; and it is but fair to say that the grounds, including a racecourse, are as well kept up as may be. But the inside of the building! To begin with what is the finest collection

in the Museum—that found in the Egyptological galleries. This first-rate collection was neglected until M. Maspero set to work, in his masterly way, to produce a catalogue worthy of the objects, on which he brought to bear all his experience, and instinct

beautiful gallery upstairs, which contains, besides some large Chinese idols, quantities of Indian figures, religious and secular, Canadian snow-shoes, North American Indian weapons, Japanese armour and monsters, Zulu assegais, and Maori clubs.

The whole of this collection was a gift from a private individual, and it is evident it was called "Chinese" to save momentary trouble on its first arrival, since when not a single soul has thought fit to attempt to sort it out and arrange it. There has, indeed, been trouble about the direction, as when some things of highest value were abstracted under the very nose of the then Director, and might have been recovered in London, save for the supineness, as extraordinary as the beauty and price of the things stolen, of the French police. The story is typical of how business matters are managed in Marseilles; and it is typical also that its warning has not been attended to or turned to profit in the very slightest degree. The same irritating slovenliness and laziness, mixed with a show of red-tapeism, that governs the Château Borély prevails also at the Zoological Garden attached to the Palais des Arts de Longchamps at the other end of the town. With the natural advantages of climate, site, and easy communication with foreign ports, these gardens ought to be the very model of what Zoological Gardens should be. On the contrary, the grounds have but few facilities—



FORMERLY THE ABBEY OF ST. VICTOR.

begotten of experience and learning, before he described them. It took five or six years to get this catalogue into the state of being printed and offered for sale at the Museum, and by the time that was done there had arisen a new Director of the Museum, who put in new objects unlabelled and uncatalogued, and who mixed up all the old ones. So that your attention is caught, let us say, by some beautiful woodwork, the history of which you are most desirous to learn; and, impelled by this desire, you look at the number which, for a wonder, is attached to it in rough pencil. You look at the corresponding number in the catalogue, and you find: "Stone inscription, probable date, etc., etc." It is just the same with the Roman remains, most of which are labelled "Found at Marseilles," and nothing more; and just the same with the so-called Chinese collection placed in a

barring, perhaps, two ponds for seals and flamingoes, and some spaces under arches for eagles—in any way adapted to use: the walks and trees are horribly straggling and unkempt; the beasts, too, many of them, look half-fed, and many of them are for sale to anyone who makes a bid which is considered high enough by the Director. In fine, it is a huge dealer's yard, terribly neglected, and showing so little idea or love of arrangement that, as at the Château Borély, the labels, when there are any—a very infrequent occurrence—have no relation whatever to the objects labelled. Thus, to take but one or two examples, a most magnificent raven is not granted the dignity of a card at all; a laughing jackass close by him is proclaimed as a kingfisher; further on a leopard is described as a cheetah; and, worst of indignities, a fine pointer is huddled up all alone and wretched in a dark corner

with the inscription, "English Dog of Chase."

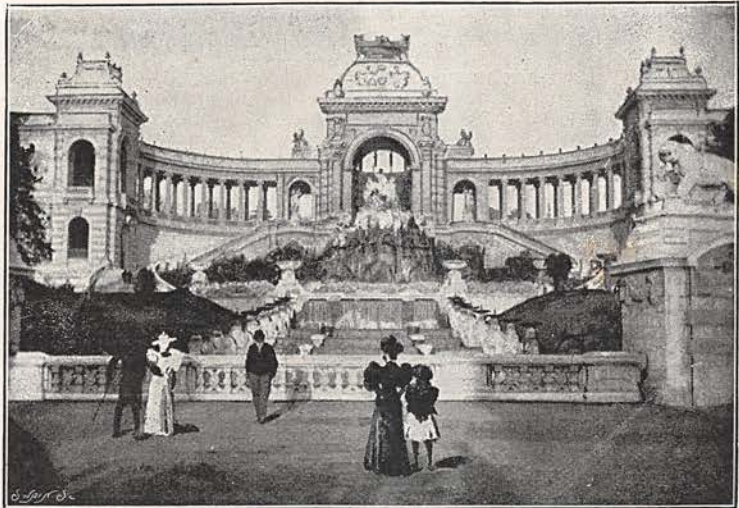
But these unpleasing reminiscences were started by the unfortunate connection between St. Victor and the Château Borély, and it is pleasant to leave them and to return to their starting-place.

Among other curious matters at St. Victor is that there was once a subterranean passage between St. Victor and the church of La Vieille Major, across the harbour. The sacristan of St. Victor—a man who evidently loves the church to which he is attached—seems to put but little faith in the story, and points to the alleged remains of the tunnel entrance with a brief comment that shows plainly enough his unbelief as to this. Other things he as clearly believes, mysteries of religion to which scarcely any modern Marseillais lends an ear. Yet when the sacristan's account is repeated to one of the most learned, most accomplished, and most sceptical natives and inhabitants of Marseilles, straightway this *doctus* is moved to wrath, and wishes to know who is the sacristan that he should say such things? The passage undoubtedly did exist, the remains are authentic, and the passage needs only clearing out to assert itself. No doubt these priests (most

present-day Marseillais hate priests) are childishly fond of having no religion, and in a fetish-worshipping way avail themselves of the forms of religion—no doubt these priests have some reason of their own for casting doubt upon a fact so well known to antiquaries. And from other sources one earns that almost beyond doubt there was enough of the passage to be shown to the public existing in 1826.

We go for the present from St. Victor to the Old Town, picking up on the way Raphael, the *voiture-de-place* driver referred

to in a former article, and trusting ourselves to his most artistic guidance. Raphael has driven us before now—to, among other places, the Château du Pharaon, now the new Faculty of Medicine, in the possession of the City of Marseilles, thanks to the Empress Eugénie. It was built as a palace for her; the right of it was disputed at law between Marseilles and the Empress; the case was decided in her favour; and she made the building a gift to the town on condition of its being devoted to medicine. In driving there Raphael displayed much readiness, in that, answering an objection that carriages were not generally allowed to drive up to the doors, he answered: "First, if there is any difficulty, I shall say Monsieur is a doctor; secondly, the place is paid for by the ratepayers, and I am one of them, and that is enough in law and conscience." There was, however, no objection raised to our progress, and then Raphael's artistic bent helped us much in finding not only the best point of view from which to take the building itself, but also the best points of view from which to look down on the harbour and old port. He takes us to La Vieille Major, and to the new Cathedral close beside it, stopping on our way to get a glimpse of the new port from the ascent



FACADE, PALAIS DES ARTS DE LONGCHAMPS.

to the Cathedral Place, and is delighted to agree with us as to the Vandalism which has neglected the Vieille Major (as I write there is actually a "roundabout" in full swing under its very walls) in favour of the

twelfth-rate twelfth-cake which is called the New Cathedral, and to which have been transferred too many of the treasures—a Virgin *regill* for the purpose among them—of La Vieille Major. This, however, still contains a few of its pristine possessions, among them a fine bas-relief of the fifteenth century by the brothers Della Robbia. Other beautiful things have gone to the Museum, and yet others to foreign parts; and of the old cathedral, built on the site, and perhaps partly from the materials, of a Temple to Diana of the Ephesians, little but a

des Pompiers or some other important official can enter at their own will. When we descend into the heart of the Old Town it becomes doubtful whether any other driver or carriage could possibly get through the narrow winding streets. Raphael is equal to the occasion, talking volubly to the inhabitants in their own patois (a patois in which Greek, Latin, and Romance play each their part), but even so on more than one occasion we have to back right down a steep lane with one of the wheels on the kerb because of a cart which blocks the way in front. The dwellers in the streets regard us with a curiosity which is more agreeable than the stares with which the rank and fashion of Marseilles regard strangers of all nationalities on the Prado and at other resorts where money-bagged merchants and gilded youth most congregate. One feature of the Old Town tenements is that to every set of rooms there is a parrot or two, treated evidently with great respect and consideration. Beast and bird shops, indeed, abound in Marseilles, and seem to do a thriving business. Through the



GATEWAY OF KING RENÉ'S HOUSE.

dilapidated outside remains; and when that little begins to tumble to pieces, it is not likely that anyone will interfere to save it, unless some brilliant person is inspired to take down the bells, gild them, and hang them up in the New Cathedral. So, passing by La Tourrette, whence we get another view across the harbour, including Notre Dame de la Garde, Raphael takes us into the slums of the Old Town, which have, as he is careful to point out, some resemblance to those of Naples, while, however, there is over all a Moorish air peculiar to the place itself. One stops a little above this tortuous maze to look at the old gateway of the Hôpital de la Charité, the inside of which, as it turns out, can be seen only by some very special order, the janitor being careful to exhibit a framed and glazed edict setting forth that only the Mayor, the Prefect, and the Chef

network of alleys, passing types of various nationalities, but always meeting the predominantly Eastern characteristics, we arrive at the house of King René, who was wont to pass the winter at Marseilles, for which city he did many good things besides laying down sanitary regulations. It is not very easy to get a view of King René's house, and when at last this is accomplished, there remains the difficulty of the interested populace, who all wish to be photographed; but with Raphael's help, this is got over with laughing promises to come back and take all their portraits, and, that done, one emerges again from the brilliant darkness of Old into the brilliant sunshine of New Marseilles. But of King René there may be more to say at his own special place, Aix-en-Provence