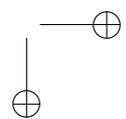
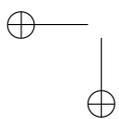
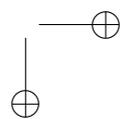
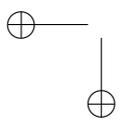
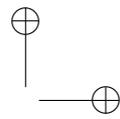
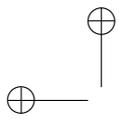
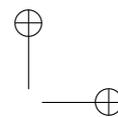
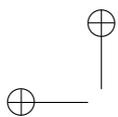


A Journey into Rabelais's France



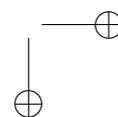
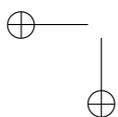


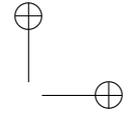
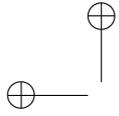


A Journey into Rabelais's France

Albert Jay Nock

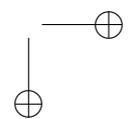
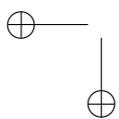
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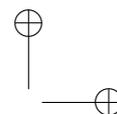
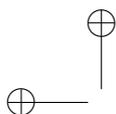




2021
First Published in 1934

Typeset by Isaac Waisberg

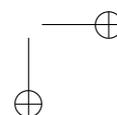
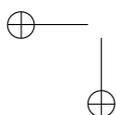


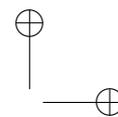
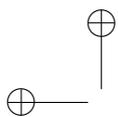


PREFACE

This book is the souvenir of a good time – nothing but that. It is the record of many months spent in delightful loafing through the parts of France that are associated with the memory of Francis Rabelais. In the course of a long occupation with his life and writings we had noticed that these regions seemed to be worth visiting, and we therefore decided to see them; and this book is merely a memorandum of our pilgrimage. Some parts of it have already appeared in the *Bookman*, and they reappear here by the editor's kind permission.

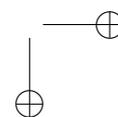
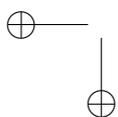
Francis Rabelais (1495–1553) was one of the best physicians in Europe. He was head of the hospital of the Pont du Rhone at Lyon, the oldest hospital in France, and perhaps the largest. He was for twenty years the private physician and confidential friend of Cardinal Jean du Bellay and his brother Guillaume, the viceroy of Piedmont. He was in favour with the most eminent men of his time, and held a court appointment from King Francis I. All the learning of the Renaissance was fermenting in his head; he anticipated Bacon in taking all knowledge as his province. Only the colossal Erasmus of Rotterdam

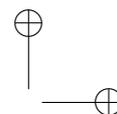
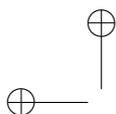




could match his classical scholarship. In literature, he was one of the four great creative geniuses of the modern world; he stands with Dante, Cervantes and Shakespeare. Finally, he did more than any one man to enrich the French language and establish it in the form in which it was bequeathed to Amyot and Montaigne.

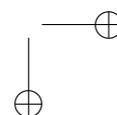
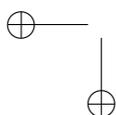
Such are the credentials of our interest in Francis Rabelais, and the justification of our reverent love for his memory.

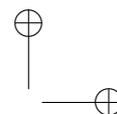
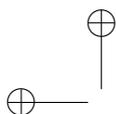




CHAPTER I

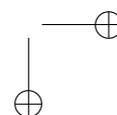
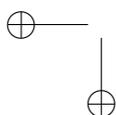
Railway-travel in France has some unusual features that the stranger finds interesting for a while, although in time their interest seems to fade out, for one reason or another. For instance, wherever it is that you propose to go, you start from Paris. If you are in Paris already, you start from there; if you are anywhere else in France, you go to Paris and start over again. You do this even if the place you wish to reach is only twenty-five miles away “cross-country.” There are cross-country lines in France, but they are merely the unpretending kind of thing that one used to find here and there in New England in the old days. A ride on one of them is about like the ride from Poughkeepsie to Waterbury forty years ago, on the line that ran through the hinterland of Dutchess County and disappeared in uncharted regions lying eastward. If one is young and adventurous and in no hurry about arriving and has nothing particular to do meanwhile, one can get somewhere across-country on a French line sometime – probably – but even so, the trip is nothing to be recommended; it is wiser to go to Paris and make a fresh start.

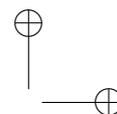
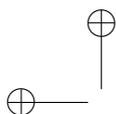




From Paris to Tours is a matter of four hours on a standard French railway that keeps one thinking about insurance most of the time; which is just as well, probably, because the country one passes through is uninteresting, and if one did not have something vivid to think of, the journey would be dull. At intervals one falls to wishing one might see some Continental maintenance-of-way men, and wondering what they are like, and where they come from, and whether they find their own way back to the asylum when the day's work is over, or whether they have to be escorted. When these artists lay out a railway they match the rails instead of staggering them; that is, they lay them with the joints opposite each other instead of with one joint opposite the middle of the other rail; thus giving you a fine rousing jolt at every rail's length. When the passenger discovers this, he understands why he is so uncommonly tired at the end of an hour's ride, and he marvels at the lunatic ingenuity which could think up the simplest possible device and at the same time the most effective, for ruining rolling-stock, ruining the permanent way, and ruining passengers, all in one motion. In this respect Continental maintenance-of-way is a sublime and impressive study in efficiency. There is a stretch of Belgian track between Liège and Aachen that has its rails staggered, but it is the only one we know of on the Continent.

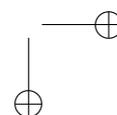
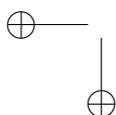
On our way down to Tours we presently saw reason to wonder why the two largest towns served by the Paris-Orléans railway are off the line. Passengers bound for Tours or Orléans dismount at a forlorn junction only a good long pistol-shot from the centre of town, and go in on a "plug." This seems about as intelligent as

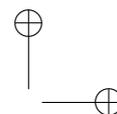
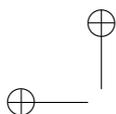




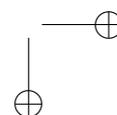
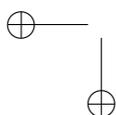
it would be for the New Haven Railway to discontinue Bridgeport as an express stop, and send Bridgeport passengers in on a shuttle from Stratford. There would be music by the entire orchestra if the New Haven should cut up an antic like that, but as far as we could observe, the passengers for Tours and Orléans accept the situation philosophically. There may be some profound and insurmountable engineering problem which makes this arrangement necessary, but we have our doubts.

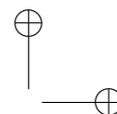
When speculation on this subject began to lag, we passed on to another that has always baffled any kind of conjecture, namely: What kind of time is it – or rather, whose time is it – by which French trains are supposed to leave and arrive? Waiting for a train in a large French railway-station once, a couple of years ago, we noticed three clocks visible from the platform, no two alike, and none of them agreeing with a clock in a church-tower, also visible from where we stood. We saw an official, who seemed to be a sort of first mate of the railway-station, looking at his watch, and we surreptitiously took measures to observe that his time disagreed with all four. When the train came along we asked a guard what time it was, and his watch was out of step with all five. Now, whose time did that train start on? The miracle remains that French trains actually run, after a fashion, and that they do not often meet with any serious accident; but how they do it, all circumstances considered, is as Lord Dundreary said, “one of the things that no feller can find out.” The title of Mr. Friedrich Sieburg’s recent book broaches the striking question, *Is God French?* and the operation of French railways raises some very strong presumptions on this point – very strong indeed.





Discourse and reflection on these matters beguiled most of the time it took us to reach Tours, and the rest of it was occupied with other topics which are only casually connected with railroading. Shortly before reaching Orléans, the train ran up on the plain of la Beauce, and the sight of this opened the question of the pun's legitimate place in the ammunition-chest of humour. The French and Americans disagree entirely about that; they are farther apart on that matter than they are on international debts. The pun is the great staple of French humour; the French think exceeding well of it, and the clever punster can go a long way with them on the strength of his talent. With us, on the contrary, he goes no way at all unless it be towards the grave, and our loyal juries always bring in a public-policy verdict in favor of the philanthropist who bumps him off. Rabelais scattered puns throughout his great work with criminal lavishness, but providentially most of them – almost all – lost their character in translation. The Elizabethan translators seem to have struggled hard to bring them over, as, for instance, in the ninth chapter of the First Book, but Providence and the genius of the English language interfered. Probably the French get no end of relish out of puns, as they are said to do out of snails, or as the Digger Indian does out of grasshopper soup; but the American can get none. The one we were just now reminded of is a fair sample. Rabelais says that this plateau of la Beauce was so named because when Gargantua first saw it, he said, “*Je trouve beau ce.*” That is our idea of a bad pun. The English are not so quick on the trigger in dealing with puns as Americans are; every once in a while *Punch* loves to stand forth and

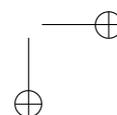
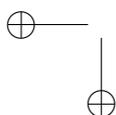


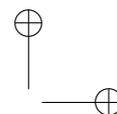


stench himself with the rich fragrance of a fine old ripe one, perhaps by way of evidence of the Norman blood in his veins; and no one protests effectively – that is, what Americans would call effectively.

This difference between the French and our own countrymen suggested another which is just as deeply rooted. The French, like Continental Europeans generally, as far as we have observed, seem to have a great horror of draughts – what they call a “current of air.” Probably it is this imposing name that frightens them, as much as anything. Some authorities trace this superstition back to the medical practice of the Middle Ages; others relate it to the period of the tax on windows. Wherever it came from, we find it in force pretty much all over the Continent; and the French seem particularly and venomously addicted to it when they travel. It was a piping warm day when we went down to Tours, and by uncommon good luck we got a compartment to ourselves and were thus able to keep the door and windows open to all the air we could get. The people in the other compartments seemed mostly to be well-to-do bourgeois, headed for the seashore where they would spend the whole day in the open air with practically nothing on. Here, however, fully clad, they shut tight every door and window at once, and began to loll and snooze and sweat and smell more and more infamously and intolerably hour by hour as the train went on, and were truly happy. There seemed a curious inconsistency in this.

We have made similar observations on Italian and German trains. Here is a jotting from an old note-book of a dozen years ago, when the German war-profiteer





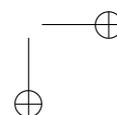
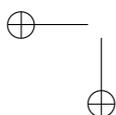
was in his heyday. It was written in the corridor of a car bound from Cologne to Munich, on a day express:

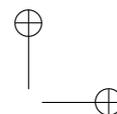
The new aristocracy of Germany has just climbed into my compartment, about eleven hundred pounds of it, I should say, consisting of the Freiherr von Schieber-Galgenschwengel, his wife, two daughters and his wife's mother. They instantly shut door and windows tight – would have caulked the cracks, probably, if they had thought to bring some oakum along. Then they opened a wicker hamper about two-thirds the size of an American family wash-basket, old-style, and usage, breadstuffs and bottled beer. I fled to the corridor. The Freiherr is a fine-looking man – one must say that for him – and he has a sort of brisk Brummagem dignity that is rather becoming. The girls are rosy stalwart beauties, running about a hundred and sixty pounds apiece, and in spite of their sudden wealth, they are quite obviously gentle-spirited, simple-hearted and affectionate, as most German girls are – no wonder Germany has been the model of domesticity from the days of Tacitus down. The right kind of man would have a *himmelschön* existence with either one of the Freiherr's gals – a lovely companion all his days, and *doch* lovely to look at for three or four years, anyway, until the family tendency set in and she had to be moved about with a winch.

Poor old Germany, most lovable and most truly civilized of European lands! Still, all our aristocracies have started out with something as rascally as the Freiherr, and no doubt in a few generations his dynasty will be as good as any.

The next entry in the note-book is as follows:

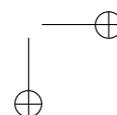
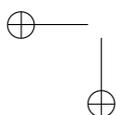
The nobility has just disembarked at Würzburg. I rushed into the compartment at the peril of my life, threw everything open, and rushed out again until the surcharged atmosphere should clear a little. These are the only Germans I ever saw who left a mess behind them for somebody else to clean up. The compartment is a sight – orange-peel and banana-skins lying around thick amidst a general *débris* of edibles. And stink? Ask of the winds that far and wide with fragments strewed the sea!

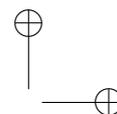




There seems to be a lot of humbug in the generalizations that Americans are so fond of, concerning what is good for you and what is not, especially in the matter of fresh air and diet. All this depends largely on what one is used to, for the human frame is adaptable enough to stand nearly anything and thrive on it, provided the owner does not worry about the outcome. Worry is the thing that shortens one's days, especially worry about what one eats and drinks. Down in Bavaria three years ago we noticed that the natives lived mostly on veal and pork, but they seemed robust and cheerful, and many of them had managed to rub along into a hale old age. They slept in air-tight bedrooms, though they were great hands to air out after the rooms were vacated. A streetful of Turkey-red bed-slips half out of window in the morning imparts an extremely "gallus" tone to a Munich landscape. They brought their children up on beer, quite successfully as far as one could see, from the moment the youngsters were able to swallow; just as successfully as America's offensive little brats used to bring themselves up from almost as tender an age on Prohibition busthead stewed out of potato-peelings and guzzled from a flask.

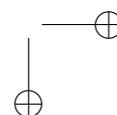
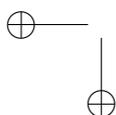
Rabelais, who was one of the best physicians in Europe, makes Gargantua remonstrate with Friar John in the matter of drinking before breakfast, telling him that it is dead against the rules laid down by physicians. "Oh, rot your physicians!" said the monk. "A hundred devils leap into my body, if there be not more old drunkards than old physicians." There is something in this robust pragmatism; not too much, maybe, but certainly something. One may not say flatly that a person lives by his indiscretions, but on the other hand there is no doubt that

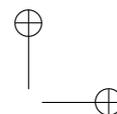




occasional indiscretions are a deal easier to get on with than steady worry about the chance of committing one. Sir Benjamin Brodie used to say that each human being is wound up to run a certain length of time, like a clock, and unless he takes uncommonly desperate chances, it pretty well makes no difference what he does; he will run out his appointed term in some sort of shape, no doubt a little better shape if he is reasonably careful of himself, but he will run it out. Some studies in longevity that we have made seem to support this theory. For years we saw a couple of fine old acquaintances of ours, one of them close to eighty-two, and the other well along in the seventies, drunk as pipers nearly every night on Prohibition's vilest liquor, yet they turned up in the morning, fresh, hale and hearty, and with all their faculties in normal order and condition.

A jovial French friend of ours lately told us a story of being present at a great French debate on the subject of indiscretions in drink. We repeat it here, chiefly on account of the light it throws on the French character and habit of mind as set forth by Julius Caesar, who observed that the French were good at two things, the *argute loqui* and the *rem militarem*. These have indeed been their strong points ever since, just as they were in Julius's day; the French are wonderful hands at closely-reasoned debate, and also top-notch soldiers, naturally born to the trade. It is true that in his account of the Picrocholine War, Rabelais quotes Gymnast as saying that "such is the nature and complexion of the French that they are worth nothing but at the first push. Then are they more fierce than devils; but if they be wearied with delays, they prove more faint than women." Livy

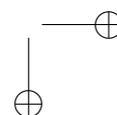
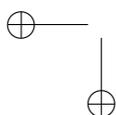


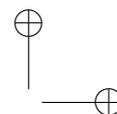
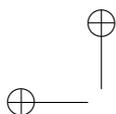


gives them this reputation, and so do Machiavelli and Erasmus. It may be so; but whether so or not, there is no discount on their eagerness with the *argute loqui*.

Our friend's story ran thus: Down in the Touraine is the drowsy little hamlet of St. Leger, a mere handful of peasants' houses, probably no more than thirty-five in the whole cluster; and here is produced a small quantity of wine of wonderful quality. This product is not on sale; the villagers keep it for themselves. If you are taken there by an accredited person and introduced, and have been properly looked over, and the committee on admissions reports favourably, you stand a chance of getting some; but not otherwise. A letter of introduction is worthless. If you brought one from the President of the Republic, the villagers would say that they had every respect for M. Lebrun and were glad to see that you were on terms with that excellent man, but that the local wine business had nothing to do with politics and must be regarded as out of his line. This wine made at St. Leger is so good that there is nobody in the village who is more than fifty years old; and a group of a dozen villagers in the local *estaminet* debated this phenomenon all one morning. Opinion was about equally divided. One school of thought held that early death was due to the quality of the wine itself, while another maintained that it was due to the fact that as the villagers got on towards middle life they fell into the vicious habit of putting water in it; and no debate in the Sorbonne was ever carried on with closer reasoning or in better style.

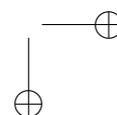
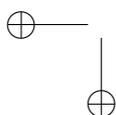
The person who told us this incident is a humorous Tourainian from Châtelleraut, where the linen for Gargantua's shirts was made, each shirt requiring nine hun-

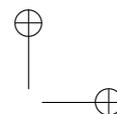




dred ells “and two hundred for the gussets.” The linen business was livelier in those days than it is now, and so Châtellerault has switched to firearms, which are always in steady demand. He told us another story of a convent down that way, which had been set up by Madame de Maintenon. A glorious wine is made there too, though we forgot to ask whether the nuns make it, or whether they let the contract to outsiders, but no matter – somebody makes it, and under Madame de Maintenon’s deed of gift, the nuns are not permitted to sell it, though they may, and do, give it away. Hence this convent is a pick-up for the accredited wayfarer. Our friend put up there over a week-end and was finely entertained; he had a bottle of wine with his first breakfast, one with his second, one with his lunch, one with a snack in the afternoon, one with his dinner, and one at bedtime. He asked the lady abbess if she did not think she was crowding the mourners a little, but she said no, the good God gave them the wine, they could not sell it, all they could do was to harvest it and cord it up until some righteous person came along to help them out with it. After all these years, they probably have enough by now to float a man-of-war.

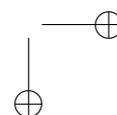
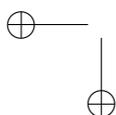
Madame de Maintenon gave this convent a life-size oil-painting of herself, for which she posed without a stitch of clothing on, and it hung in the main hall for years. There is a charming lack of self-consciousness about that gift, both in the giving and the way it was received. No doubt whole generations of nuns have looked at it, vaguely and innocently wishing they were as handsome as the skittish founder of their convent; and why not? There is good French logic in the thought that the Lord

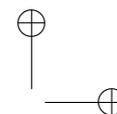
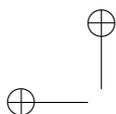




must love beauty, since He made a whole worldful of it. The picture still hangs where it always did, but recently some evil-minded old frog of an archbishop or cardinal – something-or-other like that, though we do not remember his exact title – made the convent get a painter in to fig-leaf it with a filmy scarf, so that now it is nothing but a lewd picture, quite out of place in a convent. Its sweet and eloquent naïveté is gone; it should be hung in a bar-room.

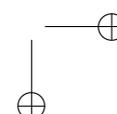
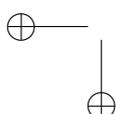
When we reached St.-Pierre-des-Corps, the junction for Tours, these desultory thoughts were abruptly shut off, and our minds were yanked back to the realities of Continental railroading, as we tilted seventy-five pounds of hand-luggage out of the rack and carried it across the main tracks and over to the shuttle-train on the other side of the station; a good three hundred yards. Some Americans like the Continental style of railway-travel and prefer it to their own; at least, we have friends who say they do, and one can not go behind the returns. We have often heard tourists dwell on the merits of the Red Train or the Blue Train or some-other-coloured train, and the great joy of travelling on it. We do not believe a word of all this. We believe that no painter can make a permanent way any easier to ride over, or create any illusions about ventilation. Anything like that is a magician's business, not a painter's. You are just as tired riding over matched rails in a train painted green as you are in one that is not painted at all; try it and see. There are two particulars in which the Continental railway-systems have something to their credit over ours. They are much more merciful to your trunk and heavy luggage, as they should be, because they charge you

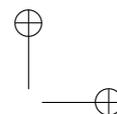




highwayman's rates for transporting it. Moreover, they do not use the Cro-Magnon type of open sleeping-car that the Pullman Company still thinks is good enough for the free-born American sovereign. In all other respects, however, we say and maintain that European railroading is far and away behind ours. The proof of railroading is how you feel at the end of the ride. Very well, ride from New York to Scranton on the Lackawanna, to Baltimore on the B. and O., or to Kingston, R. I., on the New Haven; then ride the equivalent distance from Paris to Tours, and hand in your verdict.

We reached Tours finally, dog-tired. There are good hotels there, and the unattached tourist is likely to settle in the first one he sees, as he is in no mood to be choosy. He goes to sleep, moreover, without calling in any one to rock him, but he also wakes up early in the morning – street noises. Then while his senses slowly drag themselves back to life, he wonders why Continental hotels have all their best rooms on the front of the house, and whether French people really like noise or whether they merely accept it as part of a fixed and invariable order of life, as they accept Racine, Molière, *oeufs à la coque*, Corneille, *haricots verts*, Victor Hugo, and other crystallizations of tradition. But he never finds out.

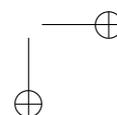
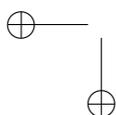


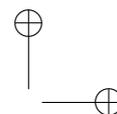
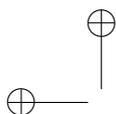


CHAPTER II

The guide-book says that Tours is situated in the midst of “a fertile plain,” and you have to take the guide-book’s word for it that the plain is fertile, until you see some of the crops that are raised there. Panurge called the Touraine “the garden of France.” Such of its soil as we saw on the way down was a thin yellowish-brown clay that fell into powder when dry. An American agriculturist, seeing it in a fallow state, would say it could not grow white beans. Nevertheless remarkable crops are coaxed out of it, and apparently have always been, though one can not see how. The region grows good wines. Vouvray, seven miles from Tours, has a world-wide reputation for its white wine. The other wines of the district bear mostly a local character. They are middling strong; the red wines of Chinon and Bourgueil are harsh, and when you are through with them you know you have had something, but they are sound and good.

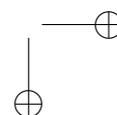
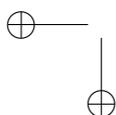
One wonders whether there is any way to “spot” a good wine-growing soil, except by putting in some vines and seeing what happens. Many of the best wines come out of singularly unpromising soil; in fact, the Germans

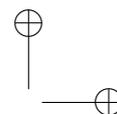




get the best white wine in the world out of what seems to be no soil at all. It is worth while stepping into a vineyard on the Mosel, to see the sort of stuff that the vines are planted in. The best way to get an idea of it without going there is to run some Vermont slate through a stone-crusher and then screen it through a half-inch mesh. The arable hillsides of the Rhine and Mosel valleys seem to be made up entirely of this crushed slate or shale; the vines are planted in it, grow out of it, and produce results. One would as soon expect to raise grapes on the culm-dumps around Wilkes-Barre, which are much the same kind of thing. Perhaps one could raise them there. We do not know that any one has ever tried, but a sight of the Mosel vineyards makes one open-minded about the chances.

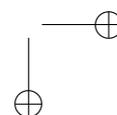
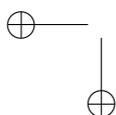
Tours is the center of a heavy summer-tourist trade for the "château country." Dozens of weary and dejected outlanders drive down here through clouds of dust every day from Paris in motor-omnibuses, stay overnight, and drive away again next morning to finish the round of châteaux built by dead and gone French royalty. One wonders why they do this. We suspected that there must be some good reason, or so many people would not do it, so one day we joined the last "leg" of a tour that was going to the châteaux of Amboise, Chenonceaux and one or two others. We undertook this enterprise purely to see what was in it, and our curiosity was satisfied, so we got our small investment back, but no "velvet" with it, whereas we expected quite a good deal. We found that if one knew the political and economic history of France from Louis XI's time down, say, to Richelieu's, one could wander around these châteaux for

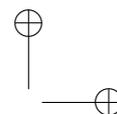
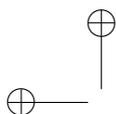




two or three months and probably get enough significant impressions to enable one to reconstruct the period very satisfactorily. We knew the history reasonably well, but the omnibus and the rest of the party would not wait two or three months. They were for pushing on; hence our project yielded no returns. We have sometimes made bold to ask tourists what dividends they actually got out of forced-march excursions like this, but if they had got any they did not let on. Motoring three hundred miles and tramping over eight or nine châteaux in three days' time does not seem educative, even in the broad sense; and regarded as a lark, one could think of a good many improvements on it. However, it is an innocuous occupation, apparently, and that is something.

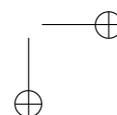
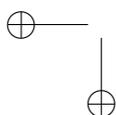
Probably French royalty picked the Touraine as a sort of summer capital because it was the sightliest region to be found reasonably handy to Paris. There were other districts more eligible, but distance from the metropolis was against them. Moreover, the Touraine is in a privileged position in respect of climate; that is to say, speaking strictly, the climate there is bad, but not so bad as it is elsewhere in Northern France. The Touraine is very lovely too, in spots; some of them – a few – are really exquisite. But most of these are not around the principal châteaux, and in general their beauty is largely man-made. Here, as in Western Europe generally, there is no discount on what man has done to beautify the landscape, but one can not help seeing that he had nothing particularly encouraging to start with; whereas in America, with incomparable natural beauty almost everywhere, he has done his best to vulgarize, deform and defile it. The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, for

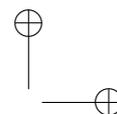




instance, is the pearl of all Europe for beauty; it has been patiently coddled, coaxed, trimmed, manicured, barbered and upholstered until from end to end it looks like somebody's private estate. Yet, as nature made it, the county of Sussex, in New Jersey, has it beaten hands down. The American who visits Western Europe with an eye for the landscape should make up his mind at the outset that it is what man has done that really counts. If he is expecting anything in the way of natural scenic beauty to compare with what he has at home, he will be disappointed.

For a certain temperament, or type of mind, and perhaps a common one, it is what man has done (and especially it is the association of some particular man with some particular place or region) that furnishes the incentive to European travel. We think this type of mind is probably pretty common because we have noticed that pilgrimages attract all sorts and conditions of men, and pilgrimages always have some association of this kind for their main interest. For every one who has gone to Switzerland for scenery or sports, a thousand have gone to Mecca because Mohammed was born there. Who could be hired to go to the commonplace village of Stratford or the humbler village of Domrémy but for such an interest? Some come here to Tours to see the house where de Balzac was born; others of a religious turn – scores of them – come in behalf of St. Martin and St. Gregory; others who have read *Quentin Durward* poke into the dingy rue Briçonnet to be “thrilled” by the sight of the sculptured noose on a fine fifteenth-century house which tradition – unfortunately groundless – designates as the residence of Tristan l’Hermite, Louis XI’s brisk and

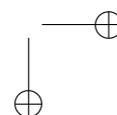
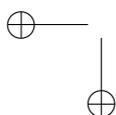




energetic provost-marshal. Even the jaded tourists from Iowa showed faint signs of life at the sight of Catherine de Médicis's bedchamber at Blois, and the library-study where she had actually sat and read or written.

Perhaps one gets most out of travel by starting with a strong interest in some one historical figure. The interest broadens out at once in all sorts of unsuspected directions, extends to all sorts of unlooked-for odds-and-ends, throws an attractive light on no end of queer obscure situations and people; all this by the mere force of association. It probably makes no killing difference what person it is that your interest settles on, provided it is one person only, not a group, not a school, not a period, not a theory, philosophy, religion or doctrine of any kind, but just one particular human being. Start with that interest and keep following it, and instantly your interest and knowledge begin branching out and touching all manner of points in the period, all manner of groups and schools, doctrines and tendencies; and above all they introduce you to a whole procession of other historical personages and present them by their most attractive side, so that they will never afterwards be mere storybook-figures to your imagination, but real folks. Nearly everybody likes to read biography, and this way of following up an individual actor in the drama of history is merely harvesting raw biography. You cook it as you go along, and flavour it to your own taste, which is much more interesting than having some one else cook it for you.

When you are in Tours, you feel that Louis XI is closer to you than the man in the next house, and the longer you stay, the closer he gets. You expect to see his shabby



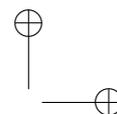
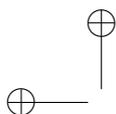
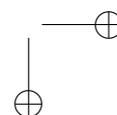
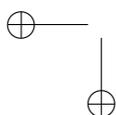
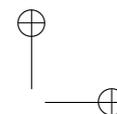


figure shuffling briskly by you on the rue Nationale at any moment, and to feel his sharp, experienced and clairvoyant glance resting on you momentarily, just long enough to turn your pockets inside out before he shuffles on. There is almost nothing left of his favourite residence, Plessis-lés-Tours, a couple of miles out of town to the south-west, but his genius still presides over the city. Tours is a trading and manufacturing town in the old style – Louis’s style – and at no time since his day has it pretended to be anything else. There was never any feudal or aristocratic nonsense about it, such as you still get a scent of when you go into the neighbouring town of le Mans, for instance. Louis saw that there was no money in feudalism. What he wanted was something to consolidate the big kingdom that he had put together, and that something was free and independent trade; free production and free exchange of actual goods. Feudalism was a separatist and divisive influence; while free business, at which anybody might set up shop and make commodities and sell them – this was what would copper-rivet his kingdom and hold it together against all comers.

There you have Tours. Ever since the end of the fifteenth century the *bourgeois et marchand de Tours* has been a pretty substantial fellow, with a clear idea of how he got that way, and a strong conviction that time has proved his course to be the right one. He does not want all the money in the world, or all the trade; too much work, and besides, if you got them, what would you have, really? No, he has seen that sort of thing tried elsewhere, and it does not look good. He wants a comfortable livelihood in order to make things easy and

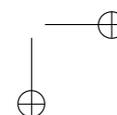
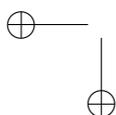


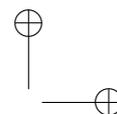


pleasant, knows how to get it and does get it. He is not even especially keen on a growing business. If he manages to rub along at about the same rate from year to year, he is satisfied. New-fangled theories of quantity-production, high-pressure salesmanship and national advertising are interesting enough to read about, but nothing to take up with. They do not attract him, and his customers would not stand for them. In short, his economics of trade have changed precious little since Louis's time; Louis could hobnob with him to-day and find him a man after his own heart. To Louis's clear intelligence an industrial proletariat would seem no more a social asset than a crew of feudal serfs. When you are trying to consolidate a nation and develop a sound national sense, an industrial proletariat is as indigestible as putty; it breeds ptomaines in the body politic which raise the devil in the long-run. Louis would not be interested in anything like this, and neither is the bourgeois of Tours; his instinct is against letting his business get so big that he has to have too many people working for him.

Louis had his little ways, and in many respects he was a very hard nut, but in his lucid sense of what it is that really holds a nation together and informs it with the only type of national spirit that means anything and is worth having, he was a thundering big man. If a few of his successors on the throne had been blessed with half of Louis's intelligence, the history of France would make better reading.

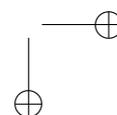
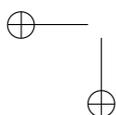
We arrived in Tours in time to look in on the regional grain-market which is held there weekly, on Saturday morning. It is an informal sort of affair, very casual and leisurely, and nobody ever seems to get much worked up

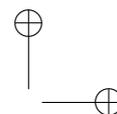




over anything. Buyers come in from all parts of France; one might think they would be as prompt as possible about putting through their deals, since the session lasts only over the forenoon; but they appear to be in no hurry. They stroll around the hotel-café, which is all the official headquarters that the market seems to have, chatting with one and another in a friendly way, and beyond this sociability one sees nothing going forward. There is an entire absence of the conventional apparatus of business; no ledgers, no secretary, no organization. Pretty soon, however, we discovered that a lively trade was going on, all by word of mouth. This is the way it went: A producer took a sample of grain out of his pocket, done up in an envelope or a shred of newspaper, showed it to a buyer, they agreed on a price, the buyer said he would take so-many quintals or bushels or whatever the measure was, and the transaction was over, with never a pencil-scratch by way of contract, agreement or memorandum.

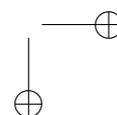
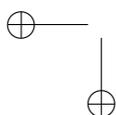
We afterwards saw these regional markets elsewhere in France, all conducted in the same way, and we were told that the practice is universal. All the business is done by word of mouth. This might seem to give a good deal of leeway for sharp practice on either side, but if so neither party takes advantage of it, for some reason. The verbal agreement is always faithfully carried out. Our old friend Bill Briggs told us of attending a wine-auction over at Beaune, in Burgundy, that was run on much the same plan. Bill said it was a most dignified kind of affair, decorous as a Quaker meeting, not at all like our auctions. The buyers sat around a rather gloomy room, silent and motionless as prairie-dogs at noon. The

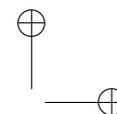




auctioneer offered a certain lot of wine by name, date and description; then he lighted a small, flat wax candle. As long as it burned, the bidding was open; when it went out, that meant that the lot was “knocked down.” The auctioneer announced the result, put up another lot, lighted another candle; and so on. No one raised his voice, there was no excitement, no commotion, not even a flurry of quick breath when the candle flickered and went out. Here again, Bill said, nobody took a note or memorandum, not even the auctioneer, but he added that the whole business was so unearthly solemn that nobody would have any trouble remembering what took place. He thought he could remember most of the bids, himself.

This way of conducting trade interested us because it brought the days of Louis XI back to our minds afresh. The French trader or manufacturer whom Louis encouraged to go into business was largely recruited from the peasantry, and he took a peasant’s prejudices with him into his new vocation. One of these prejudices was a deadly antipathy to paper. He was against paper, wherever found. Reading, writing, printing, were suspect arts, especially where figures were concerned. Putting down figures on a piece of paper was unnecessary – anybody could remember them – it was a new-fangled way of doing, and there was sure to be rascality in it somewhere. We found something pleasant and exhilarating about the persistence of this prejudice, for disinterested persons have told us that the Frenchman’s word is invariably good in his dealings with his own people, good in spirit as well as in its strict letter. We hear that his probity pretty regularly peters out where outsiders, especially

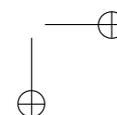
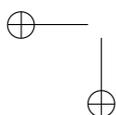


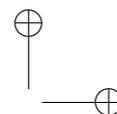


Americans, are concerned, and from our own experience we incline to think it may be even so; but when chaffering with his own kind, his word is said to be no end better than his bond.

We never held it against the morals of the European that he should bilk the tourist horde. In fact, we rather respect him for it, and think he should do more of it than he does. If we were in his place, we would take their shirts, especially if we were a Parisian. Who wants one's country cluttered up and vulgarized by enormous annual irruptions of inquisitive foreigners? Who wants one's city pawed over, nosed into and corrupted by ignorant aliens with more dollars than sense? When we first knew Paris, now more than thirty years ago, it may have been wicked enough, as all large cities are, but it was not vulgar. It is now; and its hospitality to foreigners has made it so. Well, as disinterested persons with no sort of ax to grind, we say that if we had made up our minds to pay this price for the advantage of the tourist trade, we would get the worth of it wherever we saw an open pocket. Therefore when we have been "had" for small amounts here and there, we have cheerfully charged it off as a contribution to a righteous cause.

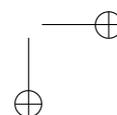
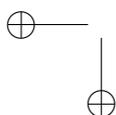
We had a curious experience on one of these occasions. Two years ago, in Paris, we stopped at what looked like an embryo department-store to buy a pair of shoestrings; they came to about five cents, regular money. We tendered a ten-franc note, worth forty cents, and the girl returned almost a handful of assorted chicken-feed, largely those enormous ten-centime coppers of the Second Empire that one never knows what to do with, and hence they accumulate in one's trousers' pockets and

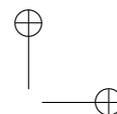




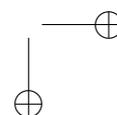
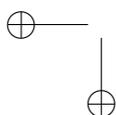
weigh them down – no wonder that all Frenchmen still wear suspenders – and also some smaller coins that felt greasy, and seemed to be made of aluminium. Counting up all this change was of course impracticable; we did not have education enough, in the first place, and it would have taken too long, besides. So we went out, and on looking over our haul, we presently found an American ten-cent piece and a buffalo nickel. So we were considerably ahead on our purchase, but we never could make up our mind about that girl. Did she set out to trim us in the regular way, or was she a kindly soul who guessed our nationality – no great difficulty about doing that – and decided that while technically short-changing us and thus keeping her conscience clear, she would do us a good turn? We had noticed that she was an uncommonly pleasant-looking creature, furnishing an agreeable contrast to “the heavy-jawed, greedy, flat Parisian face” that Tourgueniev speaks of, and that one continually sees in Paris; so she may have obeyed a good impulse and thus laid up treasure in heaven, as the Good Book says.

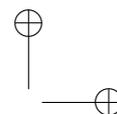
Yes, the French merchant, trader, manufacturer, whom one sees at his best in Tours, is a man after Louis XI’s own heart. He is a small-industry man. He plays safe. He is not after huge markets, huge profits; he does not wish to create a huge labour-surplus to keep the wage-scale down to a subsistence-level. He does not care to subject his industry or business to spectacular oscillations between the maxima of prosperity and depression, between billions and bankruptcy. After the late war, the French did not over-industrialize themselves as the Germans did after 1870 and the consolidation of the Reich.





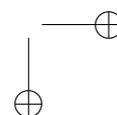
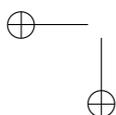
Old Louis's spirit still held control, and they continued to plod along much as before. The real grievance that the Germans have against William II is not his direct connexion, real or fancied, with the war, or even his ungallant behaviour when the pinch came, but that he went back on the domestic policy of his family – all the Hohenzollerns were always solidly for the *bauer* class and the small-industry man – and pushed with all his might for large-scale industrialization. Caprivi, who succeeded Bismarck, is thought to have been rather a dull man and a figure-head. Yet he told the Germans plainly that in their new policy of high-pressure industrialization they would probably overshoot the mark and shoot their grandmother, which is precisely what they did. This seems to show that Caprivi was more of a statesman than he is cracked up to be. The United States also shot its grandmother through inattention to similar warnings from Mr. Jefferson. France, on the other hand, stuck to Louis's old-fashioned doctrine, kept an even balance between industry and agriculture, and remained a nation of small independent producers and artisans who are able to exert an enormous power of retrenchment and compression when any kind of pinch comes, as it did a few years ago when the franc was wabbling; they can tighten their belts, wear the same shirt the year round, and continue laying up money, nickel by nickel, as before. Hence France is solvent now, while other nations who have gone in for large-scale industrialization seem mostly busted. Not having created a huge and vociferous industrial proletariat, she does not have it on her hands when unemployment reigns. Of course, her prosperity has been enormously helped out by what she could steal in a

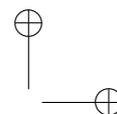




public way, and by tidy sums realized through stinging her creditors; but here again she is following Louis XI's policies, for he was uncommonly handy in those lines and left a brilliant example to his successors. He lifted the rich duchy of Burgundy as neatly as his spiritual progeny did the rich border provinces of Alsace-Lorraine, and for the same reason: there was money in it. The thrifty old buccaneer also cabbaged the Franche-Comté, the Artois and the Provence, a good haul for a single sinner to drag in. Anything valuable pretty well had to be spiked down when Louis was around. If his piety got him into heaven – for he was pious – he probably tried to steal the Throne of Grace on his second day there, as his present-day successors will certainly do in case some clerical error ever gains admission for any of them.

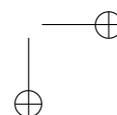
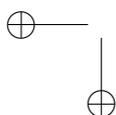
But though Marianne has been for three hundred years the gun-moll of the nations, her domestic economic policy is one to be regarded prayerfully just now by countries which have elaborated the get-rich-quick doctrine. America's enterprising young business men should come to Tours to put a mansard roof on the education they get in our university-schools of business administration. They would notice some suggestive things that do not appear in a college course. We observed, for example, that the French merchant or small-industry man knows his goods; he knows all about them, not by way of book-learning, but by having worked on them from his youth up. We observed, too, that this intimacy appears to breed a peculiar kind of affection, for we never remember to have run across any one in these walks of life who did not seem more interested in his goods than in making a sale. Buying shoes in Poitiers, a hat in Montpellier, a pipe

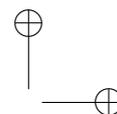




here, some gloves there, we were always impressed by this relative indifference to the chance of a sale as compared with the chance to discuss the goods under consideration. These discussions are profound and impartial; they are delivered with the detachment bred of a fine expertness. “Love the art,” says Marcus Aurelius, “poor as it may be, which thou hast learned, and be content with it.” It seems to us that the French merchant and artisan are better at this than any people we ever saw.

This trait also runs back pretty directly to the days of Louis XI. The peasant-bred workman or shopman who detested paper, who could not read or write and had a great horror of any one who could, always knew goods. His idea of business was the very simplest and soundest: the production and exchange of goods. Mere paper-business, credits, stock-transactions, money-changing, underwriting and the like, at which people got rich without handling any goods or doing any real productive work – all this he knew nothing at all about and had no love for. To him, goods were made to be used; that was his first thought about them. Only secondarily did he think of them as made to be sold. His successors have the same point of view. The more modern theory of business, on the other hand, seems to be exactly the reverse of this. Goods are made, first and foremost, to be sold, be it by hook or crook. Secondarily they are made to be used, and good salesmanship thinks little about their use if only they may be sold. The French do not “get” this idea, any more than Louis would; and if Louis had found any high-pressure salesmen dodging about Tours, he would have crossed himself and turned

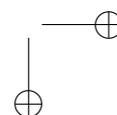
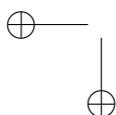


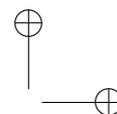


them over to Tristan l’Hermite’s official attentions before they could get their sales-talk unlimbered.

One of the most delightful episodes in Rabelais’s great work bears a curious testimony to the French point of view on business. It is the dialogue between the shepherd Dingdong and Panurge, in the seventh and eighth chapters of the Fourth Book. Panurge offers to buy one of Dingdong’s sheep, he is impatient to close the deal, the price is no object, he does not haggle; but Dingdong will not get down to dots until he has gone through his breed’s whole pedigree and given Panurge about a half-hour’s free lecture on its qualities. There is a good deal of humorous exaggeration in the episode, of course, but the essential fact remains that Dingdong is much more interested in his sheep than he is in making a sale; the sale is the last thing he thinks of, and he refuses to think of it at all until he gets ready, even though Panurge tries his best to bring him to the point.

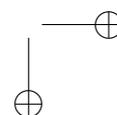
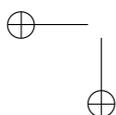
Rabelais never speaks of Tours, which seems strange, since it is the town nearest to his birthplace and would naturally be the first town of any size that he ever saw. One of his brothers went there as an apprentice to a merchant named Gaudette, and presently gave evidence of a great brain and a level head by marrying his employer’s daughter, Marie. The business went with the gal in those days, as now, other things being equal; so no doubt when the old folks retired on a competence, Marie and young Jamet gravitated into a pretty good thing and lived happily ever after. It is pleasant to think so, at any rate. But Francis Rabelais seems not to have found anything to interest him in Tours. He speaks once of “a parcel of the little plums of Tours” as part of a diet

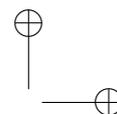




that Pantagruel is recommending to Panurge; a pretty scientific diet, too, by the way, according to modern standards, surprisingly so. These dried plums, or prunes, were highly thought of, and get mention by several writers of the period, but we did not see any of them while we were there, or hear anything about them, so probably the breed has died out or been superseded, though their name survives elsewhere as a sort of trade-mark. In fact, the local food-specialties there seemed few, and only mildly interesting. The *rillettes* are pretty good; they are shreds of pork put down in lard, and served (at least, when we had them) as an appetizer for lunch. They have the merit of staying by you quite a while, and hence are an economical dish; if you have plenty of *rillettes* for lunch you don't much mind missing dinner if you have to. Aside from this virtue their flavour makes them worth trying.

In another passage Rabelais alludes to Plessis-lés-Tours in connection with St. Francis. When Louis XI felt his last illness coming on, not liking the prospect, as was natural under the circumstances, he sent to Italy for St. Francis, to see whether something could be done about it. The saint seemed unable to accomplish anything, but after the king's death he stayed on at Plessis-lés-Tours, dying there in his turn. Meanwhile he put in his time at organizing several houses of his religious order known as the Good Men, so what he missed in the deal he made up in the draw, and nothing was lost, probably. It is to this order that Rabelais refers in a jocular way. But beyond bringing in a bare mention of the name of the town once or twice, as in this instance, he has nothing to say about Tours. Nevertheless the

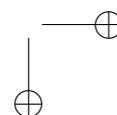
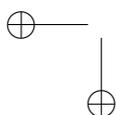




people of the town seem to bear no grievance against him, for they have put up a very good statue of him at the foot of the rue Nationale, by the Loire bridge; Rabelais on one side of the bridgehead, and Descartes on the other.

The Revolution left its mark on Tours. The town was Haussmannized on a small scale by cutting the wide straight rue Nationale from the centre down to the river, clipping off the façades of some good old houses and replacing them by a very mediocre frontage. If you get around behind this, as you can here and there, you see some good architecture in the portions remaining. No one merely passing by would suspect that it is there.

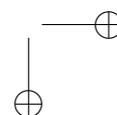
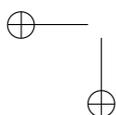
The river Loire is wide and shallow at this point, and shows sandbars at low water. On Sundays it is lined with patient fishermen who never catch anything, as far as we could see, though we watched them for hours. This was nothing new to us, however. In our wanderings over Europe we have observed fishermen angling in the Elbe, the Rhine, the Pegnitz, Nahe, Garonne, Allier, Tarn, Seine, Lahn, Vienne, Sauer, and notwithstanding we gave time to this occupation much more generously than we could afford, we never saw but one fish caught, and that was a useless “shiner” about five inches long, in the Mosel. The observant traveller finds a puzzle here. Nearly every male citizen fishes, and those who do not fish go out and watch those who do. River-fish appear on the table pretty often; hence somebody must sometimes catch one, but who does it, or where, is a good deal of a mystery, for no one ever sees it done, apparently, though nearly every fisherman is attended by two or three hopeful loafers who are looking on. When

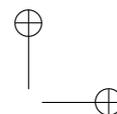




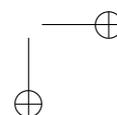
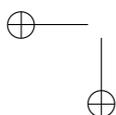
the traveller has studied this problem sufficiently, he can pass on to consider what it is about fishing that attracts spectators. We feel the attraction ourselves and usually succumb to it, but we have never been able to make out why we do.

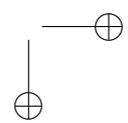
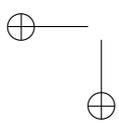
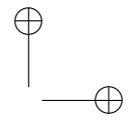
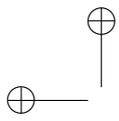
The French spoken at Tours and in the Touraine generally, is supposed to be the best in the world. It had that reputation as far back as Rabelais's time. What we heard of it convinced us that good French is more impressive and distinguished than it is agreeable to the ear. Not for nothing is French the chosen tongue of the diplomat. When conversing with Tourainians we felt ourselves removed into the bosom of the League of Nations and instinctively kept a tight grip on our pocketbooks, though there was of course not the least real reason for doing so, for the true Tourainian has practically nothing in common with the diplomat but speech; he is honest and intelligent, as a rule. To us the despised intonation of the Midi, with its slight bird-like rising inflection on final syllables, is far pleasanter to hear than the "good, pure Touraine French" that Rabelais praises, and it also suggests less sinister associations. So likewise with the softer accents of Brussels French, abhorred by the French purist. Similarly the drawling and slovenly intonation of Alabama might be thought more agreeable than that of northern communities which pride themselves, quite justly, on the quality of their spoken English – certain suburbs of Boston, for example. But neither French nor English, however spoken, can be called beautiful, ingratiating, agreeable, as Italian or Russian speech is. They have their distinctive merits, but sheer beauty is not among them.

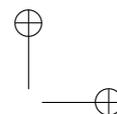




From Tours we go to Chinon, “the famous city, noble city, ancient city, yea, the first city in the world, according to the judgment and assertion of the most learned massorettes.” The biography of Rabelais, who gave it this character, begins there. Chinon is thirty-one miles south-west of Tours, and the train is supposed to cover that distance in an hour and a half or thereabouts – it is so nominated in the bond – and sometimes actually does so, according to rumour. Our real journey begins at Chinon, and we are eager to set out, eager to penetrate farther towards the heart of what the late M. André Hallays called *la molle et douce Touraine*.



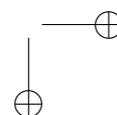
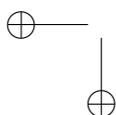


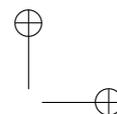
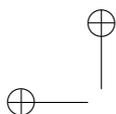


CHAPTER III

Chinon still keeps its luck, after all the centuries. It missed destruction by the religionists in the sixteenth century and by the revolutionists in the eighteenth, but only by the closest kind of shave. Now, in the twentieth, and by the same narrow margin, it escapes the worse fate of vulgarization by tourists. The thousands of tourists who are doing the round of the châteaux in the Loire Valley swarm over the great ruined castle that lies up on the hill, but do not come down into town except sometimes for luncheon. When this happens, they scramble into their omnibus as soon as their meal is over, for they are on a schedule and must keep moving. Thus the town gets only a dissolving view of strangers, and remains unspoiled.

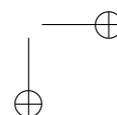
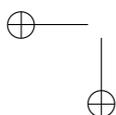
Tourists, however, presumably get their money's worth out of the castle's associations with the marauding English regime of the Plantagenets, especially with Henry II of England, and with Jeanne d'Arc, who ferreted the weak and wabby Charles VII out of his seclusion in the castle, and galvanized him into asserting himself, putting an end to British buccaneering, and clearing the way

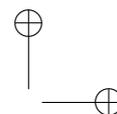




for the consolidating genius of Louis XI. Such of the tourists as are lovers of beauty also get their money's worth out of the panorama of the town and its environs as seen from the heights where the castle stands. This view is so lovely that it tempts one to take stock afresh in Panurge's fervour over the Touraine as "the garden of France." Chinon's situation on the graceful bend of the little river Vienne, the outlying fields and meadows that are cultivated within an inch of their life, the spires and pointed roofs of the old town clustered at one's feet, all combine to make up an incalculable deal of loveliness. One of the most charming features in the landscape is the solid mass of foliage on a half-mile of plane-trees along the river front. There is a mystery about this too, for one does not see how these large trees can do so well so close together, most of them being not more than fifteen feet apart.

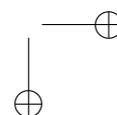
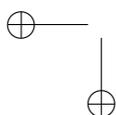
There are very few mediaeval towns which have preserved their ancient appearance as completely as Chinon has, and at the same time kept themselves so well out from under the dubious ministrations of the "restorer." It shows a rich variety of old houses built in the Renaissance, some indeed earlier; M. Jean Plattard, in his *Vie de Rabelais*, describes their "octagonal towers serving as a framework for spiral staircases, buttressed gables decorated with crockets or *persillages*, red-brick walls framed by fashioned beams, mullioned windows, corbeled-out storeys, spacious lofts with their skylights on a level with the roof, supporting a solid pulley from the arch above the street." By day the stroller may loaf gloriously and invite his soul while prowling among these houses, moving in and out over the old thoroughfares, quite at

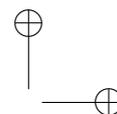
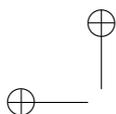




his leisure; he may take his time and let the flavour of antiquity soak in. By night he may sit on a bench at the end of the boulevarded quay, watching the moonlight on the Vienne; then looking over his shoulder he may see the castle bathed in a spectral, washed-out light that gives a far better tone to its burden of romantic legend than it has when seen under the midday sun. This countryside seems to have been specially designed by nature to bring forth the spirit of Rabelais. Its natural genius still seems to be his – fruitful, stable, wise, experienced, dignified, and above all, charming. Its pervading suggestion is that of the *vie laborieuse* which he understood so well, *une succession de travaux qui remplissent et moralisent les jours*.

Nevertheless, it is the Plantagenets and Jeanne d'Arc who mostly touch the imagination of the common run of visitors here, probably because civilization has not progressed so far but that politics and commerce are still regarded as the most important interests of humanity. There is a tablet on the site of one of the old city-gates, showing where Jeanne is supposed to have entered the town, and the route she is supposed to have taken to reach the castle. For some reason we were not much stirred by the sight of it. Jeanne's story is one of simple peasant faith and goodness cruelly sold out; it is affecting, certainly, and worthy of all respect, but not essentially uncommon. Plenty of simple peasant faith and goodness was as cruelly sold out before her time, and has been since. So we refused to weep over the tablet, much as Artemus Ward refused to shed any tears over the memory of Cotton Mather, saying simply that "he's bin ded too lengthy." Perhaps Jeanne, fine as she was, will not turn

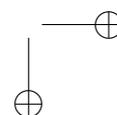
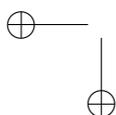


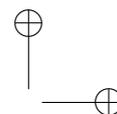


out to have as much significance for the best reason and spirit of the race as she is supposed to have.

No, we could not care particularly how Jeanne got into town and reached the castle. What we wanted to know was where Tom Wellhung entered Chinon from Gravot, with the gold and silver hatchets on his shoulder, and what route he took to the goldsmith's where "he turned his silver hatchet into fine testons, crown-pieces and other white cash; his golden hatchet into fine angels, curious ducats, substantial ridders, spankers and rose-nobles. . . and in a short time became the richest man in the country, nay, even richer than that limping scrape-good, Maulevrier." If any one could have told us that, we should have been worshipfully grateful and interested, for there you have a story that time will not tarnish; but the town has not put up any tablet to show Tom's course, which seems a pity. Forty or fifty thousand years from now our present theories of nationalism and our ideas of what makes nations great, may all have gone to pot and taken our nationalist heroes and heroines with them; but Tom's story, as told in the Prologue to the Fourth Book, will have lost neither force nor brilliance.

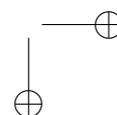
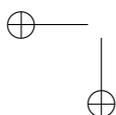
As for the Plantagenets, the few remains of Henry II's structures are pretty fresh-looking, and interesting enough as far as they go, but they did not interest us so much as some other landmarks in the town; as, for instance, the Painted Cellar, where Pantagruel said he had drunk "many a glass of cool wine," or the residence of "the hermit of Ste.-Radegonde, a little above Chinon," whom Friar John of the Funnels cites as authority on a delicate question of morals, in the thirty-first chapter of the Third Book. The cave now shown as the Painted Cellar is one

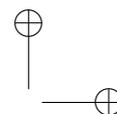
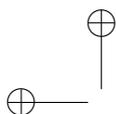




of many that have been cut to a great depth in the soft stone of the hillside. Formerly it had frescoes painted on its walls, whence its name, and it was used to store wine; it seems now to be used for general storage, though there may still be some wine in it – probably there is, for you are likely to find wine in these parts wherever there is storage-room. We went about twenty yards into the cave on a hot day, and encountered an Arctic cold, but no dampness; things would keep as well in that atmosphere as in artificial cold-storage.

One sees a good deal of cave-dwelling actually going on in the brow of the hill back of town, and also a number of caves that look as though they had only lately been abandoned. This mode of life prevails largely over the whole region, and on examination one acquires a considerable respect for it. The district is bottomed on a chalky stone, white as coral and not much harder than good hard Parmesan cheese. It is wonderful stuff to build with; you can cut it into building-blocks with a handsaw. Exposure to the air hardens it to the depth of half an inch or so; one sees blocks of it in the castle wall that have been out in the weather eight hundred years, and seem to have hardened no deeper. From such material it is no trouble at all to worm out any size of cellar you like, and any shape; the town is honey-combed with them. If one wants a permanent residence, the best way to get it is to burrow into a hillside; one can either sell the excavated stone, or use it to build a sort of lean-to by way of frontage. Under this arrangement it is easy to keep warm in winter and cool in summer, and one never has to buy any ice. The only trouble is that the rear of the dwelling is pretty dark. Still, if the occupant sleeps

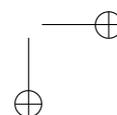
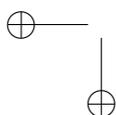


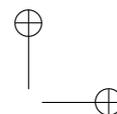


back there, the sun does not come in and wake him up too early in the morning; so the eternal balance of good and evil is preserved.

The hillside above Chinon is terraced with four or five rows of cave-dwellings, which give it a picturesque appearance. Their chimneys are ingenious and apparently practicable; they are simply bored up through the soft rock and slanted outwards to open on the hillside. These dwellings are not squalid; indeed, we found Chinon, and the Touraine generally, considerably cleaner than many districts of France. It is in the great flea-belt, as it was in Rabelais's day. In his *Pantagrueline Prognostication* he gives warning that "about midsummer you will have to fear an invasion of fleas and weevils of la Devinière," this being his birthplace, a farm belonging to his father, about three miles out of Chinon. You get that sort of visitation every summer, and it lasts till the autumn rains set in. The inhabitants are stoical towards fleas; not so the visitor, and not so the dogs and cats, which exist here in whole battalions. Pro-rated to the population, there are about enough of each for six apiece, all round.

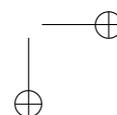
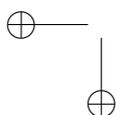
We notice here among the cats and dogs the same curious convention of neutrality that we have seen elsewhere in France and especially in Belgium. They seem to have worked out some kind of general agreement to let one another alone. They simply do not notice one another, even when they are entire strangers, and they are amusingly dignified about it. This arrangement must be of long standing, so long that nowadays the animals are born to it, for one day in Brussels we were watching a kitten just old enough to toddle around, to see what it would do when a strange dog came along. It paid no

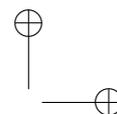




attention to the dog, and the dog respectfully walked far around the kitten. In English literature the cat and dog are a proverbial symbol of disharmony, but not in French literature, apparently; the only exception we know of is in Victor Hugo's *Misérables*, and we suspect that Hugo was writing from hearsay rather than observation. Rabelais speaks twice of the traditional enmity between cats and rats, dogs and hares, but says nothing about any enmity between dogs and cats. Another testimony appears in early Flemish paintings, where one sees cats and dogs getting along on the same terms as at present. This is an interesting phenomenon, and one would like to know how it has come about.

The hotel at which we are staying has an odd-looking mongrel hound-dog that answers to the name of Brac, perhaps short for *braconnier* (poacher, marauder) though this is only our guess. We meant to ask about this name, but the thing kept slipping our mind, and we finally got away without attending to it. Brac looks like some sort of ungainly cross between hound and pointer, with huge, heavy paws. He interests us because he is the only dog we ever saw that had not a single grain of sentiment anywhere in his make-up. He is out for revenue only, with a pagan frankness that we find wholly delightful. His frankness is not superior and disdainful, like a cat's; he puts on no airs, but on the contrary, he is easy-going, jovial, and a good mixer right up to the point of certainty that there is nothing in it for him, but strictly no further. He maintains this attitude impartially towards friend and stranger; the hotel's people are no more to him in a sentimental way than any one else; he views the whole human world without prejudice, as a potential source

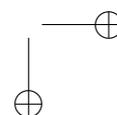
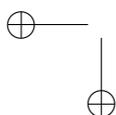


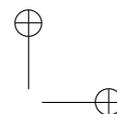


of graft. Show yourself a reasonably hopeful prospect, and he is with you, prompt to the minute; tighten up, and he marks you off to profit and loss thenceforth and forever. After this, no blandishments or promises affect him; he has to see the goods.

The self-effacing attachment of good dogs to utterly worthless people has always annoyed us, and we are unfeignedly glad to have seen the situation reversed, for once. Brac is as nearly no-account as a dog can be, and he has no more affection than a clam for any number of quite good people who like him and do well by him. We are all for Brac. Every twenty-four hours he redeems an immense amount of the quixotic jackassery that is incessantly lavished by his race on ours, and in so doing he delights our soul.

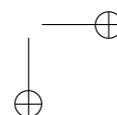
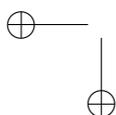
To reach the residence of “the hermit of Ste.-Radegonde, a little above Chinon,” we went up the hill towards the castle and worked eastward along a road that serves the upper terraces of cave-dwellings – about a half-mile walk from the centre of town, and pleasant. One gets a series of agreeable views, and there are interesting specimens of cave-architecture to be examined as one goes along. The hermit lived in one of these grottoes, which was subsequently converted into a chapel after being tidied up a little, perhaps. It is commodious and clean, and rather handsome; it has a couple of graceful monolith pillars that are worth looking at. For location, size and shapeliness, this grotto would do first-rate for any hermit, as far as we could see. Being a hermit seems to have been a meditative occupation, like fishing, but less laborious. We got the impression that this one must have had a pretty good time, on the whole, with the neighbours

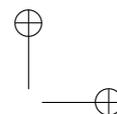
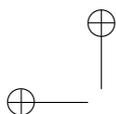




sending in enough to live on, and nothing much to do but reflect on the vanity of human endeavour. The life attracted us, as far as we understood it, for it seemed to be just in our line, so that we had some thought of buying a grotto and going in for it, but other matters kept interfering and discouraged us. This solitary brother's name was Jean; we do not know what his other name was – nobody seemed to know. He was a protégé of the pious queen Radegonde, wife of Clotaire, in the sixth century. He is dead now. There is a tomb in the grotto, said to be his. We considered it carefully, and found it very substantial, so if he was really buried there, we do not doubt that he has stayed put. From what Friar John says, one perceives that he knew human nature rather well and did not expect too much of it, so doubtless he lived in the equanimity that is born of this wisdom, and one has a comfortable feeling about him. Peace and repose be his!

Chinon was once the capital of France for a while, in the days of Charles VII, when France was a shrunken kingdom, a good share of it being in the capable and practiced grasp of the English. It was once, in fact, the capital of England as well, when Henry II lived here as sovereign over everything from the Scottish border to the Pyrénées. It has always been distinctively aristocratic, like le Mans, in contrast to towns like Tours, where the traditional tone of civilization is strictly bourgeois, and it still cherishes all the aristocratic repugnance to modern innovation. The Romans had a fortified settlement here which they called Caïno. Gregory of Tours, in his history, gives the town the name of Cainon, which Rabelais says is evidence that the city was founded by Cain, the son

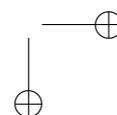
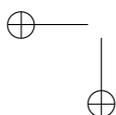


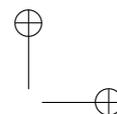


of Adam, and is therefore the oldest city in the world. He makes an entertaining and plausible story out of this; it is found in the thirty-fifth chapter of the Fifth Book.

Rabelais's family owned considerable property in Chinon, and were well-to-do. Their town house, no. 15 rue de la Lamproie, is still standing in good condition, though for the most part rebuilt in the seventeenth century; not much of the original structure remains. There are a couple of fine Renaissance mansions on the rue Voltaire that a weak tradition says they owned. Another house at no. 2 rue de la Lamproie was for a long time thought to be theirs, but this seems to have been an error. The present proprietor is making the most of the tradition, however; he is a dealer in alleged antiquities, and we saw an inscription on his second-storey window to the effect that Rabelais once fished for eels out of that window. This is possible, of course, but there is no other record of it, as far as we know, and when we noticed what the proprietor's occupation was, some instinct made us put the legend down as probably fictitious.

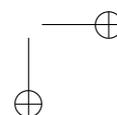
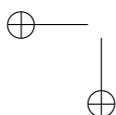
We lodged at Chinon in pleasant quarters overlooking a small public square, much animated on market-days. A prosperous blacksmith-shop fronted on the side of the square, and occasionally sent up a fine bracing stench into our open windows, when the wind was right. We were also waked up pretty regularly of a morning by the ringing of the anvil, though for some reason we did not find the sound objectionable, but rather enjoyed drowsily listening to it for a while, until we realized that we were becoming wider and wider awake and might as well turn out. There is evidence that this sound has sometimes interested poets and musicians, so perhaps it

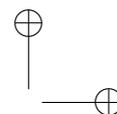
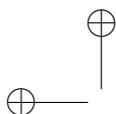




has a poetic quality, but it mostly set us to wondering how many of the younger tribe of Americans have ever seen a blacksmith-shop or heard one or smelled one. Not many, probably, and we do not know that they have missed much, but it seems strange to older people that a national institution so well and widely established should have disappeared in so short a time. We do not remember having seen one in years; yet in our early days every hamlet and cross-roads in America had one or more.

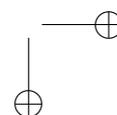
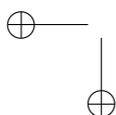
This blacksmith forged his own horseshoes out of rod-iron instead of buying the standardized article ready-made, American style. In the matter of industry, Chinon struck us as even more nearly self-sufficing than most French towns we have seen. Pretty nearly everything the inhabitants use is made on the spot, including furniture. There is a shop here that whittles out first-rate handsome furniture all by hand, and of any sort you want, apparently, and it does a good business. The Chinonese raise their own food and drink, doing their own slaughtering in a small abattoir of very up-to-date appearance on the edge of town, instead of bringing their meat in refrigerator-cars from some central stock-yards. It gave us a queer sensation to see so many people who were each capable of doing something all the way through, making a product from beginning to end, like the old Flemish painters who ground their own colours, made their own brushes, cut and prepared the wooden panels on which they painted. Americans seldom have this complete mastery of an art or craft, and one would think that pride of workmanship would suffer considerably as an effect of close specialization.

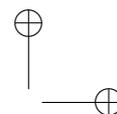




Here again, as in Tours, though by a different line of approach, we confronted evidence that the doctrine of quantity-production “ain’t what it useter be, and it never was.” In fact, one would say that if anything worth keeping is ever going to be salvaged out of our civilization, it will be through the dogged French antipathy to modern industrial ideas and practices. What the French really stand out against is the idea that man can live by *things* alone – things that are made to sell, and sold for profit – and that if he can only have never enough things, and can occupy his mind exclusively with wanting more things and getting more things, he will be really happy. The French and Americans disagree radically about that; they have an entirely different notion of what human happiness consists in. Maybe the French will come around to our way of thinking, but they show no signs of it yet, and events seem to be bearing out their view.

Rabelais has a statue here, by Hébert, which some critics find fault with, but which struck us as rather fine and impressive. Perhaps its excellent situation helps it out; it is a seated figure, on the quay by the bridge-head, facing the town. He also has a street named for him, quite improperly because it was not the one he lived on. He lived on the one called Lamprey Street, and once, a long time ago, the city authorities in a lucid moment changed its name to Rabelais Street. Rather recently, however, they changed it back to Lamprey Street, and transferred the name of Rabelais to another street that may not even have existed in his day. They showed the same grade of intelligence in naming a street for Michelet, one for Rousseau and another for Voltaire, it being highly doubtful that any of these worthies was ever

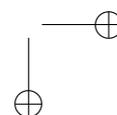
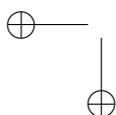


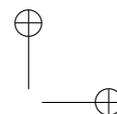
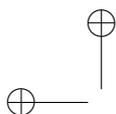


within twenty-five miles of Chinon in the whole course of his life.

Naming a street is a serious business, because a street is about the most nearly permanent of all human institutions. Buildings rise and fall, but the street is likely to stay put; the ancient cowpaths of Boston and Brooklyn are still where the cows laid them out and are likely to stay there, even though the buildings that now flank them be many times replaced. Chinon has streets that are all of eight hundred years old to a certainty, and no one knows how much older. Streets should be allowed to name themselves, as formerly they always did; a street took its name from something or somebody definitely related to the life of *that street*. No other rule was known to the Romans or to Europeans generally, down to the time of the French Revolution, and it should be restored. Until something happens of enough consequence to cause a street to name itself, let it bear a number. There is no reason to suppose that Horace Greeley ever set foot on what is now Greeley Square in New York, or that General Pershing ever lived on Pershing Square, or had an office there, or indeed that he ever so much as stopped there long enough to buy a cigar on his way to a train out of the Grand Central. If he wanted a cigar, he probably bought it inside the station.

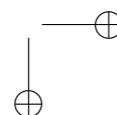
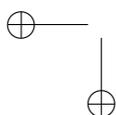
Brussels has done as well in this matter as any city that we know. The authorities there have misnamed streets in the usual footling fashion in the new parts of town, usually to commemorate some small-fry politician or horse-marine general, but they have at least had the good taste and good sense not to meddle with the historic street-names in the old town to any great extent. One

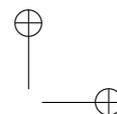




can easily see there how these streets named themselves. Sometimes the names grew up in popular speech from the groupings of business, as Butchers' Street, Chicken-market Street, Junk-dealers' Street. Sometimes they grew up out of some physical peculiarity, like One-person Street, which is so narrow that two pedestrians cannot pass without a tight squeeze, unless they are slenderer than the Brussels average. Sometimes a street took the name of some institution located there, like Capucins' Street or Hospital Street, and sometimes took the title of some dignitary who had his permanent headquarters on it, like Bishop's Street. Finally, sometimes a street took the name of some noted individual, but always one who bore some definite and distinctive relation to the life of that particular street. The boulevard Anspach, for instance, is properly named, because the burgomaster Anspach, who was the Haussmann of Brussels, laid it out.

Here in Chinon the rue Philippe de Commines is properly named, because that interesting individual built a church which fronts on it, and long after the church has gone to ruin the streetname will perpetuate his memory; unless meanwhile some crew of ignorant blackguards in the city hall should change it, as in the United States would be most likely to happen on some pretext or other. De Commines was the one great literary character besides Rabelais to be associated with Chinon, though he was not a Tourainian or even a Frenchman; he was a Flemish man, Filips van Komen, who spent so much of his life in France as a soldier and administrator that even his name became Frenchified. He began his career in the service of the duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, and of the count de Charolais, known afterwards as Charles

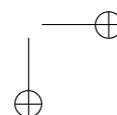
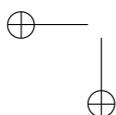


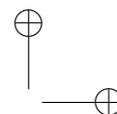


the Bold. Louis XI, who had an unerring eye for a good man, detached him and took him over, made him his confidant and kept him busy in various executive jobs of a high order; and it was in this capacity that he lived a long time at Chinon as governor.

In one interesting respect, Rabelais and de Commynes are alike. Both are known now as pre-eminently great prose writers; Rabelais, of course, as one of the very greatest, and de Commynes not really so many miles out of sight behind him. Yet neither of them thought of himself as a writer, in anything like a professional sense, or gave any more than odds-and-ends of time to writing. Writing took up a very small space in their lives; they were both extremely busy with other matters. While producing instalments of the *Gargantua* and *Pantugruel*, Rabelais's pen lay idle for periods of two years, four years, twelve years, and he turned off these instalments utterly at haphazard and in an incredibly short time. Probably de Commynes would never have written a line if the archbishop of Vienna, Angelo Cato, had not asked him to compile his personal recollections of the reign of Louis XI. The archbishop wanted these as material for a history that he thought of writing; but the history never came off, and the memoranda were not published in de Commynes's lifetime. There is no evidence that he set any great store by them or thought they were especially valuable.

De Commynes had the faculty of telling a story with such simplicity and directness as to create an illusion of the writer's sinking down completely out of sight behind the story, while the story rises up and tells itself. This makes great prose, such prose as the authors of

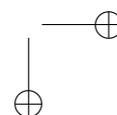
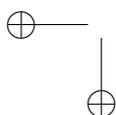


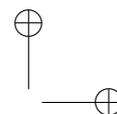


the Gospels wrote. Tourgueniev had this faculty above all modern writers. Among Americans, Richard Henry Dana had it conspicuously. There is interest for a student of style, if any such still exist, in trying to turn de Commines's cold-pressed French into a corresponding English idiom, say the monosyllabic idiom of the story of the Prodigal Son. It can be done perfectly if one knows our idiom well enough and knows how to manage it – but there is the rub. Try it on this paragraph:

Et incontinent passa oultre et tira au pays de Liège, pour ce qu'ilz avoyent desja faict la guerre par l'espace de cinq ou six mois à son père, lui estant dehors, ès pays de Nammur et Brabant; et avoyent desja lesdicts Liégeois une destrousse entre eulx. Toutesfois, à cause de l'yver, il n'y peüt pas faire grant chose. Grant quantité de villages furent brusléz et de petites destrousses faictes sur les Liégeois, et feirent une paix. Et se obligèrent lesdictes Liégeois à la tenir, sur peine d'une grant somme de deniers; et s'en retourna ledict conte en Brabant.

De Commines's pages furnish some amusement as well as edification. He recounts incidents that make one wonder whether family affection and filial piety are strictly bourgeois virtues. His narrative makes it plain that some of the fifteenth-century nobles would do up their fathers and brothers and trade off their sisters with a workaday calmness that seems extraordinary. Not that such things are not done in the bourgeois civilization of modern times, but one rather expects the nobility in any age to have been more or less above that sort of thing. Then again, de Commines's story shows some curious features of the way warfare was practiced in those days. The combatants seemed to keep a kind of union hours. An army would go out against a fortified town

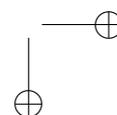
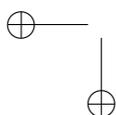


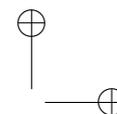
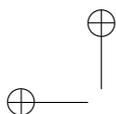


and fight the garrison, say, from ten to three; then all hands would knock off until next day, for no apparent reason, and all the evening there would be nothing but jiggling and feasting in the besiegers' camp; and one learns from other authorities that the ladies participated in these festivities. It is a commonplace that war is a dull business nowadays by comparison with what it was formerly, and one gathers from de Commynes that such is the fact.

De Commynes and Rabelais, the twin glories of Chinon, were contemporaries, though with a generation's difference, the great statesman-historian being about fifty years old when Rabelais was born. He went into retirement on the death of Charles VIII, when Rabelais was three, and died in 1512; so it is unlikely that they ever saw each other. Rabelais never speaks of him or of his period. Like many writers who live in a time of great and rapid expansion, Rabelais and his contemporaries appear to have taken little interest in France's recent past. Similarly a whole generation of post-war American writers seems not to know that anything took place in the United States before 1890, not even the writing of a book.

The most amusing thing we saw in Chinon occurred one Sunday noon, when a donkey ran amok on the principal street, the rue Voltaire, just as people were coming home from church. He pranced up and down at a great rate, stopping occasionally and flourishing his heels from side to side with amazing agility, giving us a new idea of a donkey's effective radius, we having seen but very few donkeys, and never having happened on one when he was in a mood to show off. The populace gave him a wide



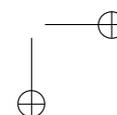
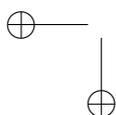


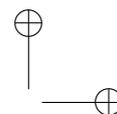
berth, but presently a large ferocious-looking woman came out of a side street brandishing a fence-picket, and the show was over. The donkey calmed down at once and trotted meekly homeward, followed by the ferocious woman with a line of language which he had evidently heard before and knew meant business. We luckily had a motion-picture camera with us, and managed to get a pretty good film of the performance.

To our notion, Chinon is the loveliest and most inviting town of all we have seen in France. Life here would grow tedious if one were idle, as it would anywhere; but if one had a job that was portable and not too exacting, one might take it there and live with it in great happiness indefinitely. One gets from Chinon's beauty a cheering sense of stability, solvency and permanence, such as is expressed in the doggerel lines that Rabelais quotes:

Chinon,
Little town,
Great renown,
On old stone
Long hath stood.
There's the Vienne, if you look down;
If you look up, there's the wood.

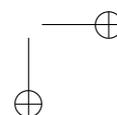
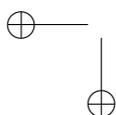
No wonder Rabelais's essentially aristocratic spirit loved Chinon. There is none of the bourgeois ideal in the grace and beauty of its line of plane-trees and poplars along the Vienne, especially as seen under a moonlit sky. It is the sort of thing that kings sought out, and that the noble-spirited of the earth may yet today rejoice in.

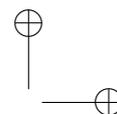
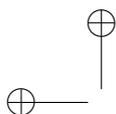




CHAPTER IV

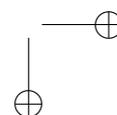
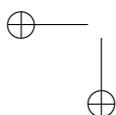
We lingered at Chinon a long time, making ourselves thoroughly at home there before starting out to see the surrounding regions which Rabelais celebrated in his narrative. Our first venture was to go out to his birthplace, his father's farm called la Devinière, where, according to him, the midsummer fleas and other vermin that infest Chinon are bred. Appearances bear out this tradition. Rabelais's sentimental associations with this farm-property seem much more intimate than those with Chinon. He speaks of it as often as he does of Chinon, and says much more about it, always in the peculiar vein of intimacy and affection in which one speaks of the place where one's earlier years were spent. Thus he particularizes, always incidentally, such rural pursuits as the sowing of hemp "at the first coming of the swallows" and picking it "when the grasshoppers begin to be a little hoarse"; the "powdering" or salting of meat for the winter; gathering nuts; the master of the house, sitting by the fireside on winter evenings, "whilst his chestnuts are a-roasting, is very serious in drawing scratches on the hearth with a stick burned at one end, wherewith

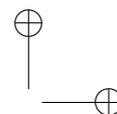




they did stir up the fire, telling to his wife and the rest of the family pleasant old stories and tales of former times.” Incidentally, too, he drops in little identification-marks of the farm’s geography, such as “going out towards the old walnut-tree,” the cart made in the cooper-shop of Jan Denio, the “broad highway” leading to Lerné, the “willow-grove” at the foot of the farm-property. These particularities, taken with the invariable tone of his references to la Devinière, are perhaps the best support of the very old tradition that he was born there rather than in his father’s town-house at Chinon. Perhaps there is some significance of the kind in the further fact that in his narrative he glorifies la Devinière into a royal palace for Grangousier, and has Gargantua born on the property.

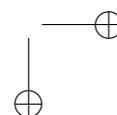
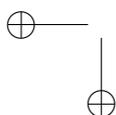
To find one’s way to la Devinière from Chinon – about a six-mile walk there and back – all one needs do is to carry a copy of Rabelais along and follow the route that Gargantua took when he went to help his father fight Picrochole in the latter’s stronghold at la Roche-Clermault. You cross the river and keep on the straight broad road to Parilly, about three-quarters of a mile. On the way, in the swamp to the right, you see some remains of the ancient Nunnery Bridge which Gargantua crossed, so called because the tolls were a perquisite of the nunnery of Fontevrault; and on the left you pass “the winepress of Billouard” which marked the limit of Captain Tripet’s depredations. The winepress is still there, still in commission under the same name, and still apparently doing a good business. At Parilly you turn to the right, on the road through the Woods of Vède, cross the Miller’s Bridge and keep on about a quarter of a mile to la Devinière.

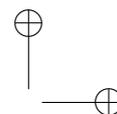
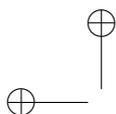




The farm-buildings of la Devinière lie a little distance back from the highway. We heard that the property is about to be purchased by the State and preserved as a “historical monument,” which is a good thing and should have been done long ago. We found it in private hands, and guarded by a pair of vicious and earnest-minded dogs. A stout peasant girl restrained them while we explained our errand, and then somehow managed to impound them until we got off the premises, but not before we were thoroughly well scared. The dogs’ commotion served as a general roll-call which brought all the farm-people swarming out in response, but when they found nothing more formidable than a brace of lowly aliens, wearing the jim-crow raiment of foreign lands and inquiring about Rabelais, they courteously convoyed us all over the property and made us free of every object that interested us.

The farm-house is a small two-storey building, solid as Gibraltar, and as good as the day it was built, done in the excellent domestic rural architecture of the fifteenth century, with the outside stairway that prevails hereabouts in buildings of this class. The upper room, fronting “the broad highway” is supposed to be the one in which the great genius was born. From its window one can overlook practically the whole stage-setting of the most interesting war in human history, the Great Picrocholine War described in the First Book. In almost no time at all the story of every other war fades into the mauve monochrome of factual history; the story of this one will never fade, its colours will never lose a shade of their original brilliance, the fascination of its sequences will never abate a jot of its power. The last war ended



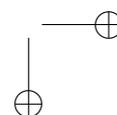
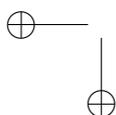


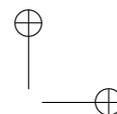
but a dozen years ago; yet what interest is there today in reading the muster-roll of its forces, comparable with that which one has in reading of Picrochole's assemblage? Few of us, precious few, can recall off-hand the name of a single division-commander in the World War, but those of Picrochole's army are as nearly immortal as names can be:

My lord Shagrag was appointed to command the vanguard, wherein were numbered sixteen thousand and fourteen harquebusiers together with thirty thousand and eleven volunteers. The great Touchfaucet, master of the horse, had charge of the ordnance. . . . The rear-guard was committed to the duke of Scrapegood. . . . Thus being hastily equipped, before they would set forward they sent three hundred light horsemen under the conduct of Captain Swillwind, to discover the country.

It seems highly probable that in this story Rabelais, for the most part at least, is simply recalling and elaborating the constructions of his childhood's fancy. During his boyhood there was a great deal of war going on. When he was eight years old, Louis XII, "the Father of the People," was defeated by the Spaniards on the Garigliano. In the next six years there was busy preparation for war with Venice, and when the Venetians were defeated at Agnadello in 1509, Rabelais was but fourteen. His early days were full of war, full of talk about war, and it would be natural, surely, for an imaginative child standing at this second-storey window with this landscape spread before him, to fill the whole scene up with soldiery.

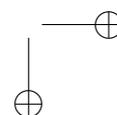
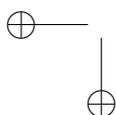
Amateurs of Rabelais may perceive too – we think we are not exploiting a mare's-nest – that the grotesque proportions of the Picrocholine War suggest fancies that are peculiarly childlike. Those of us who were born in a

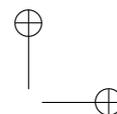




cottage will remember that its cramped quarters seemed really spacious, and two or three city blocks seemed a great distance. Recalling one's early impressions of space and time, when one reads the story of the Picrocholine War one is struck by its close correspondence with a child's view of his surroundings. Picrocholine sets out from Lerné, for instance, a village of twelve hundred people, and marches three miles east to Seully with an army whose shock-troops alone number forty-six thousand, with nine hundred pieces of artillery. Grangousier's regular army "which he maintained at his ordinary garrison towns of la Devinière, Chavigny, of Gravot and of Quinquenais," numbered some eighty thousand. These four places were, as they are now, nothing but farms; three of them, perhaps all four, the property of the Rabelais family. One would have hard work to scrape up a hundred people out of the lot. Exaggerations like these seem – to us, at least – to have a specifically childlike quality; there is a bit of their flavour in the memory of one's own childhood and its fancies. It may be worth remarking, too, that there is no other terrain in the whole Chinonais that lends itself to such fancies so handily as the one that Rabelais surveyed in his boyhood from the window of his upper room.

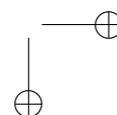
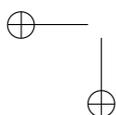
Some of the stone steps of the old house's outdoor stairway are footworn to a depth of three or four inches. Nothing else about the place gave us such a striking impression of great age as these marks made by five centuries' impact of human feet. Aside from the house, we saw the usual farm buildings, looking them over rather circumspectly, not knowing when more dogs might appear. We saw a pigeon-house, pretty densely populated

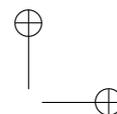




and in evident need of being hoed out and dusted up a little after centuries of hard use; also some cellars cut into the rock. The most picturesque feature of the place is the old well. It is very charming, and admirably situated in the direct line of seepage from the barnyard, so that from the artist's point of view it is beyond complaint or cavil. Probably it could supply enough water for cooking, with sometimes maybe a little over for shaving or baptizing, but we could not make our best estimate run much beyond that. However, we reflected that no more was really needed; hardly any for beverage purposes, and as for baths, nobody on the premises since Rabelais's day, or before, had ever contemplated taking one. As a national practice, water is usually mixed with wine for drinking, but very discreetly. Wine is supposed to kill off the water's bacterial content, but we regard this as improbable, and believe that the remarkable native immunity from zymotic diseases is due rather to induration. One of our French acquaintances told us that his countrymen never picked up typhoid or colitis from raw substances like cress or lettuce, because the wine they drank with them was antiseptic. We took no stock in this, believing rather that the last Frenchman susceptible to anything of the kind died three hundred years ago.

Building up this power of resistance is doubtless a good thing in the long-run, even though it be a little rough on the weak brethren who perish in the process. We have sometimes thought that Americans protect themselves too much in the way of over-sanitation. On reflection, though, we are not so sure. Perhaps our fellow-citizens are not so much impressed by the huge volume of sales-talk on the subject as we think they are. In Paris the



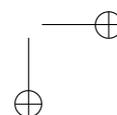
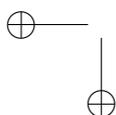


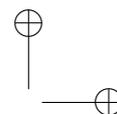
other day, we ran across a group of three or four old acquaintances, among them Professor C. of Columbia – he might not thank us for publishing his views, so we do not mention his name – who gave us something of a set-back when we introduced this topic. We had just encountered some very filthy conditions where such should not exist, and we spoke our minds about them, wondering why France generally and Paris in particular should have such a great attraction for Americans in the mass, “for,” we said, “whatever else one may say about them, Americans are a clean people.”

We paused with this peroration, expecting an outburst of patriotic applause, but none came. Instead, Professor C., who had been lolling in his chair with his eyes closed during our harangue, dropped a peculiarly cold icicle down the back of our neck with the question:

“Are you quite sure of that?”

It startled the breath out of us, for we had never regarded the point as debatable. Professor C. then gave us what the early Methodists called a “sarchin’ discourse” on the observations he had made not only in the South and the Mississippi Valley, but in more familiar regions; not only in the darker districts of New York City (where it appears there are something like half a million “flats” or apartment-dwellings with only a primitive type of sanitation) but in more pretentious quarters given over to the younger generation of housekeepers whose practices are sketchy and sluttish. These, he said, simply do not put in time and interest enough to do more than “get by” on the external appearance of decent housekeeping, and their intimate surroundings are filthy and squalid, quite as much so as one finds in the corresponding quarters

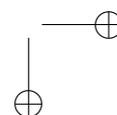
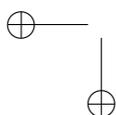


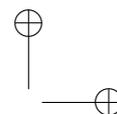


of Paris. He ended his discourse in an epigrammatic vein. “The Germans,” he said, “keep things clean; the Dutch scrub them clean; and the French wipe them off – sometimes – and I think you will find that this last pretty well fits the new generation of American housekeepers, too.”

Thus was our jingoism rebuked, and we took what comfort we could out of the thought that perhaps Americans were still able to stand off a microbe or two in the struggle for existence. An acquaintance of ours in Luxembourg once told us that in this matter the Grand Duchy represented the Aristotelian doctrine of *in medio jacet virtus*. “The French are very dirty,” he said, “and the Germans are very clean. We are just between the two. We like to keep clean, but we don’t like to have the police after us all the time.” Probably that is the ideal to strive towards, because it economizes the saving grace of cussedness. When we are in squalid New York, we are always ostentatiously washing and brushing up, and ransacking our vocabulary for new and appropriate words wherewith to reflect on the incredible degradation of the inhabitants. In hygienic California, on the other hand, we are always looking for the chance to throw cigarette-butts and rubbish around and surreptitiously spit on the floor. These efforts to keep up appearances waste a lot of energy, and there is solid comfort in settling down in Luxembourg where there is no temptation to put on airs either way.

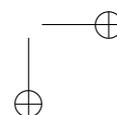
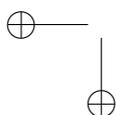
Walking about six hundred yards straight south of the Devinière farmhouse, on a path that crosses the “broad highway” and also crosses a parallel highway beyond a strip of meadow, one comes to a circular growth of very

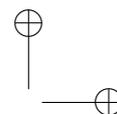




old willows, which forms a sort of natural amphitheatre, something like forty or fifty yards in diameter. This is in all probability “the willow-grove” where Grangousier and his jovial neighbours “all went tag-rag together” after their huge meal of tripes, and settled themselves for the fine drinking-bout described in the fifth chapter of the First Book. There is no other willow-grove on the premises, and this one looks sufficiently ancient; its conformation also answers the description. Whether the trees are actually the same ones as of old is another matter. We do not know what a willow’s age-limit is, but we have instinctive doubts of its running as high as four hundred years. Still, there seems nothing against the conjecture that the trees which were there in Rabelais’s time reproduced themselves much as they stood. Certainly the trees that are there now are very old; and the grove is on a little brook which would provide water enough to keep willows in a flourishing state to the natural end of their days, whenever that would be. Gargantua was born in this grove, his mother reposing “upon the grass, under the willows.” It does not appear that this event interrupted the festivities, and since he was born by way of his mother’s left ear there seems no great impropriety in the accouchement being carried on more or less in public.

We wandered on from la Devinière to Seully, the nearest village, lying about eight hundred yards westward. On the way we passed by the vineyard that still bears the name of the *clos Rabelais*. Its wine is said to be good, but not all that is offered under its name is genuine, unfortunately. We did not think much of the sample we tried, which we were quite sure was bogus and palmed

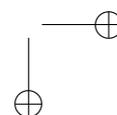
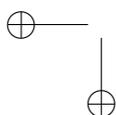


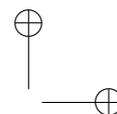


off on us because of our evident interest in the name. At Seully one can see what little is left of the famous abbey that sheltered one of the greatest characters ever created by literary genius, Friar John of the Funnels. There is not much: the vaulting of a roof, a church wall, some cellars, a fragment of the cloister. When one sees the devastation wrought by French revolutionists and French Protestants on buildings like these, one wonders whether these social movements were productive of enough good to be worth the price. One feels especially resentful of this abbey's destruction, for it was here, no doubt, that Rabelais laid the foundation of his fine scholarship, and his associations with it were many and intimate. One can still see the abbey's vineyard, or rather its site, where Friar John routed Picrochole's marauding soldiery, single-handed; an old map of the abbey's property shows its location, and one can easily make it out. Perhaps the character of Friar John was to some extent drawn from life. He may have had a type or counterpart in some monk whom Rabelais knew at Seully in his boyhood, and who may have dusted his jacket properly for stealing grapes in the vineyard. If so, that monk was worth knowing.

There was then in the abbey a claustral monk called Friar John of the Funnels, young, gallant, frisk, lusty, nimble, quick, active, bold, adventurous, resolute, tall, lean, wide-mouthed, long-nosed, a rare mumblor of matins, unbridler of masses and runner-over of vigils; and to conclude summarily in a word, a right monk, if ever there were any, since the monking world monked a monkery.

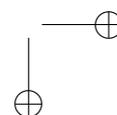
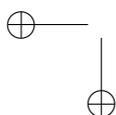
It is pretty hard to find in any literature a piece of character-description as vivid, forceful and readable as that.

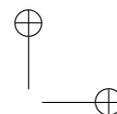
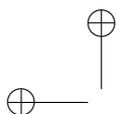




The church at Seuilly, in which Rabelais was baptized, has survived intact, without “restoration” or noticeable replacement. It has no other association of more than local interest, as far as we know, and is in itself a rather unpretending structure, remarkable only for its longevity. Churches last longer than most structures; and in our wanderings around the Chinonais we were impressed by the longevity of another type of structure, the mill. The region is dotted with mills. Take a sixteenth-century district-map, and where you find a mill noted on it you will find a mill to-day, very likely the same one. We are not clear about the reasons why mills have so uncommonly long a lease of life, or why if one gives out it should be invariably rebuilt on the same spot. Cemeteries share this latter peculiarity, in a sense; that is, a piece of land used as a cemetery in times almost prehistoric is still so used; exceptions to this rule are infrequent – we know of none. There are cemeteries in France that have passed from one set of pagan hands to another, then to another, then into Christian hands, but always remain cemeteries.

We walked back to Chinon over “the bridge at the mill” beside the ford of Vède, where Picrochole’s expeditionary forces were “with great horror drowned.” The Vède is a sluggish brook about two yards wide – hardly that – and perhaps as much as two feet deep in places. By very close damming it can be induced to turn a mill, after a fashion, and there is still a mill there, though not the original one. It is a replacement, and the miller’s house is evidently new as well; it is not the one where Ulrich Gallet stopped to ask the miller for news of Picrochole’s progress, though it stands on the same site. The original

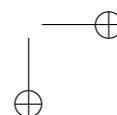
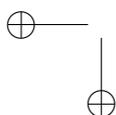


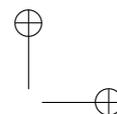


miller has also been replaced; we did not see the new one. There are half a dozen mills along the length of this little stream, and how they all get water-power enough out of it to run themselves is more than one can see. In respect of economy – economy that gets results, Satan only knows how – France is a land of unending miracle.

A day or so after this excursion we covered the same ground again in order to explore la Roche-Clermault and to push on past Seully to Lerné, which was Picrochole’s capital and royal residence. La Roche-Clermault lies about a mile from la Devinière eastward. In Rabelais’s time it had on its hill a château which an old print shows as a fairly stout stronghold; and it was this that Picrochole is said to have seized and fortified against the siege of Grangousier’s army. He was dislodged and overcome after an attack by an assaulting party led by Friar John, which “with great diligence crossed the marsh and valiantly got up to the top of the green hillock, even to the highway which leads to Loudun” to move on Picrochole from the rear. The aspect of this terrain has not changed since that day; there is hardly a building, if any, on the “green hillock” that was not there then; and the Loudun highway still keeps the same course.

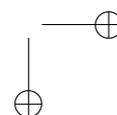
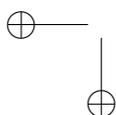
Picrochole’s stronghold, however, has disappeared – by what fate we did not learn – though there are fragments of the old structure remaining in the walls surrounding the seventeenth-century manor that replaced it, and doubtless others are worked into the present outbuildings here and there. We went away, passed by la Devinière and Seully, gaining a good view of the fine château of Coudray, and reached Lerné. It interested us to observe that the stretch of countryside commanded by the upper

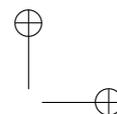
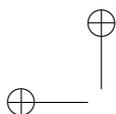




window of la Devinière – the stretch between la Roche-Clermault and Seully – is the only one in the region that has any natural loveliness worth speaking of. From Seully to Lerné is a dull walk, and there is nothing very sightly from la Roche-Clermault to Chinon. The Rabelais family picked the prize panorama of the whole Chinonais when they got la Devinière. Either they had an eye for beauty or were lucky, or both. Down by Candes and Montsoreau, where the Vienne flows into the Loire, there is another sightly spot, of very small extent, and the records show that Chavigny, which commands a good view of it, was also owned by them.

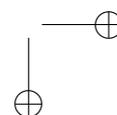
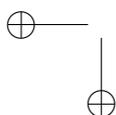
There is no reason for lingering in Lerné. One goes there merely to give the town a kindly glance by way of tribute to the imperishable memory of the cake-bakers, subjects of King Picrochole, who brought on the Great Picrocholine War by falling foul of Grangousier’s shepherds. The making of *fouaces*, a sort of leathery waffle, was in fact a considerable industry at Lerné, but it is dead now, and from our experience with *fouaces* we should say it is no great loss. Perhaps good ones are still made somewhere and we were merely unlucky, but the fact is that though we have sampled them once or twice out of sentiment, we never had any that we thought were fit for a dog to eat, and the memory of them makes us glad that Picrochole’s forces got the worst of it in the war. Rabelais says “it is a celestial food to eat for breakfast hot fresh *fouaces* with grapes,” and so it may have been in his time, but henceforth any one may have our share. Curiously, there is to this day a good deal of rivalry and bad blood between these two neighbouring villages of Lerné and Seully, as no doubt there was in

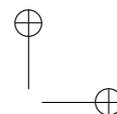




Rabelais's time; these communal antipathies soon take on the character of a tradition and seldom die. Therefore when Picrochole's soldiers plundered and ravaged Seully, they were behaving in character; the villagers of Lerné would like nothing better than to duplicate that feat to-day.

On another morning we set out from Chinon by motor upriver to Panzoult, near Croulay, to visit the grotto of the sibyl whom Panurge consulted on the question whether he should marry, and whether, if he did marry, his wife would be faithful to him. The story of this enterprise is told in the seventeenth chapter of the Third Book. We went a mile or so out of the direct way in order to reach Cravant, a little above Panzoult, where we stopped by a wayside church that is said to run back to Charlemagne's period; it is now out of use, but by hunting up a caretaker near by one may get inside and look it over. Whether it is worth one's while to do this seemed doubtful at first, because the building is not associated with anybody or anything of interest, as far as we could find out. We expected to find it a "picturesque ruin," and ruins *qua* ruins have long ceased to fascinate us; we have seen acres of them that bore a romance which is merely synthetic, and we do not care if we never see another. This church was not a ruin, however; it was in good shape, and afforded a rewarding architectural study, as far as it went, which was not very far, so we invested a few minutes in it as a purely speculative venture. If the intending tourist is interested to see how they put up buildings of this sort in early Carlovingian times, he may perhaps be safely counselled to do likewise.

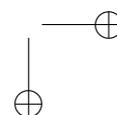
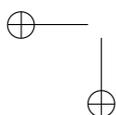


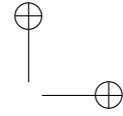
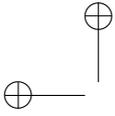


At Panzoult we found the sibyl's grotto by aid of a kindly tousled peasant wench who gave us directions and then went along to see that we followed them. It is very neat and clean, and untenanted at present; quite the regular thing in grottoes, with nothing but its reputation to distinguish it from innumerable others. Cut into a hillside in the regular way, it commands a view of some peaceful meadows, pleasant but likely to grow a trifle monotonous if looked at long enough. The sibyl's tradition survives unimpaired along the countryside. Rabelais says, however, that she lived in a thatched cottage, not in a grotto, so the story of her residence in this cave may have been cooked up in the neighbourhood for tourist consumption. Still, native visitors seldom come here, and foreigners never do; hence the motive of that would not be very clear. On thinking it all over, our guess was that the old lady may have had a thatched lean-to in front of her grotto, or else that she may have moved.

We drove on up the river, remarking that the landscape above Chinon is as uninspiring as the landscape below it. We decided that to make the gullible and toothsome "prospect" take stock in the beauty of the Touraine, one should be careful not to let him stray away from the environs of Chinon and la Devinière. We were now headed for l'Isle-Bouchard, about four miles beyond Panzoult, this being the place where Picrochole disappeared from history. We had already joined his trail at Rivière, where in his ignominious flight from defeat he killed the horse that had stumbled under him.

Then, not finding any other whereon to remount, he was about to have taken an ass at the mill that was thereby. But the





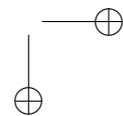
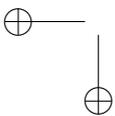
miller's men did so baste his bones and so soundly bethwacked him that they made him both black and blue with strokes, then stripping him of all his clothes, gave him a scurvy old canvas jacket wherewith to cover his nakedness.

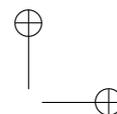
In passing through Rivière we noticed that the mill is still there. Rabelais records a report that after leaving l'Isle-Bouchard, Picrochole made his way northward and crossed the Indre at Port-Huault, near Azay-le-Rideau.

What is become of him since, we can not certainly tell; yet was I told that he is now a porter at Lyon, as testy and choleric as ever.

His fate has a special interest for these post-war days when so many of the erstwhile great are driving taxicabs and running elevators. But we bade farewell to Picrochole's memory at l'Isle-Bouchard, content not to follow him further; it is always painful to see the sons of the *ancien régime* in reduced circumstances.

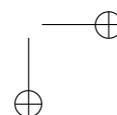
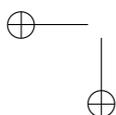
There is an eleventh-century church at l'Isle-Bouchard, also some ruins of the priory of St. Leonard. These remains are enough to show that the structure must have been stunning fine, and one curses anew the ignorant iconoclasm that destroyed it. In fact, one has to do so much cursing of revolutionists and Protestants on one's travels through France that one regrets not having been properly trained for the job. Only a person brought up in the goodly discipline of the towpath or the quarter-deck could do justice to these reprobate vandals. One comes to the conclusion that organized Christianity, by whatever side you take it, Protestant or Catholic, is a muddled and spotty affair. In Rabelais's day, when the Catholics were

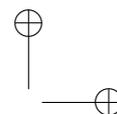




in the saddle, the abbeys and monasteries owned one-fifth of the land of France. A map of the land-holdings of the abbey of Seuilly shows it as practically the proprietor of all out-doors in the Chinonais. Like all monopolists, the Catholics squeezed too hard and did not know when to ease off. The squeezed and exploited masses came to look on the magnificent church establishments as symbols of oppression, which was doubtless natural enough as human nature goes, while Protestantism regarded them as nurseries of idolatry; and there you had just the right combination of ignorant exasperation and ignorant fanaticism to deprive the world of any object of mere beauty that lay in its path. A thoughtful traveller coming out of France is in no frame of mind to believe that organized Christianity, whether Catholic or Protestant, is worth its keep.

The secularizing of old churches, abbeys, convents and the like sometimes leads to queer anomalies. Over in Mainz three years ago we spent an evening in a fine prosperous beer-hall called the Café of the Holy Ghost. The name attracted us in the first instance, and we went in to find out about it. The place was originally a convent and had been secularized or “disaffected,” as the French say – which is a fine word for it; we like that word in this connexion, for some reason – and the minions of Gambrinus promptly took it over. They had the good sense to let the building stay intact, and the general effect is interesting; also one can see that it is probably more cheerful now than it was under its original auspices. The only structural change that the church authorities insisted on when the building was “disaffected” was that the stained-glass windows should be removed. This seems

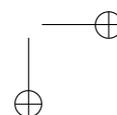
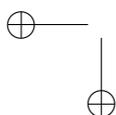


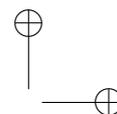


a strange proviso; maybe the glass was good, and the far-sighted authorities knew of a place where it would come handy.

Here in l'Isle-Bouchard the remains of a ruined abbey, or some such sort of church edifice, have been made over into a saw-mill. We went to see it, and were struck by the carefulness with which everything significant in its architecture had been preserved. The saw-mill seemed to be running half-time when we arrived, and there were several workmen around with nothing to do. They took us over the place, showed us everything, and seemed no end proud of the ingenuity displayed in this work of salvage. They laid particular stress on the way a rear wall had been extended – and it was ingenious – without disturbing the original masonry and ornamentation. Inside the mill is an exquisitely sculptured altar-base. It stands in a most inconvenient place for the sawyers who have to walk around it in their work, and it must reduce efficiency, but they have not only let it stay in its place, but have built a strong grill around it for protection, thus making it still more of an obstacle to industrial progress. We determined to patronize these sawyers when we have anything in their line that needs doing, for we believe they are people of integrity and high character who would behave honourably towards their customers.

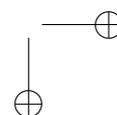
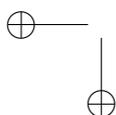
Speaking of the secularization of church property, we notice that the Catholic Church in Western Europe has very little of the Protestant world's precisianism about its church buildings, even when they are not "disaffected." People and dogs alike make themselves at home in them in an informal way, rather pleasant to behold. Some years ago at Gastein we saw a little church with its foun-

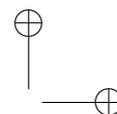




dations built into a hillside, which gave it a high cellar, with double doors opening directly on a road. The doors happened to be open one day when we were passing by, and we observed that the cellar was bung-full of wine-casks. Probably it had been rented out for storage; rented for immoral purposes, most of our Protestant fellow-countrymen would say. In certain directions the Catholic Church has learned not to put too extravagant expectations on human nature, and to this extent it has given itself leverage on great masses of the people. If it came out uncompromisingly against economic exploitation, and stuck to its guns, it would soon be the only church in Christendom.

We returned to our pleasant quarters overlooking the blacksmith's shop at Chinon, and spent the week-end mostly in dislodging such fleas as we had acquired from the countryside, and nursing their bites. Our bodies had by this time become a flea-pasture, and our garments were a sanctuary and breeding-ground. Each of us carried the beginnings of a lordly dynasty. They were ravenous, too, and gave us no rest. We sought help from the local druggist, and found that he had gone fishing; his wife said he went fishing almost every day in summer when the weather was right. We wondered what became of people with urgent prescriptions to be filled, but some instinct suggested that we had better not inquire. Probably they waited until he got back, this being the logical French solution of such problems, doubtless satisfactory in nine cases out of ten, maybe more. The lady said she thought she might find something to cool down our flea-bites, and after much rummaging produced it. It had a pleasant smell, but was otherwise unsatisfactory. However, we

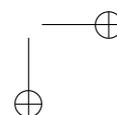
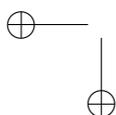


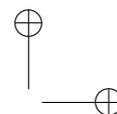


managed to get rid of the fleas in the course of the day, and nature shortly mollified the bites, leaving us in good condition for the next invoice.

Having explored up-river to l'Isle-Bouchard, we decided next to go down the Vienne as far as the Loire, to see Montsoreau and Candes, then cross the river to look at the Rabelais family's property of Chavigny, and go back to Chinon by the road on the Vienne's right bank. On the way down we made a detour to Fontevrault to see the celebrated abbey. The government now uses this establishment for a prison, which we took as evidence that it had been "disaffected." Visitors are still allowed to go over the historic portions of the abbey, which have lately been overhauled and more or less cleaned up for public inspection. Richard the Lion-hearted was buried there, also Henry II of England, and their tombs are on exhibition with those of Henry's queen Eleanor, and Isabelle of Angouleme. These tombs were badly knocked about when the abbey was rifled by Protestant or revolutionary vandalism, so there is some uncertainty about their actual occupancy. However, they were officially "identified" about twenty years ago; hence if the royal tenants are not reposing in them, they ought to be.

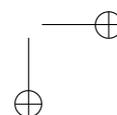
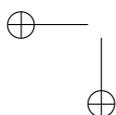
Our inquiries about these matters were superficial, for our interest lay elsewhere. Fontevrault was in Rabelais's day the residence of two men of importance in local history, and one of them important to amateurs of Rabelais throughout the ages, for it is to his activities that the literary world is in debt for the great story of the Picrocholine War. This was Gaucher de Ste.-Marthe, physician to the nuns of the convent; he bore the title of lord of Lerné. He was an enterprising individual and

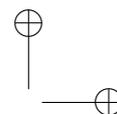




considerably “on the make,” and it occurred to his thrifty mind to rig up a fish-weir on the Loire, above Saumur, thus obstructing navigation. The Loire boatmen went to court about it, retaining Antoine Rabelais, Francis Rabelais’s father, who was the most prominent lawyer in the district, to push their case. Ste.-Marthe managed to stand the thing off for several years, but finally lost; and meanwhile the feeling between his family and that of Antoine Rabelais had reached something like the proportions of a feud. Francis Rabelais came home for a visit while the case was on; he was writing the First Book at the time, and it is quite reasonably supposed that this imbroglio struck him by its humorous side and gave him the idea of the Picrocholine War.

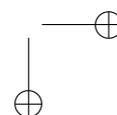
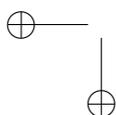
The other man was a monk of Fontevrault named de Puy-Herbault. The abbey, like several others in France (notably one of the very earliest, situated at Poitiers) was a double-barrelled affair, somewhat like our co-educational schools, one side for monks and the other for nuns, and both under the same petticoat government. The abbess was the head of the whole institution, as was also not uncommon; we think this might be a point for our feminists to look into. This Puy-Herbault was death on immoral literature; he seems to have been an earlier Anthony Cornstock by temperament, with the sort of mind that needs to have a little chloride of lime dusted around in it every now and then. Not enjoying Comstock’s facilities for expressing his peculiar notions, he wrote a book condemning practically the whole kit and boiling of French romance, even including the *Romance of the Rose*, and the tales of Lancelot du Lac, Arthur, and Holger the Dane. In dealing with Rabelais, naturally, he

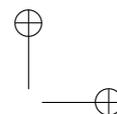




outdid himself; not only did he attack his works and his doctrine of Pantagruelism, but his personal morals and character as well. Thus Puy-Herbault's book started the tradition which has come down to the present day, and is still widely accepted, that Rabelais was a low-lived drunken scoundrel, given over to the most degrading vices, a profligate fellow who knew neither the fear of God nor any decent respect for man. It seems odd that such a yarn as this could ever have been swallowed by anybody who had read Rabelais's works however inattentively, but it has been swallowed by whole generations; for verily the human gullet yawns wide for slanders, and the human craw's capacity for them is without limit.

We saw the great hall at Fontevrault, with the raised dais at one end where the abbess's high table stood. She ate her meals there in company with her guests and principal subordinates, while the rank and file of the establishment sat below the salt. We had no trouble about imagining her as a proud and stately old girl, also probably an experienced and capable citizen, and we revered her memory accordingly. This abbey's population, especially on the women's side, was recruited largely from the aristocracy. It was doubtless on this account that the female inmates had the curious privilege of confessing their sins to one another or to the abbess; after which a priest was called in to administer penance or absolution "sight unseen," as it were, or as a sort of shotgun prescription, not knowing just what it was for. The abbess told him what she thought would be about right, and he took her word for it. Rabelais tells a first-rate story about this in the thirty-fourth chapter of the Third Book, concealing the name of the abbey





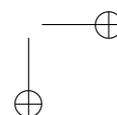
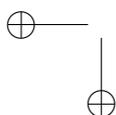
under a fictitious and ribald title, but the reference is to Fontevrault. He makes Pope John XXII the hero of the story, which is not quite historical, since John XXII seldom went anywhere out of Avignon, and never as far as Fontevrault. He had the reputation of being a mean fellow, however, always up to playing ingenious low tricks on people, and this may have led Rabelais to saddle the story on him.

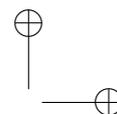
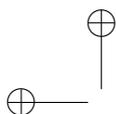
The architecture of Fontevrault is fine and impressive. The French government is doing a commendable piece of work on its restoration, going about it with much more intelligence and restraint than has been displayed on earlier jobs; those done by Viollet-le-Duc, for instance. On the evidence offered, one hardly knows whether Protestant demolitions or Viollet-le-Duc's restorations have been the more calamitous. One strange architectural feature of Fontevrault is a conical tower, supposed to have been the abbey's kitchen. It looks like a Dutch pine-apple cheese or an old-fashioned bee-hive, and is not much of an ornament, but it has the interest of making one wonder who devised it, and why.

Leaving Fontevrault, we went on to Candes and Montsoreau. An old local saying runs:

Between Candes and Montsoreau
There shall feed nor calf nor cow.

The import of this is that the two villages are so close together that there is not room enough between them to graze a calf which is true. Rabelais mentions this saying in the nineteenth chapter of the Fourth Book, where Panurge, terrified by a storm at sea, vows to St. Nicholas that "if you set me ashore out of this danger, I will build

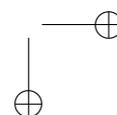
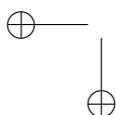


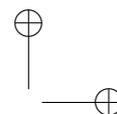


you a fine large little chapel or two, between Candes and Montsoreau, where neither cow nor calf shall feed.” Panurge admits afterwards that he was trying to rook the good saint, and he may have succeeded, for as the story runs, he got safe to land. St. Nicholas did at one time have a chapel in his honour at Montsoreau, but it was none of Panurge’s building.

Montsoreau commands the confluence of the Vienne and Loire. It was of some importance as a port of entry and was well fortified. The château of the lords of Montsoreau stands on the riverside, an unusual situation, most of these structures being located on high ground for prudential reasons. In those spacious days there was usually somebody biding his chance to attack them, hence the more nearly inaccessible they were, the better the owners slept at night. This château was built about the middle of the fifteenth century for the noble family of de Chambes, and remained in its possession for a couple of centuries.

What interested us especially here was that our old friend Philippe de Commines married into this family. There was a touch of humour in the incident. Jean de Chambes, who built the château, had served Louis XI in a distinguished way. This did not make Louis hesitate about doing him up in the matter of some property-rights which were coming to his daughter Colette’s husband; Louis never let anything like gratitude stand in the way of his general policy of wiping out feudal holdings. Jean went to law about it, but died before getting judgment, and the king presently compounded the affair with a pension to Colette. Then in a short time, apparently



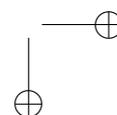
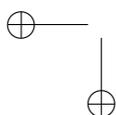


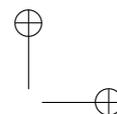
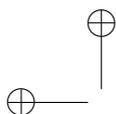
wishing to do the right thing, he suggested the brilliant match with de Commines for Colette's sister H el ene.

This was highly acceptable. Louis came down to Montsoreau to attend the wedding, and while there he dropped the hint that it might be a good thing to give H el ene, as a dowry, her father's rights in a litigation that was going on over the feudal property of Argenton. This also was acceptable. H el ene's father was glad to offload this sort of dowry on a son-in-law, somewhat as a modern father might be glad to give his daughter a batch of second mortgages as a marriage-portion, if he could get the bridegroom to stand for it. De Commines already owned the property of Talmont, next to Argenton, so he was willing to take the chance of some day being able to combine the two. But he was let in; he died and went to glory before ever that lawsuit budged a peg. History does not say whether he was happy enough with H el ene to make up for her being a liability in the sense in which French marriages are arranged. Let us hope she was winsome and capable; one would hate to think of such a man as de Commines tempted ever to regard his wife in the light of a protested draft.

One sometimes suspects that American law-suits drag unnecessarily, but this litigation over Argenton lasted two hundred and seventy years. We think this is probably a record. We also think that de Commines was a pretty intrepid fellow to take a chance of its ending in his lifetime.

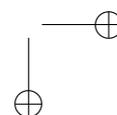
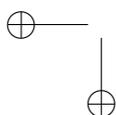
We crossed the river, passed by Chavigny and looked at it, finding it an unpretentious stretch of pleasant farmland with a few houses done in the extremely good style of domestic rural architecture prevailing in the region;

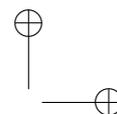




pointed roofs of excellent proportion to the height of the walls, and well-proportioned graceful outdoor staircases, as at la Devinière. In fact, la Devinière is a standard sample of these dwellings; when one has seen it one has seen them all, though this is not to say that one gets tired of looking at them, for the more of them one sees the more one likes them. Chavigny was the “noble” property of the Rabelais family; it came in by marriage, Francis Rabelais’s grandmother, Andrée Pavin, being daughter and heiress of “the lord of that estate.” It was thus, usually, that the nobility was recruited from the peasantry; a peasant family would work its way into the status of *bourgeois* or town-dweller, and then by marriage or purchase pick up a “noble” estate, and there they were. The Rabelais family displayed a coat-of-arms in the seventeenth century: argent, with three rabbits sable, each placed on a small sinople background, and a prior’s staff pale behind the shield. We do not know what all that means, and we never saw the coat-of-arms. We are lifting the description, however, from responsible authorities, and doubt not that it is accurate.

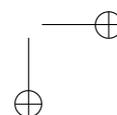
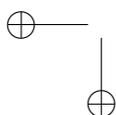
So ended our excursions over the Chinonais – over what Rabelais two or three times calls affectionately his “cow-country.” As we counted up the number of little villages we had seen, each for us so rich in associations, we realized the value of pilgrimages, and the wisdom of religious bodies in laying so much stress on them. No amount of reading, study or picture-gazing can produce the effect on the spirit that contact with reality produces. La Devinière, Seuilly, Lerné, Panzoult, Parilly, Gravot, la Roche-Clermault, Pontille and Bréhémond, where the cows who supplied milk for the infant Gargantua were

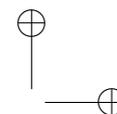




pastured – reading never brought us the full realization that all these places are actually *there*, and that they remain almost precisely as they were when Rabelais saw them. The Chinonais seems to have changed less in four centuries than any part of France that we have seen. Every friend of Rabelais should come here, and come with plenty of time before him to wander over the region slowly, as we have done, and cover it completely. It is a lovely and profound experience, and its joy will remain with him as long as he lives. No doubt just such an effect is produced on the hordes of the faithful who crowd the trains to Lourdes as soon as the first warm days come on; or in earlier times, on those who travelled as best they could over the longer “pilgrim trail” that led beyond the Pyrénées into Spain, to Compostella. One is impressed by the wisdom of a Church that is aware of the spiritual power liberated by pilgrimages, and that so manages matters as to get the benefit of it.

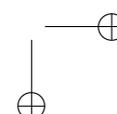
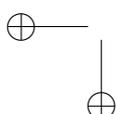
We should have left Chinon long before we did, for time was getting on and we had a long way to go; but it depressed us dreadfully to think of leaving a region that grew dearer to us every day. We shillyshalled and procrastinated for a while, and then salved our conscience by remembering that there was a bit of writing that we ought to do; why not stay in Chinon and do it? This did not answer very well, because the weather was so fine that we wanted to be outdoors all day and evening, and at night the light was so poor that none but a Frenchman could read by it, let alone write. So we compromised by resolving to write steadily all through the next rainy spell, and went our idle way relieved and happy. But the rainy spell did not come; it did not come all summer. In the

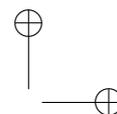




seven months of our stay in France we encountered but one shower, and it lasted only fifteen minutes. We think we are the only visitors who ever had that experience, and if so, we want the credit of it. We read of hard rainstorms, plenty of them, and sometimes not far away, but they never came where we were. Thus our only excuse played out in time, and we were obliged with great sorrow to leave Chinon. We took our last look at the town, so charming, so unravaged, at the river with its plane-trees and poplars, at the heroic figure of the great master seated by the bridge-head, wise, disciplined, humorous, Olympian, and we bore away their memory as

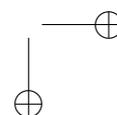
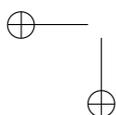
part of our life's unalterable good.

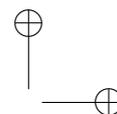




CHAPTER V

Next after the Touraine, the Poitou is the region with which Rabelais seems to have been most intimate, and about which he had most to say. At first we thought of going there directly, making our headquarters at Poitiers and exploring the neighbourhood from that as a centre, as we had done from Chinon. We changed our mind about this, however, and decided that before pushing farther southward we ought to go up to le Mans, and see the tomb of Rabelais's great friend and patron, Guillaume du Bellay, lord of Langey and viceroy of Piedmont. We also considered visiting Angers, chiefly to look over the remains of the monastery of la Baumette, where some suppose that Rabelais continued his studies after leaving the abbey of Seuilly, but we gave this project up because the tradition is very weak and uncertain. Rabelais speaks of Angers once or twice in a way that shows he had been there, which would be not at all unlikely. He even mentions an old uncle of his who lived at Angers, and who had made a collection of Christmas carols in the Poitevin dialect; but there is no actual evidence that he

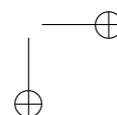
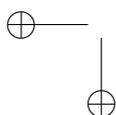


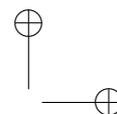


stayed in Angers any length of time, or that he was ever anything more than a casual visitor.

His associations with le Mans, on the other hand, were intimate and sad, though he probably spent even less time there than at Angers. Guillaume du Bellay, mortally ill, left Turin, the capital of Piedmont, in 1543, wishing to die in his native land of France, and somehow managed to survive the terrible rigours of a winter passage over the Mont-Cénis road, but he did not reach his home. He died at the little village of St.-Symphorien, near Roanne, at the foot of the hill of Tarare, not far from Lyon. Rabelais, who had been in Italy with him for two years as his private physician, embalmed his body, which was then taken to le Mans and buried in the cathedral.

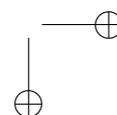
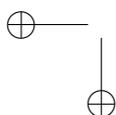
Rabelais refers twice to these events, once in the twenty-first chapter of the Third Book, and again in the twenty-seventh chapter of the Fourth; and an air of despondency, very unusual with Rabelais, hangs over both references. Something out of the ordinary must have attended du Bellay's last hours to make them even more impressive than the mere presence of death would render them, for Rabelais speaks of some grave natural portents, "the many dreadful prodigies that we saw five or six days before he died." Also he says that like Isaac, Jacob, Patroclus, Hector and others, du Bellay exercised the gift of prophecy in the last three or four hours of his life, foretelling "several important things, whereof a great deal is come to pass, and the rest we wait for." Times in France were then beginning to be very bad; and in a corresponding vein of sadness and depression Rabelais says further that while du Bellay was alive, "France enjoyed so much happiness that all the rest of

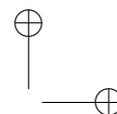




the world looked upon it with envy, sought friendship with it, and stood in awe of its power. But now, after his decease, it hath for a considerable time been the scorn of the rest of the world.”

In order to reach le Mans from Chinon, we went back to Tours, stopping there a day to pick up some necessary odds and ends, and especially to indulge the forlorn hope of finding a cigarette that a Christian could smoke without forfeiting the character witnessed by his sponsors in baptism. At Chinon we had been smoking a variety that smelled and tasted of all earth’s nameless abominations. French tobacco puts one in a quandary. Either the much-vaunted virtuoso spirit of the French is a myth, or their equally vaunted spirit of resistance to tyranny and oppression is a myth. You may take your choice; both the same price, and we don’t know which is right, but we shrewdly suspect that both are. The fact is impregnable that no people of a taste above cannibalism could enjoy such tobacco as the French government monopoly foists on its victims, and none but a criminally docile people would refrain from dynamiting a government that manufactured and marketed such dreadful stuff. France and Italy take the lead in these flagitious practices, for both governments have a monopoly. In Germany the government keeps its hands off, and the tobacco is good but dear, and rather light and tasteless; at least, all we ever tried seemed so. Belgium is a paradise for smokers, for it has an intelligent tariff regulation, if any tariff regulation can be called intelligent. There is a duty on manufactured tobacco, but raw tobacco comes in practically free; so manufacturers in other parts of the world set up branch factories in Belgium and produce some-

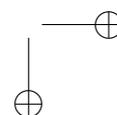
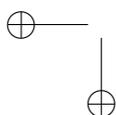


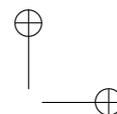
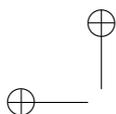


thing that maketh glad the heart of man, at almost no price at all.

We signalized our stay in Tours by getting into a row with the post-office, which was a commonplace incident enough, but we mention it for the sake of introducing some advice to the intending tourist. If you wish really to know a country, do all your errands yourself. Buy your own postage-stamps, money-orders, railway-tickets and theater-tickets, register your own letters and luggage, do all your own negotiating all round. If you leave these things to tourist-agencies and hotel people, you will save a good deal of time and probably a little money, but you will miss an incalculable deal of education. One learns as much about a people in this way, just by noticing how transactions of this sort are managed, as one can learn by any other means, perhaps more; perhaps these matters afford the best index to the national character.

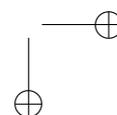
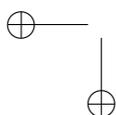
Our fuss with the post-office at Tours was over sending some corrected proof-sheets to a publishing house in New York. The clerk noticed corrections written in ink on the margin, and said we must pay first-class postage. We claimed the printed-matter rating and stuck to it, knowing our rights. The clerk assembled a convocation of all the other clerks; they leafed over the whole hundred or more proof-sheets, one by one, meanwhile chattering like crows in a corn-field and darting accusing forefingers at a correction whenever one appeared. Meanwhile at the various windows people were mobilizing in mass-formation, but showing no impatience while the inquisition was going on; they knew they were in for a half-hour's wait, having had the like experience many times before. Presently the conclave summoned

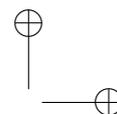
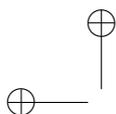




what they called the *contrôleur*, who seemed to be a sort of vice-president in charge of sales-resistance. He firmly backed up the convention's judgment in favour of first-class rates. We stood our ground and demanded a sight of the official postal rules. Immediately there was a wild scrambling and rummaging, the book was produced, we pointed in triumph to a clear ruling in our favour, but even then that *contrôleur* would not relent. We suspected that the matter might have been settled informally in the first instance by the regular route, but we were good Americans, morality was our specialty, and we had set our faces sternly against bribery and corruption. We were not to be intimidated; it was a case of millions for defense but not one sou for graft. We told the *contrôleur* that we would go over his head, appeal to Paris, and if that did not work we would join the League of Nations on the spot, make an international matter of it and have the United States navy ordered out to seize all the French possessions in the Western hemisphere. He gave way at this; we mailed our parcel and departed, indifferent to the venomous looks cast at us by the brigade of clerks whose machinations had been foiled.

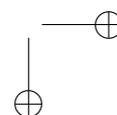
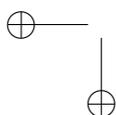
Scenes more or less like this appear to be in the regular repertoire of French and Belgian post-offices, and the visitor can get a great deal of amusement out of them, coupled with instruction. German and English post-offices do not stage anything of this kind, so the visitor gets his instruction straight, with practically no amusement. One can not imagine anything mailed by the French post ever getting anywhere, but it does. You buy a stamp at a government tobacco-shop, stamp your

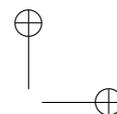




letter and drop it into a superannuated soap-box, or what looks like one: an open wooden box behind the counter by the front wall, usually under a mailing-slot that has been gouged through the lower window-frame. That letter will arrive, usually somewhere near on time. If you miss the soap-box and the letter goes on the floor, no matter; it will be seen and picked up, and will arrive. There is no reason why it should, but it will.

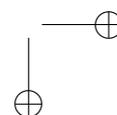
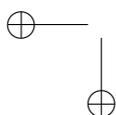
In the lobby of a Paris hotel, three years ago, we saw a remarkable mail-box, a rather handsome wooden affair about four feet high, shaped exactly like the square-shouldered gin-bottles in which the great firm of John de Kuyper, in Rotterdam, sends forth its product; a product the most excellent, the most lordly, the – but we forbear. Why praise this glorious product to a degraded race that for years has known only the synthetic article, slopped up in a wash-basin, tasting like eternal torment, and smelling like bedbugs? To return, then, the whole front of this mail-box was on hinges, and when it opened, most of the letters fell out on the floor. Our attention was called to this by seeing the postman on his knees picking them up. For a while after this we made it a point to be around at collection-time, and saw that it was a regular performance; he did it every day. We came back to this hotel a year later, and he was still doing it. We noticed, however, that the hotel people had improved the box that year. They had taken away an ornament that stood on top of it – a rather graceful and pretty flower-vase – and replaced it by a strange new-art figure that looked like nothing we had ever seen. Hence the box always offered something to wonder at, not only when the postman was around but also when he was absent.

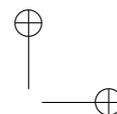
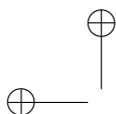




From Tours we made our way to le Mans by rail in something like a couple of hours, and found a pleasant hotel, roomy, and kept in good French style with none of the hybrid accretions that are sometimes taken on in deference to what foreign travellers are supposed to want. It was lunch-time when we arrived, and we immediately encountered something that we had for years been curious about – clams. We had long known that the French have a name for clams, and French is such an economical language, even parsimonious, that we could not imagine its investing in a word without taking security for it. We felt sure that clams must exist, but we had never seen any. At le Mans, however, our confidence in French thrift was justified, for here they were, about a dozen of them, among the *hors d'oeuvres* that were brought in on a lazy-Susan. They were of the quphog type, about the size of a quarter-dollar, and their shells were heavily striated. We considered them carefully, but went no further; they were dry as peanuts, and had the look of being far from home.

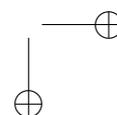
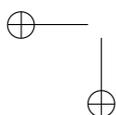
We suspended operations awhile, hoping to see what happened when some one else ate some, but nobody obliged us. Nor were we in any better luck with respect to huge burglar-proof crayfish that also appeared among the *hors d'oeuvres*. We were interested to see how these were going to be got at, for we had tried one ourselves and could not break its shell. Several people were at near-by tables, eating with incredible voracity, but no one tackled the clams or the crayfish; we concluded that they were too hungry to bother with anything that could not be bolted, shell and all. One feels like that, with nothing but the remote and pallid memory of a

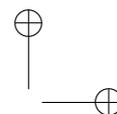




French breakfast standing between oneself and starvation. Our old friend Tommy used to say that he loved to see Frenchmen fall on their food; it put him in mind of his boyhood days on the farm, when he was feeding a P. K. Dederick perpetual hay-press. According to our observations, however, Frenchmen stage this sort of show mostly at lunch; they seem not quite so ravenous at dinner-time, less in earnest and more companionable and chatty.

In this respect they are out with medical opinion, at least with American medical opinion; and thus we were reminded that medical opinion travels in cycles. As a practitioner, Rabelais was a bit on the radical side. Conservative opinion in his day was for having the principal meal at noon instead of at night, like the old-style American Sunday dinner. Rabelais spoke his mind about this in his account of Gargantua's education. At lunch Gargantua ate "only to prevent the gnawings of his stomach; but his supper was copious and large, for he took then as much as was fit to maintain and nourish him: which indeed is the true diet prescribed by the art of good and sound physic, although a rabble of loggerheaded physicians, nuzzled in the brabbling shop of sophisters, counsel the contrary." Thus it seems that conservative modern opinion has but just got around to the position of radical sixteenth-century opinion. In a book published fifty years ago, an author puts down the chance remark that the average American made his breakfast on beefsteak and coffee. Think of doing that now! Yet they managed to raise some pretty robust specimens on the misfit diet of those days; some of them



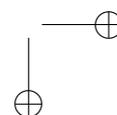
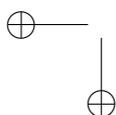


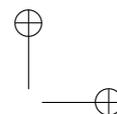
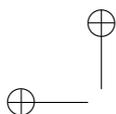
are still around, burying a grandchild every now and then, and wondering what in the world the race is coming to.

There were quill toothpicks on the table at le Mans, so we finished our meal to the accompaniment of an impassioned pizzicato played by our table-companions. French table-manners, in public places at least, differ noticeably from our own, just as ours, no doubt, differ noticeably from theirs; there is probably no very definite standard in such matters. In a Paris restaurant the other day, we noticed that a smartly-dressed young woman had brought her lap-dog in to lunch with her; presently she wiped the dog's muzzle with her napkin, and then her own. Her escort showed no signs of being disturbed by this, so probably it was nothing unusual.

Aroint thee, wench! – let us speak of other things. We started out for the cathedral, which is on high ground, facing the little river Sarthe, in the oldest part of town, and sticking out its posterior disdainfully over the new part, which lies below its level. The Church in its early days made the faithful do some climbing to reach the sanctuary, and it still picks out high sites when it can get them. Some of the churches in Germany and Luxembourg, as well as in France, are almost inaccessible even now; one gets an idea of the amount of effort it must have taken to reach them over the sixteenth-century style of roads and paths. One does not see just why they were planted so high in the air, unless it were to remind people that the way to heaven is toilsome and discouraging.

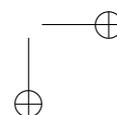
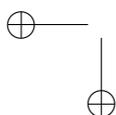
The cathedral here is one of the noblest structures we ever saw, and we wondered why more tourists who are interested in church architecture do not include it in their programme of sightseeing. It is as old as any

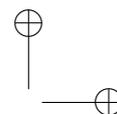
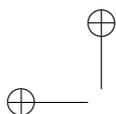




of the better-known cathedrals – older than Chartres, for example – as fine as most of them, and even more impressive than many, helped out as it is by its location. It also has stained glass in its aisle windows that is as old and as beautiful as any in the world, probably; it is of the twelfth century. We admired the cathedral's external perfections so long that we finally decided to put off going inside until next day, when we would be fresher; so we turned off to explore some of the old town's narrow thoroughfares that lay to the left.

One of these is called the Grande Rue; like Grand Street in New York, the name is about all that is left of its pristine quality, which is another instance of the peculiar interest attaching to street-names. Where you find a Grande Rue in a French town, you are safe in betting that it was a mediaeval Park Avenue; just as when you find a rue Neuve, you may safely bet that it is either the oldest street in town or the next oldest, for it got its name from being the second street that was laid out, and in some cases, as in Brussels, for instance, the first one is now obliterated. We found the Grande Rue pretty squalid; indeed, the whole district, even in its palmy days, must have been a standing invitation to the plague. But we saw some houses of good architecture, and some which were not so good but which embodied quaint conceits, such as the house of the Two Friends, or the one that is set off with figures of Adam and Eve, presumably while they were still in Paradise. This latter symbolism struck us as a pleasant poetic idea for distinguishing a dwelling-house. Probably it was conceived by some home-loving brother who had picked up a good wife somewhere and liked her, and set out

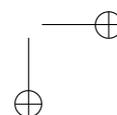
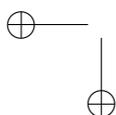


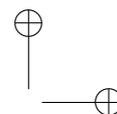
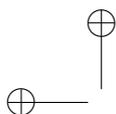


with the idea of building an earthly Eden for himself and her. One hopes that the devout little Scriptural idyll came off; possibly it did, if war or the plague or confiscation or any of the myriad other uncertainties of the time did not intervene.

We saw also the house on the Grande Rue where the lively little queen Berengaria, wife of Richard the Lion-hearted, is said to have lived after the siege of Chalus had left her a widow. It is a handsome structure, rather lavishly ornamented, and if indeed she ever lived there – the legend is not too substantial – she may have found it restful after her days with Richard, who was probably a pretty hard citizen from a wife’s point of view. Her tomb is in the cathedral now; she was buried elsewhere, in the first instance, but for some reason was evicted and had to move, we do not know why. Maybe the Protestants or the revolutionists had something to do with it; we did not look the matter up.

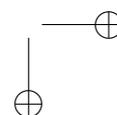
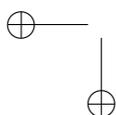
Guillaume du Bellay also seems not to have been let rest in peace in his burial-place; he too had to move. It appears that he was buried at the entry to the cathedral choir, for in 1862 a sarcophagus was found there containing a body so well preserved as to leave no doubt of its being his. The corpse was of gigantic size, and its face exactly resembled that of the semi-recumbent statue on his tomb. Its extraordinary state of preservation was testimony to the skill with which it had been embalmed by du Bellay’s two attending physicians, Rabelais and “master Gabriel, physician of Savillan,” this being Gabriel Taphenon, a practitioner of Savigliano, in Piedmont, who was a member of du Bellay’s vice-regal household at Turin.

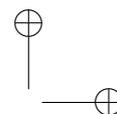
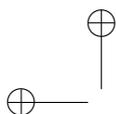




Bishoprics were a sort of perquisite in the du Bellay family; of the four brothers, Jean was bishop of Paris and a cardinal, and Rene was bishop of le Mans. Guillaume and Martin were in the royal service, successively as viceroy of Piedmont, and in other distinguished capacities. All four were good friends of Rabelais, but Jean and Guillaume in particular attached him to their households as their personal physician, and also, outside his professional capacity, they made him an intimate companion and an honoured and trusted adviser. In all her history, France has had very few such enlightened and capable public servants as these two brothers; they seem to have been the very best and ablest of men. When Guillaume died, the surviving brothers built a magnificent mausoleum to his memory in the cathedral at le Mans. The architectural portion of this was destroyed in some outbreak of iconoclasm, but the sculptures, strangely enough, escaped injury. These are among the finest of the period. The guide-book says they are “the elegant and secular work of an Italian sculptor, with Egyptian caryatids and a frieze representing a combat of Tritons”; but other authorities make them out to be the work of a local sculptor, Noël Huet. They are now assembled most impressively above the tomb, in the baptismal chapel of the cathedral. The statue of du Bellay is superb: a semi-recumbent figure, flanked by the two “Egyptian caryatids” which are portraits of his brothers Jean and René.

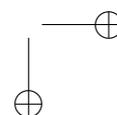
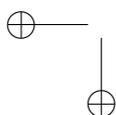
We were well repaid for coming to le Mans, for no surviving monument is likely to bring us so close to Rabelais, to give us so vivid and moving a sense of his profound seriousness, the essential soundness of his spirit,

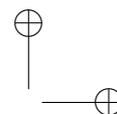
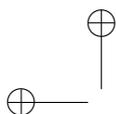




as the tomb of “the learned and valiant” Guillaume du Bellay. Here one sees him purely by the side of his deepest admirations; he speaks of du Bellay as he does of no other man, with a tone of peculiar devotion, almost of reverence. In contemplating this monument one recalls the many reminiscences, found in the Third and Fourth Books, of the time he had spent at Turin with du Bellay; and one feels indeed, as M. Plattard says, “that nothing had left a deeper impression on him than the sight of the activity of this great and truly universal spirit, equally endowed for thought and action, who commanded admiration by his learning, his quiet earnestness and his strength.”

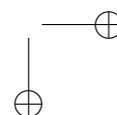
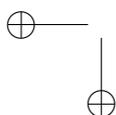
We left le Mans next day, carrying with us most agreeable memories of the aristocratic old town which has managed very largely to keep its character, notwithstanding the forces of violence and upheaval that have so often been let loose within it. On this account we found it a congenial city, aside from its relation to our special interest. Whether the tourist who has no such interest would find enough at le Mans to pay him for going there, we can not say; probably not, or he would find his way to it in larger numbers, even though the town makes comparatively little effort to attract him. We are poor judges of such matters. We can give le Mans high commendation on the points usually set out as bait for the unattached tourist. That is to say, we can affirm that “one eats well there,” as the French idiom has it – rather unusually well, we thought – also drinks well, the hotels are good, the architecture is good, there is plenty of history, and the assortment of postcards is fully up to the average. What we are sure of, however, is that

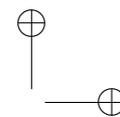
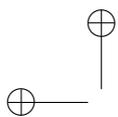




the amateur of Rabelais should come here; he should not be misled by the fact that Rabelais's relation to the town was purely casual, and that one gets at him here only, in a sense, at second-hand. It is the quality of such relations that counts, and the visitor will find that this relation, incidental as it may have been, is vital.

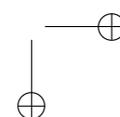
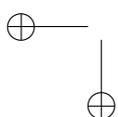
One can so easily reconstruct in imagination all the happenings that culminated in du Bellay's burial at le Mans. The terrible winter journey from Turin over the Mont-Cénis pass, the dying man borne on a litter to meet his end on his native soil; then the wait at St.-Symphorien, where "the lords d'Assier, Chemant, one eyed Mailly, St.-Ayl, Villeneuve le Guyart, master Gabriel, physician of Savillan, Rabelais, Cohuau, Massuau, Majorici, Bullou, Cercu alias Bourgmaistre, Francis Proust, Perron, Charles Girard, Francis Bourré, and many other friends and servants to the deceased, all dismayed, gazed on each other without uttering one word"; then the slow progress of the cortège over unspeakable roads, up the valley of the Allier and the Loire; the pause at St.-Ayl, near Orléans, while Jean du Bellay made up his mind whether his brother should be buried at le Mans, Paris or Vendome; the ransacking of the dead man's papers, and the theft of his manuscript *Memoirs*, by a rascally German servant; then the journey ending at le Mans, where the funeral ceremonies were held with extraordinary pomp. This funeral procession was on the march for two months, almost to the day; du Bellay died on the tenth of January, and was buried on the ninth of March. Among those who attended the funeral was the future poet, Pierre de Ronsard, then a youth of nineteen. His father, Louis de Ronsard, was one of four

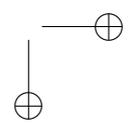
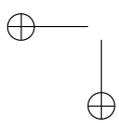
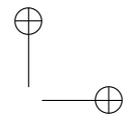
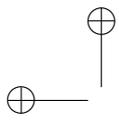


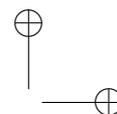
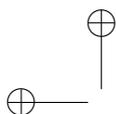


noblemen who were in the strict sense pall-bearers; that is, they held the corners of the black cloth that covered the casket, which pall-bearers originally did instead of carrying the casket itself.

Yes, decidedly, the amateur of Rabelais should come here; it is but a step out of his way, and his imagination finds much to fasten on and interpret, so that he goes away with a greatly sharpened sense of his author's humanity. Elsewhere one gets the sense of Rabelais as a scholar, man of letters, physician, critic, diplomat, creative artist; here one gets the sense of him as a great man's great friend, affectionate, admiring, assiduous, inconsolable. Such glimpses of him are rare, and none other that we shall ever get will seem as clear and complete as that which has come to us here.



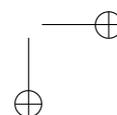
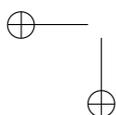


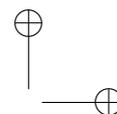
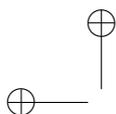


CHAPTER VI

Leaving le Mans on the morrow of our visit to the cathedral, we doubled back to Tours on a local train, exactly the kind of train that the Germans, with their praiseworthy passion for precision, call a *Bummelzug*, and took the Paris-Bordeaux express for Poitiers. Rabelais had a sort of suburbanite's connexion with Poitiers, visiting it often, but never actually living there. He spent three years at Ligugé, about five miles south of Poitiers, with his old friend Geoffroy d'Estissac, bishop of Maillezais, who made his headquarters at the famous Benedictine abbey there, Ligugé being a more nearly central point in his diocese than Maillezais, and more easily accessible. Thus Rabelais had a chance at urban life, such as it was, whenever he felt like going to town, and his associations with Poitiers became intimate.

Poitiers is built on the end of a high promontory that sticks out into the landscape like the prow of a ship, and the climb up into town from the railway-station is long and steep for pedestrians; wheel-traffic tempers the ascent by taking a circuitous route. The city has no industries worth speaking of; none, that is, of more than

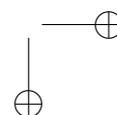
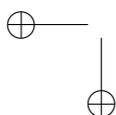


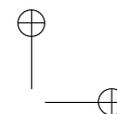
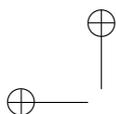


local importance. It has the characteristic air of what we call a college town, rather sleepy, poorly built and unimpressive. Its life centres mostly around agriculture, the university and the church; apparently this was always the case. In the sixteenth century, when it shared with Lyon the distinction of being the largest town in France, after Paris, observers remarked that it had much more area than population. Maps of the period which are presumably trustworthy bear out their statement that most of the space inside its walls was given over to vine-culture.

When the wayfarer finally gets up into the city, recovers his breath and looks about him, he sees that the general view over the levels from which he has climbed is agreeable, and that the landscape immediately about the town is friendly and pleasant; nothing to stir one deeply, but one can not quite agree with the judgment of J. K. Huysmans on "the slovenly Poitou." He visited the region about thirty years ago, and left in disgust with the "stunted trees, ridiculously low hillocks, muddy streams, birds that did not sing, and peasants who sang too much." It is not so bad as all this by a great deal, but nevertheless natural beauty is no greater charm of the Poitou than it is of the Touraine, except occasionally and in a small way.

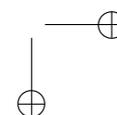
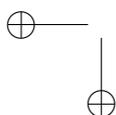
In the matter of hotels at Poitiers we profited from pilgrimizing "by two and two," like the Apostles, or the night-police of Brussels and Paris, so we are reminded to pass the fruits of our experience along to the intending tourist. When you come to a town that has two hotels equally well recommended and satisfactorily described, you separate, and sample both at once. Then meeting

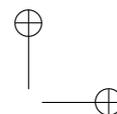
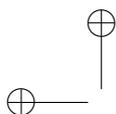




next morning, you compare notes on beds, plumbing, fleas, noise, and all the details that make one's day-to-day existence bearable or the reverse; and you act accordingly. Advice about hotels must be based on very recent experience to be worth anything. By the time you get there the place may have changed hands, or somebody may have started some construction-work near by; almost anything may have happened. We found two excellent hotels at Poitiers, but at daybreak some workmen set about putting a tin roof on a garage thirty yards away from one of them, so we took up with the second, and liked it so much that it remains one of the most agreeable memories of our whole journey. We would give the name of it, except for what we have been saying about the futility of recommendations. The reader would no more than get settled, very likely, before the *négotiant et marchand des vins* next door would take the notion to begin cooping hogsheads under his window at six in the morning, and we would be put down as sinful persons, probably hirelings of the French tourist propaganda. In the matter of hotels, guide-books are useless, friends are useless. There is only one source of information that is likely to be worth anything – the drummer. Like the old-time Mississippi pilot, his information is fresh every trip, and may usually be regarded with confidence.

We happened to come into town on a market-day, and found the unkempt public square fringed with traders in agricultural produce, carrying on business in the same informal and leisurely fashion that we had observed at Tours. Here we had occasion to recall Rabelais's remark that the inhabitants of the island of Ennasin looked "much like your ruddy Poitevins," for we saw many ruddy

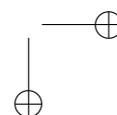
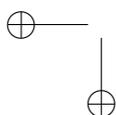


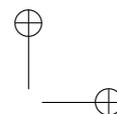
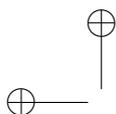


complexions in the group. The descendants of the Pictavi seem a sturdy lot, as a rule, and they give an impression of being as much attached to their own peculiar ways as their ancestors were to theirs. Julius Caesar tried to keep on the soft side of the Pictavi while he was cooping up Vercingetorix in the Auvergne. He made an alliance with their chief, but this did not prevent eight thousand of them from going out on their own motion to give Vercingetorix a lift, like the right-minded people that they were. If they had fried their chief over a slow fire before they went, their title to posterity's veneration would have been complete and perfect.

Some authorities, however, do not give the Poitevins any too good a character. One of these authorities is Rabelais's friend Jean Bouchet, himself a Poitevin and an eminent lawyer, practising at Poitiers. His neighbours seem sometimes to have upset his nerves, perhaps because his long and extensive practice kept him too close to their little foibles; lawyers and physicians notoriously see human nature by its weakest and most unamiable side. Bouchet wrote an ambitious historical work, the *Annales d'Aquitaine*, in which he makes out that the sixteenth-century Poitevin was descended from the Scythians, and had undergone a degenerative hybridization, due to the successive domination of Romans, Goths, French and English. He describes them thus:

Us sont à cause des Scythes vindicatifs, hardis, et cruels en leur vengences, et se delectent à se destruire par proces; à cause des Romains sont assez meurs et pesans; à cause des Gots, lours et grossiers en leurs gestes et façons de faire; assez beaux de corps à cause desdits Scythes et aussi des Anglois; et aigus d'esprit et honnestes en leur forme de vivre à cause des François.



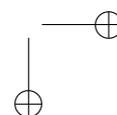
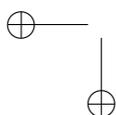


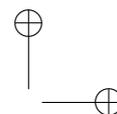
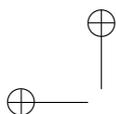
Bouchet wrote poetry as well as history; being a great admirer of the prevailing contemporary school called the *Grands Rhetoriqueurs*, he followed their style, which was rather ornate, running largely to intricate literary devices such as were formerly more in fashion for English “society verse” than they are at present. On the merits of his fellow-citizens he composed the following:

Poytevins sont loyaulx non caulx
Feables non voulans meffaire
Begnins non rudes, bons non faulx
Manyables non a reffaire
Amyables non pretz a braire
Amoureux non trompeurs et fins
Traictables non voulans desplaire
Preux non noyseux sont poitevins.

This effusion is an anagram; it reads backwards as well as forwards. When read backwards, it expresses Bouchet’s notion of the Poitevin character. There may have been something in it, for another experienced observer, the geographer Mercator, backs up his view. According to him, the common run of Poitevins were “a quarrelsome sort of beings, much given to lawsuits, keen, and handy at making five out of four.”

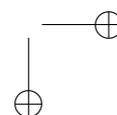
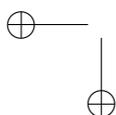
Bouchet must have been one of the most interesting characters that ever lived; it is a pity that he has never been brought out and made accessible, if only for the immense unconscious humour that surrounds all his works and ways, and that really glorifies him. He is one of the spicy and succulent morsels that are carefully purged out of the historical diet which professional historians do their best to reduce to pemmican. Humour, especially unconscious humour, is one of the most competent guides

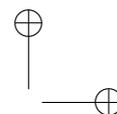
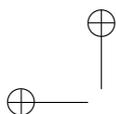




to an intimate knowledge of a people; everybody knows this except, apparently, those who undertake to teach or write history. The occasional flashes of grim humour in Caesar's *Commentaries*, for instance, are more illuminating than whole pages of his descriptive writing; yet how many students of Caesar even so much as recognize them for what they are?

Besides being a first-rate lawyer with a big practice, a poet and a historian, Bouchet was also an antiquarian and an impresario of the local theatrical performances which were being given continually all over the Poitou. He had an enormous interest in the stage, and his reputation as a director and stage-manager spread far and wide. He directed the *Passion* at Poitiers in 1508. When the authorities at Issoudun put on the tragedy of *Christ Slain*, in 1535, they called him in; he was in demand at Nantes, at Bourges, and was summoned even as far away as Bordeaux. He became well-to-do out of his law-practice, so that he could afford to live in handsome style at Poitiers, in the mansion called the House of the Rose, where Jeanne d'Arc was lodged during her examination by the church authorities. He was always a little close and thrifty, even in his affluent days – what the New Englanders call “near” – and nothing seemed to distress him more than a demand for taxes. He pours out his poetic soul in grief at having been met on the court-house steps at Poitiers by a collector with a tax-bill – he, an old man of sixty-nine, father of eight children (four of them girls and therefore liabilities) and not a rich man, at that. The thing was monstrous, iniquitous, crushing; the rich ought to pay the taxes! This sentiment has a

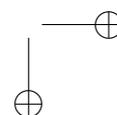
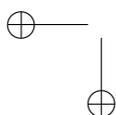


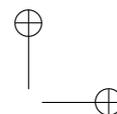
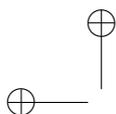


familiar sound; it brings the sixteenth century straight down to our own times.

In the forty-first chapter of the Third Book, Rabelais drops in a word of casual testimony to the Poitevin mania for going to law. He says that the honest humble peasant Perrin Dendin, who lived in the little hamlet of Smarves, had arbitrated more differences than were settled “in the court-house of Poitiers, the auditory of Montmorillon and the hall of the old Parthenay,” all put together. This must have been a good many. D’Aubigné says poetically that Chicenery, fleeing from the triumphant Themis, found a sanctuary in the Poitou; and Mercator repeats his observation that the Poitevin rustic is “an obstreperous sort of fellow who loves lawsuits and does his best to provoke them.” This popular mania was money in Bouchet’s pocket, but like many others of his temperament, he affected to despise his profession. He complains naively of the grinding hard work of his law-practice, the incessant trivial succession of formalities whereby he supports his wife and children, when he would so much rather be churning out poetry or listening to elevated conversation at Ligugé. But what can one do? He has a family, a large family, eight children, and his girls must soon be married or lose their chances, and so must have dowries to attract suitable husbands; hence he has to submit to heavy toil, keep on the go night and day, up hill and down dale, all for the sake of marrying off his girls who are already husband-ripe:

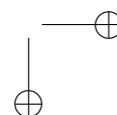
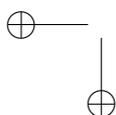
fault prendre grans travaux
Aller, venir, de nuyct, par mons et vaulx,
Pour marier filles qui en ont l’aage.

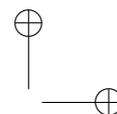
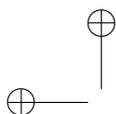




Somebody took Bouchet to task one day for wasting his time over poetry; he wrote altogether too much poetry for a serious-minded man and a busy lawyer. Bouchet soberly went into a mathematical calculation to prove that instead of too much poetry, he had written far too little. An hour a day for poetry, when business was over, was surely reasonable – much better spent over poetry at home than at the tavern, “tippling over glasses and cards.” Well, then, having done this for something like thirty years, he had 10,950 hours to account for. He should have produced at least a page an hour, but as a matter of fact he had not produced anything like that much; nowhere near half that much. Therefore, instead of being too industrious over poetry, he had really loafed at it, and should be ashamed of having done so little.

He and Rabelais occasionally corresponded in verse while Rabelais was at Ligugé; one letter and its answer have been preserved. They used the familiar ten-syllable line with a tailed rhyme. These efforts are not highly poetic. They mostly demonstrate the impossibility of producing great poetry in an age of rapid expansion when spiritual activity in general is at a low ebb; and this has been so often and so abundantly demonstrated that one wonders why poets continue to nurse a forlorn hope of success in such circumstances. Bouchet and Rabelais were in the wrong period for poetry. Their verse bears the period’s trademark; when not jog-trotting and humdrum, it is platitudinous and windy. For instance, when Rabelais urges Bouchet to come over to Ligugé and join in on the literary conversations led by d’Estissac, he exhorts him to “put on the winged sandals of his patron Mercury, and fly hither on the favouring and gentle

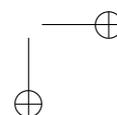
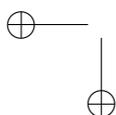


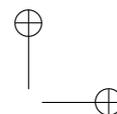
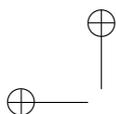


zephyr,” so that his friend (Rabelais) may hang upon the speech of “that fluent and eloquent mouth through which Pallas turns her fountain, and distils Castalian streams.” A very small dose of this is enough to make one thankful for the sound literary instinct that cautioned Rabelais to stick to prose. By the same token, when one notices the sterling prose that Whitman, Wordsworth and Browning wrote, one would be glad to trade off the bulk of their verse for more of it, at a ratio of sixteen to one.

There is no record that Rabelais ever studied at the University of Poitiers, but his casual remarks on the institution and its life are such as show that he knew it well. In his day the university had a fine reputation; not so its students. They were insubordinate and cocky; also they were notorious loafers, passing their time in wandering over the countryside when the weather was good, exploring the woods around St.-Benoit, and only turning up at headquarters in answer to a general roll-call. Rabelais says that Pantagruel found them much bored, owing to their rooted indisposition to work, and thought of providing them with something easy and pleasant to do; so, picking up an enormous boulder at the grotto of Passelourdin, a few miles south, just outside the village of St.-Benoit, the giant carried it to Poitiers and set it up on four stone pillars, as a table-rock for the students to use for picnic lunches, and to carve their names on. A drawing made eight years after Rabelais’s death shows this stone tattooed with names, and students scrambling over it.

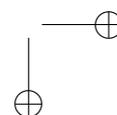
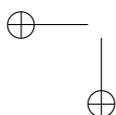
This monument still goes by the name of the Lifted Stone, which it bore in Rabelais’s day. We went to

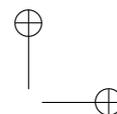
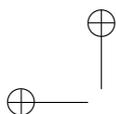




see it; a half-hour's walk from the centre of town, ten minutes by trolley. It is in fact a dolmen, put up by some unknown prehistoric hands; hands that were dust long before the coming of the Gauls. Putting it up must have been a hard job in those days. It is a flat stone about two feet thick, and twenty feet long by fourteen wide. It stood four feet above-ground on four stone pillars, but one of these gave way at some time in the last two hundred years, letting the dolmen fall slantwise. It is in the suburbs now, whereas formerly it was quite a way out of town; the spread of civilization has reached out and taken it in, so that the enclosure in which it stands abuts on a very nice commodious jail. Near by is a cemetery of unmeasured antiquity. It was old in the earliest Christian times; older still in the seventh century when some one built a handsome and elaborate mortuary chapel there. In its turn, this chapel sank out of sight under the dust and debris of ages, and was forgotten. It was discovered and dug out to light in 1878, and is now one of the best preserved and most interesting of France's innumerable historical monuments.

Rabelais says that no student could matriculate at the University of Poitiers until he had drunk "at the caballine fountain of Croûtelle, passed at Passelourdin, and climbed up upon the Lifted Stone." This may refer to some ceremony of initiating freshmen, a sort of hazing. We went down to Croûtelle, a little village about five miles south-west of Poitiers, on the old highway from Paris to Bayonne. The "caballine fountain" is a brisk little roadside spring, hidden in the deep shade of woods. We expected to have some difficulty in finding it, but we failed to reckon with the persistent force of tradition

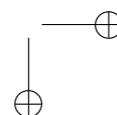
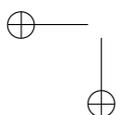


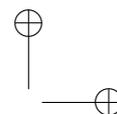
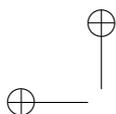


in this country; the first person we spoke to knew all about it, and told us just how to get to it. We took a ceremonial drink out of our cupped hands, having nothing else to drink from, and lingered for some time in the pleasant shade, loth to go. For some reason, the sight of this lovely little spring remains in one's memory as a peculiarly gratifying recollection.

On another day we went over to St.-Benoît, where the grottoes of Passelourdin are. Here again we were none too sure of finding our way, but a chance passer-by set us right at once, with no trouble at all. The grottoes are deep natural caverns high up in a perpendicular limestone cliff; they were no improvement on any other limestone grottoes, as far as we could see, except in the potent attraction thrown over them by sentiment. One "passes" to them over a short path about two feet wide, in the edge of the cliff, where one's elbow juts out over a precipice a couple of hundred feet deep, as one walks along. There is an iron railing there now, so one feels a less urgent impulse to "scrooge," yet its effect is mostly moral; the railing looks shaky and ramshackle, and could hardly be trusted not to give way at the moment of need. Without it, however, "passing at Passelourdin" would be something of a trial to an unsteady head. We wondered whether any dizzy freshmen ever came to grief there, and if so, whether anything was done about it; but since there was no way of finding out, we dismissed the question and gave ourselves over to looking up the river-valley, which presents a large and lovely view, especially on a perfect day of strong sunlight, such as we had.

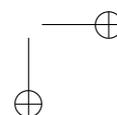
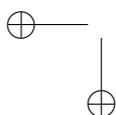
Students in the sixteenth century nicknamed their teachers, even as they do now. In the Third Book,

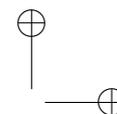
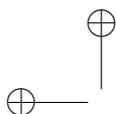




Rabelais brings in Bridlegoose telling a story of the time when “at Poitiers I was a law-student under *Brocadium Juris*,” this perhaps being Robert Ireland, a Scotsman, who taught law there all through the first half of the century. Panurge speaks of him in the Fourth Book, as “the most decretalipotent Scotch doctor.” There was a considerable implantation of Scots here at this time; and a few years after Rabelais’s death, when the ill-fated Francis II married the worse-fated Mary Stuart, Poitiers became part of Mary’s dowry, which may have brought in a fresh influx of her countrymen. A street here is still called Scotsmen’s Street, as a reminiscence of these circumstances. Robert Ireland lived on it; it is a very pleasant street now, with several sightly old dwellings still standing, and handy to the post-office. No doubt the Scots herded together on this street, and formed a “quarter,” after the fashion of immigrants everywhere, so that they could hobnob freely and tell one another how much better things were done at home; things like haggis or whisky, for instance, or oatmeal. For some reason we found it especially hard to imagine a French cook in Poitiers, in the sixteenth century, stewing up oatmeal for Scotsmen!

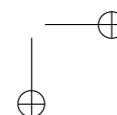
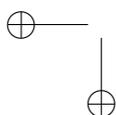
The Faculty of Law seems always to have been this university’s strong suit. Theology was the weakest of the four faculties; medicine developed later into something quite respectable. The Faculty of Literature had seven colleges, one of which was the College of Puygarreau, Jean Bouchet’s *alma mater*. One is impressed particularly here, as in every Continental university town, by the insignificance of the academic “plant” as compared with ours. You could not get an up-to-date American

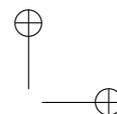
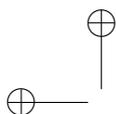




university-president even to look at the equipment of the University of Poitiers. For instance, the Faculty of Literature is housed in a Renaissance mansion, the Hôtel Fumée, built by a man who was mayor of Poitiers at one time. It is one of the most beautiful buildings we ever saw, with a spacious and sightly courtyard given over largely to rose-bushes; a charming spectacle at the time we saw it, for the flowers were doing their best just then. A good American university-executive, however, trained to think in terms of floor-space, window-space and similar matters, all viewed in the light of the number of students he was expecting to get, would not care much for the exquisite, dimly-lighted, inconvenient old Hôtel Fumée. He would be for tearing it down and putting his Faculty of Literature into a fine new million-dollar glass-and-concrete structure, where you could see your way around and really teach literature efficiently – that is, if anybody wanted to bother at all about literature.

Still, there is very fine scholarship coming out of Poitiers, which is more than one can say for our more elaborate educational plants; and, after all, scholarship is something to be thought of in connexion with university life. The American school-plant is probably the finest in the world, and its product is not impressive. We should think this anomaly would begin to dawn on those who endow our institutions of learning so liberally. Would they invest in an automobile concern that turned out ramshackle cars, incapable of making a mile an hour without breaking down? Hardly. Yet every year they commit the exact equivalent of that lunacy in subsidizing the American school, college, university. The point is that the French educational system is not regarded as

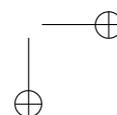
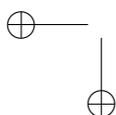


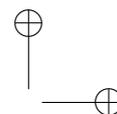
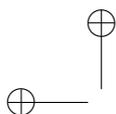


a public-service utility, like the subway, where any one may drop a nickel in the slot and take title to ride the whole length of the line without further effort; whereas something like this appears to be the American ideal.

We found the streets of Poitiers full of students, as la Fontaine did in the seventeenth century, when he turned up his nose at the *ville mat pavée, pleine d'écoliers, abondante en prêtres et en moines*. There were not so many priests and monks about, though we saw a few. Poitiers, however, in spite of being a university town, did not impress us as a literary centre; it never was that, really, not even in the sixteenth century when it had a student-population of four thousand. In those days the literary centre of the Poitou was at the little town of Fontenay-le-Comte, hardly more than a village, whither we shall shortly go. Although Poitiers has not actually produced many eminent men of letters, it has nourished a few. Joachim du Bellay, one of the illustrious family that befriended Rabelais, was a student here; he and his friend Ronsard were the best of the Pleiad poets. Nicolas Rapin, who helped produce the *Satyre Menippée*, also studied here, though he lived at Fontenay. Another literary genius – he was that, no question, though he turned his genius to very dubious employment – whom Poitiers harboured for a while, was John Calvin. He was here in 1534, teaching his doctrines more or less surreptitiously. It is said that he used to meet with his disciples in the grottoes of Passelourdin, after the fashion of the early Christians at Rome, to escape unfavourable attentions from the authorities.

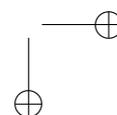
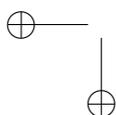
It would have been money in Poitiers's pocket if he had been corked up there. Twenty-eight years later, Calvin's

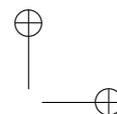
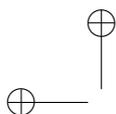




disciples cleaned the town out of nearly every aesthetic and archaeological treasure it had; by luck, the thirteenth-century choir-stalls of the cathedral somehow escaped. They even burglarized the tomb of poor Ste. Radegonde, took out her remains and burned them. What they could not handily destroy, they defaced; and what they could not satisfactorily deface, they defiled. Again one remarks that the overhead on early Protestantism seems pretty high, even as it seems high on modern Protestantism. Probably the nondescript sects of our tatterdemalion modern Protestantism are by and large as insensitive to the appeal of beauty and poetry, dignity and amenity, as their French forbears of the sixteenth century, or as Cromwell's Ironsides "smashing the mighty big angels in glass." Protestantism is always bedevilling other people over some twopenny reform; why does it not bear down a little harder on reforming itself?

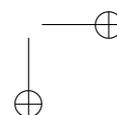
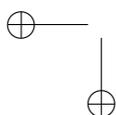
One does not wander around Poitiers long before discovering that it has a great place in the history of feminism. When our feminists develop the historic sense, if ever they do, one might expect Poitiers to become a kind of Mecca, with the church of St.-Hilaire serving as a Masjid-al-haram. It would be rather odd to see feminists interested in a church, because they now mostly regard the Church as an enemy to the cause, as it has been ever since the fag-end of the Middle Ages; but before that time it had a better record. During the first six centuries of our era, indeed, the strong-headed lady who was out for "freedom to live her own life" found that the Church furnished her best chance to get it. When she had looked over the marriage-market and whatever other prospects were in sight, and found them uninter-

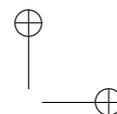
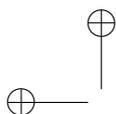




esting, she betook herself to a nunnery. This seems like getting out of the frying-pan into the fire, but it was not. These institutions left one free to regulate a surprisingly large margin of one's personal life to suit oneself. Apart from certain routine duties which seem not to have been very exacting, one might pretty well do what one liked. Probably a woman was much freer under the intelligent discipline of a mediaeval nunnery than she is in this year of grace under the unintelligent pressure of public opinion in an American small town. Economic independence counted as heavily then, of course, as it does now. An economically independent woman never had much trouble, apparently, about doing as she pleased with herself in any age of the world.

If the mediaeval woman were on the upper crust of society, she might establish a convent of her own, as Ste. Radegonde did here in Poitiers. It always seemed to us that this lady qualifies beyond all competition as the patron saint of feminism. She was a Thuringian princess, born in the first quarter of the sixth century, gently reared, highly educated; she knew Latin and Greek as well as she knew her mother tongue, and she was thoroughly at home in Roman and Greek literature. She was married early, without much of a voice in the matter, to a wretched disreputable fellow, Clotaire, the king of Soissons. He was the son of Clovis, the great Frankish king, who had just consolidated a large part of Gaul into a realm which still bears the name of his regime, the country of the Franks, *Frankreich*, France. In spirit, Clotaire bore somewhat the same relation to his father that Commodus bore to Marcus Aurelius; he was quarrelsome, coarse, untrustworthy, murderous. Radegonde

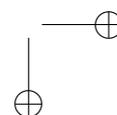
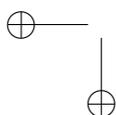


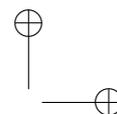
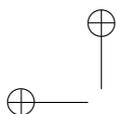


managed to put up with him for twenty years, but when at the end of that time she found out that he was arranging for her young brother's assassination, she decided that patience was no longer a virtue. She left him, took refuge in Tours for a time, and then in Poitiers, where she planned to set up a convent of her own; it was to be of the duplex type, one side for men and the other for women, like the establishment at Fontevrault. It is said to have been the first or second of this type in all Europe; it was one of the earliest, at all events.

While this was building, she lived mostly in the church property of St.-Hilaire, because it had the right of sanctuary, and Clotaire could not kidnap her as long as she stayed on the premises. These sanctuaries were another good feature of the Church's economy in those times. There were a number of them dotted over the Church's domains, and according to the rules, which resembled those of the game called prisoner's base, it was "no fair" to seine out any sort of refugee, guilty or innocent, convicted or unconvicted, who had managed to get to their doors ahead of the sheriff. This seems a commendable arrangement, in view of what the modern world knows about the mob spirit, private vengeance, lynching, trial by newspaper, railroading, the third degree, and similar instrumentalities of justice. The Church ought to revive this system in the United States, with sanctuaries not too far apart. Half a mile would probably be about right to start with, until our penal code should be revised in terms of moderate enlightenment and decency.

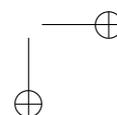
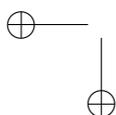
Clotaire persisted for a while, hoping for a reconciliation, or for the chance of catching his grass-widow out of bounds. He gave up, finally, and died a few years

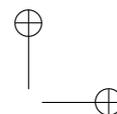
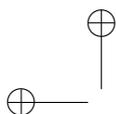




afterwards, much behind his schedule. This event was the greatest public improvement that the kingdom had known in a long time. Radegonde was in her new establishment then, making herself a power in the land; she held sway over literature, politics, Merovingian diplomacy and social life; she brought a considerable order even out of the chaos made by the claims of Clotaire's successors. Yet withal she seems not to have taken on what the jargon of our times calls "the male psychology." In this respect she resembled the great women of the French and Italian Renaissance. For all their achievements in the world of men, they remained steadfast to their own point of view on life, whereas the emancipated woman of our day seems determined to cultivate man's views of life and his demands on life, and to make them her own, as far as she can.

Radegonde did not take the actual direction of her convent, having no ambitions towards any executive job that she could just as easily get somebody else to do. She put in a friend named Agnes, and left herself foot-loose, as a kind of chairman of the board, thus evincing a wisdom that is beyond praise. In her off-hours she did her part in a decorous and rather glamorous romance with the attractive young Italian poet Venantius Fortunatus, who hung around the convent for some time in a chaste and devoted intimacy, turning off a poem every now and then, and singing to the ladies, troubadour-style; meanwhile letting them pamper him scandalously, and living on the fat of the land, like a spoiled child. Their influence was beneficent, if one may judge by the fact that he "got religion" and was subsequently canonized as a saint; he even became bishop of Poitiers for a short

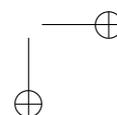
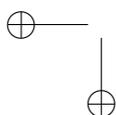


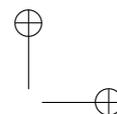
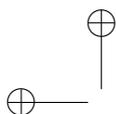


time. He also gravitated into a fair chance at a kind of literary immortality. As a poet he was no great way above par, but several of his Latin poems, among them the *Vexilla Regis*, were translated, and survive to-day in Protestant hymnals. He is one more example of the queer freaks of fortune by which men live in literary history; there is a vicious irony about them, too, sometimes.

Radegonde linked herself firmly to twentieth-century America by another tie than feminism, perhaps a more substantial one – bathtubs. She built baths in her convent, and the executive Agnes saw to it that they were used. In an emergency Radegonde herself was not above lending a hand. Once a nun fell ill, and Radegonde soaked her for two hours in a hot bath, after which she was as good as new. The municipal library at Poitiers has an eleventh-century picture of this performance, which no doubt caused a great stir; probably the cure was regarded as a miracle by reason of its unusual features.

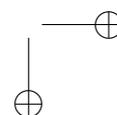
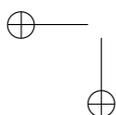
Still, in the Middle Ages people did more bathing than they did in the periods succeeding; the high-life of the Renaissance were almost guiltless of the practice, and were rather naïve about their neglect of it, apparently. Marguerite of Navarre speaks of a lady who showed her hands with pride, asking the company to notice how clean they were, although she had not washed them in two weeks. Probably, though, American women could say even more than that for their faces. We hear, but we accept no responsibility for the statement, that female high-life in America nowadays never wash their faces, but merely slather them over with some sort of gudgeon-grease, and swab it off with dry cotton or paper tissue. Pugh, fie upon them, nasty trollops! If this be true, it

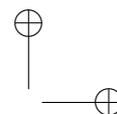
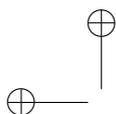




would seem to show that there is a fashion in everything, even in washing. American society takes unwashed faces as the regular thing, and thinks nothing of them; in Marguerite's time society regarded unwashed hands in the same naïve and untroubled way – and there you are. One can not help wondering about the development of the sense of smell in those days, nevertheless. Did it set the fashion or follow the fashion, or did it assert itself neither way? A full-dress Valois court assemblage at Blois or Amboise on a warm day must have smelled like a session of Virgil's harpies on the Strophades. The question is whether the participants themselves noticed anything, or whether they took it as all in the day's work, as New York's high-life take the atmosphere of the Metropolitan Opera House. The testimony of Martial shows that the Romans bequeathed an olfactory sense that one would say worked normally; *qui bene olet nil olet*. Something seems to have happened to it, however, and though one can not make out just what did happen, the subject has a speculative interest.

Poitiers had other feminists beside Ste. Radegonde, some even who were militant enough to command respect from the Pank hurstians and the Woman's Party. The liveliest of the lot were a brace of spirited hussies, mere flappers, princesses named Chrodhilde and Basine, who flounced out of Radegonde's convent in high dudgeon against the management, two years after Radegonde's death. As soon as they were fairly off the convent premises, they put themselves at the head of a gang of desperadoes, and sacked the town. The streets of Poitiers ran red with blood, and the forces of law and order had their hands full subduing the insurrection. In fact, the

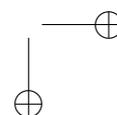
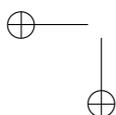


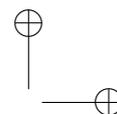
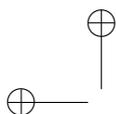


two princesses never were subdued. They rode off somewhere beyond the reach of extradition, and lived to a green old age in a halo of renown. This enterprise is still known in local history as the Nuns' War, and to this day it is mentioned with uneasy respect throughout the Poitou.

In the Middle Ages women regularly bore arms, and seemed as handy with them as anybody. The mailed figure of Jeanne d'Arc did not impress the populace as anything out of the common, except for her assertion of divine guidance. Even as late as the middle of the sixteenth century, Louise Labé, born at Lyon in 1526, seems to have become bored by life on Main Street as the daughter of a rich cloth-merchant; and the story goes, backed up by a couple of lines in one of her own poems, that she put on man's clothes, reached down the gun, sallied forth and fought through the siege of Perpignan, under the name of Captain Louis. She did it as a "flyer," apparently, or as the New Englanders say, just to be "a-doing," rather than from any motive of high-pressure patriotism. Then she went back to Lyon, married, and devoted herself to writing some of the best poetry produced in all her brilliant age. She even made a distinguished success with the sonnet-form, which was something brand-new in French letters:

Tant que mes yeux pourront larmes épandre
A l'heur passé avec toi regretter,
Et qu' aux sanglots et soupirs résister
Pourra ma voix, et un peu faire entendre;
Tant que ma main pourra les cordes tendre
Du mignard luth, pour tes grâces chanter;
Tant que l'esprit se voudra contenter
De ne vouloir rien fors que toi comprendre;



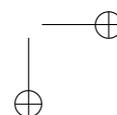
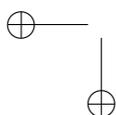


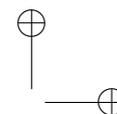
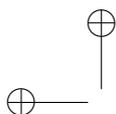
Je ne souhaite encore point mourir,
Mais quand mes yeux je sentirai tarir,
Ma voix cassée, et ma main impuissante,
Et mon esprit en ce mortal séjour
Ne pouvant plus montrer signe d'amante,
Prierai la mort noircir mon plus clair jour.

There are few elegiac poets in any modern literature who would not have to spread themselves a little to beat that.

Louise Labé was a good scholar, knowing Greek, Latin, Italian and Spanish, a good musician, and she had uncommonly fine social gifts. There is record that she was a really great exponent of the difficult art of conversation. Lyon was at that time the cultural centre of France, and she made a distinguished place for herself at the very head of its society. She married well; her husband was a ropemaker, whereby she became known to her associates by the affectionate designation of *la belle cordière*. Outside her purely literary undertakings, she wrote a small manual of housekeeping, a very good one, done in a business-like and sententious style that rather reminds one of Cato's treatise; thus making it appear that she was as handy with the broom and rolling-pin as she was with the pen and the smooth-bore.

The subject of feminism was rife in Rabelais's day. It had an extensive controversial literature long before the invention of printing, and in the next half-century it spawned a shoal of books. Even the colossal Erasmus of Rotterdam could not quite keep off the topic. Rabelais, in his account of Panurge's intended marriage, gives up practically the whole of the Third Book to it. He is supposed to make himself out an anti-feminist in these passages, but we could never see that he does. It seems

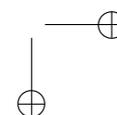
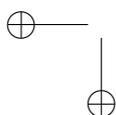


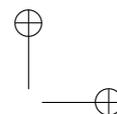
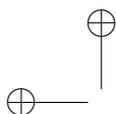


much more likely that he saw the immense unconscious humour in the controversy – for who that stood outside the lists could help seeing it? – and wrote accordingly. Certainly, in his description of the abbey of Theleme he gives the ladies all that any feminist could ask; he portrays them in full equality with the men, and quite up to the men in every point of intelligence and character. Thus we should say his writings can not fairly be cited to show that he had any leanings one way or the other; criticism can not fairly make fish of the First Book and flesh of the Third. Doubtless he looked at the squabble with an experienced and indulgent eye, appreciated its humour, but felt no serious promptings to engage in it on either side. He saw any number of good stories suggested by various features of it, however, and proceeded to tell them in his own inimitable manner. In short, the controversy interested him strictly as an artist, not at all as a partisan.

As we strolled about the town, we found street-names that were reminiscent of the time when most of the actual town-site was under cultivation. On the west slope of the promontory on which the city is built, the streets named *Hautes-Treilles* and *Basses-Treilles* bear witness to Mercator's observation at the end of the sixteenth century, that a great part of Poitiers was "devoid of inhabitants and taken up with vine-culture and other rustic pursuits." The street called *Cuvier* also is testimony to the presence of a fermenting-vat in those days.

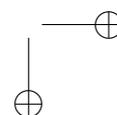
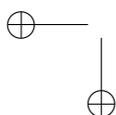
Mercator adds, on the other hand, that the rest of the town is venerable for the excellence of its structures, though he does not specify any of them. Rabelais speaks of several. He mentions the great hall in the Palais

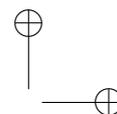
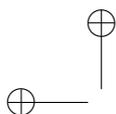




de Justice, which in his day was fringed with booths or stands of small merchants, like the gallery of the Palais at Paris. This room was used for all sorts of social purposes, occasional fetes, assemblies and stage-plays, as well as for lawsuits. It is still here, almost exactly as Rabelais left it, except that the booths are gone. Rabelais also recalls a bygone glory of Poitiers, the belfry. This was a massive structure, over a hundred feet high. It stood where the Faculty of Law now has its quarters, opposite the church of Notre-Dame la Grande, and old views of the city show it as a dominant feature; it became unsafe, and was pulled down in 1815. Its bell was one of the largest in France, weighing about nine tons; it was a present to the city from the duke Jean de Berry.

The church of St.-Hilaire, where Ste. Radegonde lay low from Clotaire, has been here in one shape or another ever since the middle of the fourth century, when it was first projected by the stout old fundamentalist who made Poitiers as orthodox as Tennessee, at least nominally. It has been torn down and rebuilt every now and then, variously tinkered and "restored," until nothing older than the eleventh century now remains; that is, nothing that one can see. Fragments of the original chapel built by St. Hilaire as a burial-place are said still to exist under the nave of the present church; but from a visitor's point of view they might as well not be there, since no one can get at them. The main interest that the Rabelaisian has in the property of St.-Hilaire is not in the church, but in the adjacent deanery. This was built by Rabelais's old and good friend Geoffroy d'Estissac, bishop of Maillezais and dean of St.-Hilaire, with whom Rabelais made his home for some time. There still remains a good façade

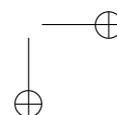
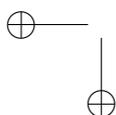


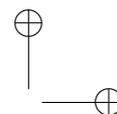
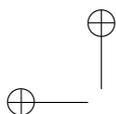


and some other structural details that he put up; the building itself has recently been turned into a normal school.

The building most closely associated with Rabelais's memory here was destroyed in 1788 by a caprice of the last proprietor; not by Protestants, this time, or by revolutionists. This was the château of Bonnivet; it was not in Poitiers, exactly, but near by, in a very poor situation. Guillaume Gouffier, admiral de Bonnivet, put it up to take the shine out of the Constable de Bourbon's fine show-place at Châtellerault. He did not live to enjoy his triumph, however, for he was killed at the battle of Pavia, and the château was not completed for more than a century after his death. It has the interest of being the first of these princely edifices that Rabelais ever saw, and it furnished him with his architectural design for the abbey of Thélème; so it is worth the amateur's while to examine the extant pictures of Bonnivet in order to get an idea of what Rabelais meant Friar John's abbey to look like.

Hardly any town in France is richer in incalculably valuable Roman remains than Poitiers was, and when one sees what a clean sweep has been made of them, one is ready to believe Jean Bouchet, Mercator, Agrippa d'Aubigné, and the whole array of trustworthy testimony that the Poitevins are a miserable lot. We do not mean sixteenth-century Poitevins, either; we mean modern Poitevins, the Poitevins whom Satan, ever mindful of his own, turned loose on these precious antiquities in the middle of the last century. The amphitheatre at Poitiers, constructed under Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, was larger than the one at Nimes, four hundred and



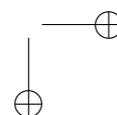
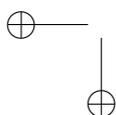


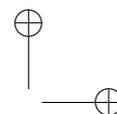
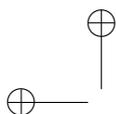
fifty feet in diameter, seventy feet high; it seated 52,000 spectators. A sketch made in 1699 gives some idea of what a noble and imposing structure it must have been. In 1857 the wretched Poitevins levelled it to the ground, and turned the site of it into a marketplace. Other remains of Roman occupation mostly shared the same fate. There is a magnificent Gallo-Roman baptistery of the fourth century that by some oversight was left standing; the guide-books say it is the oldest Christian building in France, so we suppose it must be; at all events it is a superb specimen that no one should miss seeing.

It is a relief to take a breathing-spell from the incessant toil of cursing the Protestants and revolutionists, and curse the Poitevins awhile. Bouchet undoubtedly knew them like a book:

Ils sont joueurs, jureurs et grans menteurs,
Plaidars, noiseux, voire grands détracteurs.

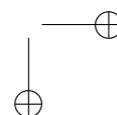
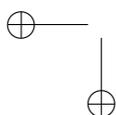
We believe him, and curse them accordingly with all the curses that Homenas invoked upon the heretics, in the fifty-third chapter of the Fourth Book. No sooner does one go down-hill from the baptistery towards the river, however, than one has to begin all over again on the revolutionists of 1789 who destroyed the abbey of the Holy Cross, founded by Radegonde, the centre of a vast volume of history, the starting-point of the Nuns' War, the stage-setting for the chaste, tender and poetic romance of the youthful Venantius Fortunatus with the abbey's time-worn but gentle-spirited founder. This establishment stood on the bank of a small stream that runs along here, hardly more than a brook, called the Clain. Pictures of it still exist, showing it as a

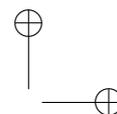
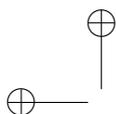




substantial group of buildings, not over-ornamented, but on the contrary, having a rather business-like look, as any enterprise of Radegonde's would have. The church remains, though greatly patched up and rebuilt, so that if any of its earlier material – earlier than the eleventh century – has been worked into the structure, it cannot be identified. Radegonde's empty coffin is in the crypt; as we have said, the sixteenth-century Protestants took her body out and burned it, like the amiable Christian spirits that they were.

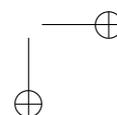
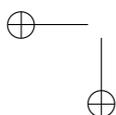
Rabelais had no illusions about Protestantism. Like Erasmus, he was against intolerance and viciousness wherever he saw them, whether on the Catholic side or the Protestant side. In the thirty-second chapter of the Fourth Book, he lumps the protagonists on both sides together, as “the apes, hypocrites and popemongers, the maniac nincompoops, demoniac Calvins, impostors of Geneva, frantic herb-stinking hermits, tearers and renders, church vermin, false zealots, cannibals, and other deformed monsters, made in despite of nature.” An unprejudiced study of those times can find no fault with these classifications. It is probable, curiously, that Rabelais and Calvin were acquainted. They had some rather intimate friends in common, and an unpublished manuscript of Bernier contains the interesting statement that “I have seen a letter from Calvin to Rabelais, in his own handwriting.” This acquaintance, if it ever existed, was in earlier days, before Rabelais had published much of his great narrative, and before Calvin had established his appalling politico-religious regime at Geneva. For some reason, the Protestants at first had great hopes of Rabelais, as they had of Erasmus. Because he had been

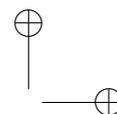
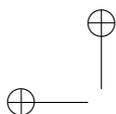




critical of Catholic abuses, they seem to have taken for granted that he must be on their side. When they found him “throwing stones into their garden, too,” as one of them said in bitterness, they were down on him, hammer and tongs; Calvin vituperates him like a fishwoman in his book *De Scandalis*. In fact, it was the shady combination of scoundrels and lunatic zealots on both sides that gave Rabelais the reputation of being an atheist and an enemy to religion; a reputation that has stuck to him ever since, in spite of the eloquent testimony of his own writings.

In the Prologue to the Third Book there is in all probability a reminiscence of scenes at Poitiers after the great defeat of the French forces under Francis I at the battle of Pavia. Francis was taken to Spain as a prisoner, and was hived up in jail there for a year; the government meanwhile devolving upon the extremely capable shoulders of his mother, Louise of Savoy, who sent out officials to “sell the war” in all the towns of France. Their efforts show that publicity-men and selling-talk are pretty constant quantities throughout the history of mankind. There is a record still preserved of the harangue made by the agent who came to Poitiers, and if the modern reader goes through it from end to end he will not find a single familiar perjury missing, from the “causes of the war” all the way down to the explanations of the little temporary set-back at Pavia and the “tactical retreat” that followed. In reading it over, one gets a sense of great intellectual poverty, of a complete bankruptcy in inventiveness and initiative. We have often thought that of all men the politician will have the most miserable time of it in Tophet. Think of dodging up the alley to all eternity for fear of meeting Ananias and Sapphira; or of





having real creative artists like Louis XI and Machiavelli look you over and then go around telling the boys that they don't see what Satan's kingdom is coming to if the immigration-laws aren't tightened up!

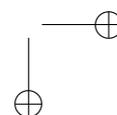
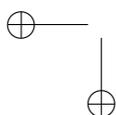
The queen-regent issued a programme of national defense, which her janizaries expounded in their speeches when they got through "selling the war" and telling the people what villainous creatures the Spaniards were. Again there is a great monotony in its details. The orator at Poitiers gave instructions about organizing the Home Guards; also about espionage, showing the inhabitants that it was their patriotic duty to turn themselves into contemptible sneaking spies on the doings of their neighbours:

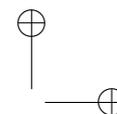
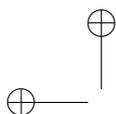
Qu'on face garde et guet en cette ville, ayant l'oeil à ceux qui entreront, pour sçavoir s'ils font aucunes trainés, monopoles, machines et enterprises.

He also issued injunctions against hoarding and small-scale profiteering, and one duly observes that these regulations stopped at just the right place, as they always do:

Qu'on pourvoye aux vivres et envitaillement de la ville, et que ceux qui ont blés et vins en plat païs, les facent venir pour les conserver à ceux ausquels besoin en sera, au profit des seigneurs dedits blés et vins.

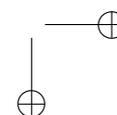
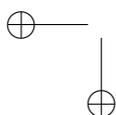
In all probability Rabelais came over to Poitiers with his friends from Ligugé and Fontaine-le-Comte, and heard this official hold forth. He saw all Poitiers turn itself loose for an orgy of "preparedness," and his practiced eye took

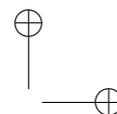
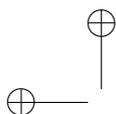




in the humour of the situation without any loss to speak of. When he got around to write the Prologue to the Third Book, the scene recurred to him, and he produced the inimitable sketch of Diogenes and the Corinthians in the war against Philip of Macedon. If people ever learn how to think about what they read, that story of Diogenes will be worth more to the cause of peace than a thousand “conferences” of political mountebanks and scoundrels who would trade off their immortal souls, if they had them, for a turn at place and power, and throw in their risen Lord for good measure.

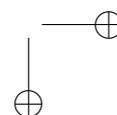
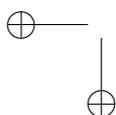
A year after Pavia, the queen-regent and her daughter, Marguerite of Navarre, stopped at Poitiers on their way to Spain to get Francis I out of jail. No doubt Rabelais dropped into town as on the former occasion, for the chance of a look at the gifted and pleasing Marguerite. Subsequently he dedicated the Third Book to her, though not out of any romantic sentiment for her *beaux yeux*. Such impulses seem not to have been much in his line; apparently he was not susceptible to the charms of the fair sex, as a rule. There is a bare record of one attachment, but nothing is known about it except the fact that it resulted in the birth of a son who died at the age of two years. His attention to Marguerite was strictly in the line of duty. She had got the king, her brother, to issue him a copyright – an unusual privilege at that time, and hard to get – and Rabelais paid off the obligation in the conventional way. When the Third Book was published, he managed to forge out a dozen lines of the very worst poetry imaginable, and printed them as a dedication; so the account was square.

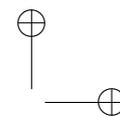
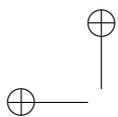




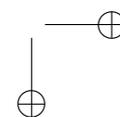
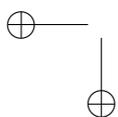
The record of these two able and accomplished women, Louise of Savoy and her daughter, brings one's mind back to the topic of feminism; a topic that seems especially associated with the history of Poitiers. A study of the Renaissance's great women impresses one with a sense of the amount of time and labour they put in on straightening things up after some numskull of a man had made a mess of them. They were busy almost all their days with the grinding task of keeping their menfolk out of mischief, and cleaning up after them when they had got into mischief. Louise and Marguerite certainly spoiled Francis I, but by all accounts he was such a poor affair to start with that spoiling did not much matter. When Louis XII gruffly prophesied that "the great lubber" who was to succeed him would ruin the kingdom, he showed that he had Francis's measure. No doubt Francis's mother and sister had it too. Francis seems to have been in many ways quite lovable, however, so as Louise and Marguerite rolled up their sleeves for the sorry job of housecleaning that they saw lying ahead of them, they probably thought they would get what compensation they could from the pleasure of spoiling him.

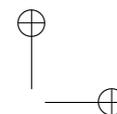
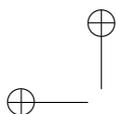
We have been much amused here in Poitiers by a little white cat that belongs to the hotel. It is a pleasant, pretty creature, restless under petting, preferring to roam by itself, but never straying off the property. Usually it is much bored, hunting industriously for something to do, and finding nothing, finally decides, like Mr. Pickwick's acquaintance in the Fleet, to "take it out in sleep." Having graduated into the star-boarder class, we take our meals with the elect on a balcony that opens out from the dining-room and overlooks a very charming garden.





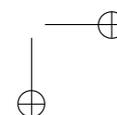
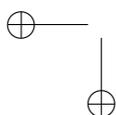
At lunch-time the cat is usually wandering about, its white body making a pleasant picture against the green of the grass. We get a good deal of diversion out of watching its attempts on insects and bits of fluff floating in the breeze; the little creature seems so desperately hard up for amusement. We wonder why it does not muster up ambition enough to run away from home and see the world. The hotel owns some pigeons, and when we left Poitiers, our last sight of the little cat was as it lay on a grassy slope, dozing in the sun amidst half a dozen pigeons who were quietly preening themselves in the friendliest unconcern imaginable.

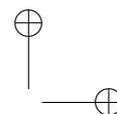
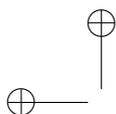




CHAPTER VII

We lingered interminably in the environs of Poitiers, wandering here and there, afflicted with what the late Paxton Hibben so well called “the incurable laziness that besets many active people.” Going into Ligugé one afternoon, and strolling down the avenue of trees towards the Benedictine abbey church, we heard a service going on. This surprised us, for we did not know that the Benedictine monks had come back after the French government cleared them all out in 1901. A dozen or so of them were there in the choir, singing some kind of office, we did not know what, and singing very well. We were all the congregation there was, and we stayed until the service was over, some fifteen or twenty minutes, and watched the monks go out in procession. The one whom we took to be the abbot was a noble-looking individual, tall and spare, with a Roman cast of countenance, highly intelligent. In profile he looked like certain busts of Cicero that we have seen, and he officiated with a fine Roman dignity. Traditionally, monks are supposed to be big and fat, but he and his retinue did not fill the bill; there was not a fat one among them. We kept this in

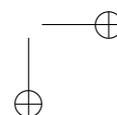
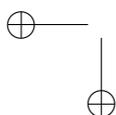


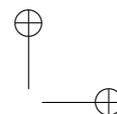
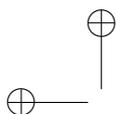


mind afterwards, and noticed that none of the monks we saw in France came up to expectations in this particular.

This monastic property was fortified by the English during the Hundred Years' War, and in 1359 the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages profited by an absence of the soldiery to tear the whole thing down. The entire premises lay in ruins for a long time, and was rebuilt only in part and by slow degrees. In Rabelais's time it may have retained some traces of fortification, but there are none now. We walked along the outside wall leading away from the church, and considered the low, heavy, round structure built into the wall after the manner of a watch-tower, and known as "Rabelais's tower." The tradition is that he lived there, in the second-storey room, and that this room was the "little chamber" from which, "in bed this bright September morn," he wrote his rhymed letter urging his friend Jean Bouchet to let business go by the board and come over to Ligugé. The tradition is fairly old, though it may not be authentic; all any one knows is that the tower bore the name of Rabelais as far back as the beginning of the seventeenth century. Looking the structure over, we hoped he had better quarters; living there seemed about as cheerful as living in an American county jail.

We would have liked to go in the tower, but this, like nearly everything in France that one really wants to do, was *défendu*. We could not even get in the monastery grounds, for the property is in the hands of the State now, and is being used for some governmental enterprise or other, the nature of which we did not discover. During the war it was used as a hospital for wounded Belgian soldiers; perhaps it still serves some purpose of that

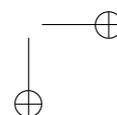
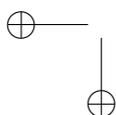


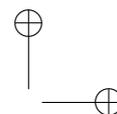
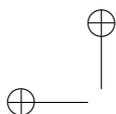


kind. However that may be, visitors are warned to keep out. We consoled ourselves easily, for there is nothing of interest to see; that is, nothing associated either with the period or with Rabelais. So, having cursed the Protestants and revolutionists anew, we varied our regular ritual by cursing the government on general principles; and then winding up with a sort of general curse all round, we went our way. We were so preoccupied with these devotions that we forgot to find out where the monks live nowadays, though this is not important; there seems to be only a handful of them, and almost any ordinary-sized dwelling would house them all without crowding.

The church is not particularly interesting, except for the sculptured portal, which is graceful and striking; on each side of it is one of the slender prismatic stone shafts that Rabelais derisively calls “skewers” in the twenty-ninth chapter of the Fourth Book. Geoffroy d’Estissac finished the construction of the church, which he found incomplete when he became bishop of the diocese, and probably the portal is due to him. The straight avenue, about two hundred yards long, leading to the church, is the best feature of the entire premises. Fine trees form a continuous Gothic arch over it, and the end of the arch is filled in by the flamboyant-Gothic portal; a lovely and artistic composition, viewed at its best from the far end of the avenue. On a sunny day, with the trees in full leaf, the sight of it is something to remember.

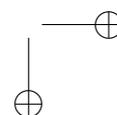
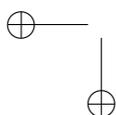
In the last chapter we spoke of the tiny rural settlement called Smarves, where Perrin Dendin lived, something over five miles south of Poitiers, and perhaps half a mile from Ligugé. We passed close to it one afternoon in

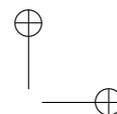
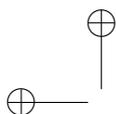




walking from St.-Benoît to Ligugé, a matter of two or two-and-a-half miles. We mention this in order to say that the reader will find this walk one of the most charming in the world, lying as it does by sightly fields and hedgerows, through lanes that have the attractive grace of English lanes, and with an occasional wide prospect of tillage animated by little groups of good domestic architecture. We had everything in our favour on this walk; the day was perfect, and the time of year just right to show the vegetation at its best; so we cut down our pace to a stroll, and made the most of our good fortune, getting back to Poitiers by the late *Bummelzug* from Ligugé. This walk remains in our memory side by side with one that we took in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg under similar conditions late in May, some years ago. If a person prefers, as we do, a panorama of cultivated scenery to one of wild scenery, we know of none that will please him more than the one he sees in Luxembourg while walking from Bourscheid to Heiderscheid by way of Feulen. At one point near Feulen we counted up eighteen little hamlets visible from where we stood.

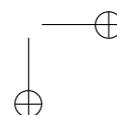
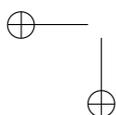
On another afternoon we went to Fontaine-le-Comte, a short three miles west of Ligugé, to see the place where “the noble abbot Ardillon” used to have his establishment, in which he entertained Rabelais and sundry other cultivated people, giving them a regime of plain living and high thinking. His monastery was founded in 1127. Like many others of the kind, it was set up in the middle of all outdoors, remote from any settlement; and even now the hamlet of Fontaine is almost too small to count as a settlement. The English sacked the abbey during the Hundred Years’ War; so we dutifully devoted the first

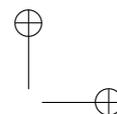
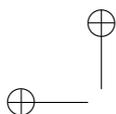




few moments of our stay to the grateful task of cursing the English. Really, one gets up quite an imposing roster of comminations in passing through these districts. The monastery was rebuilt in good season to be destroyed again, this time by the Protestants. Only a very few fragments of the buildings are left; they are used as dwellings, of a poor and depressing order. One sees, however, a good door way, extremely massive, and surmounted by a sculptured shield.

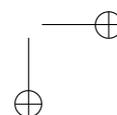
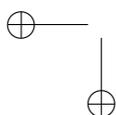
The church was spared in the general destruction, as was often the case. The iconoclasts appear to have been particularly venomous against the monastic establishments, and if they could make a clean sweep of these, and dispossess and scatter the monks, they were sometimes willing to let the churches alone. This might be taken as evidence of an economic motive behind their religious fanaticism; there were too many monks and monasteries, and they were too prosperous – this is the way it might naturally impress the Protestants and revolutionists, who were mostly of an unprivileged class that had to skirmish for its meals. The church at Fontaine, otherwise unimpressive, is big enough, one would think, to hold all the monks in Christendom. One looks with amazement at the size of this structure, set out in the midst of the blank countryside. It gives one a fair notion of the number of monastic brethren who fed and roosted in Ardillon's establishment; and there were other establishments just like it, larger or smaller, dotted all over the country, only a rifle-shot apart, housing a colossal army of men who, in the view of the secular populace, were hardly more useful than barnacles, and yet who were fixed in a good thing for life. One can get the point of view of the revo-

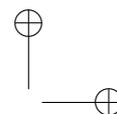
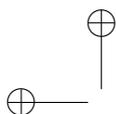




lutionists, who regarded the monasteries only as so many rats' nests; but it strikes one that they could have got rid of the monks somehow without destroying so much noble architecture. Probably the Protestants had their share of the same motive; probably the differences of religious belief were very largely a pretext for dispossession and violence. It would not be the first time that religion was pressed into the service of an economic motive, nor will it be the last.

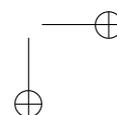
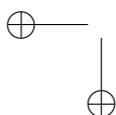
Ardillon's coat-of-arms may be seen in the transept of the church, but we saw no other object of interest. Ardillon kept strictly to the monastic rule of residence, never leaving his station, but his house was always open to men of culture. When Bouchet came to a jumping off place in the practice of law, he would run over from Poitiers for a day or so, and when things at Ligugé began to drag a little, Rabelais would take the pleasant three-mile walk across, and stay until he got ready to go back. Perhaps Jacques Prévost, regent of the university, would accompany Bouchet; and they might run into the traveller and historiographer Quentin, or the cultivated canon, de Puytesson; or another lawyer, Nicolas Petit; or one of the very few learned Franciscans, Trojan; or perhaps a group of university students, "lovers of the Muses," as Bouchet calls them, who had walked down from Poitiers. One reconstructs an extremely agreeable picture of those associations. Bouchet rises to a Virgilian pensiveness in apostrophizing the "bright streams, verdant woods and growing trees, where often on a sunny morning one may find Rabelais with Quentin, Trojan, Petit, each in the garb of a different profession, but all of one mind in the study of humane letters."

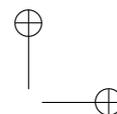
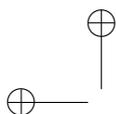




O ubi campi! There is very little doing in that line around Fontaine at the present time, so one is not tempted to remain long. Still, it is pleasant to see the place where there was so much doing four hundred years ago; the imaginative reconstruction of those scenes gives a certain power of inspiration to even such poor fragments as remain of their setting at Fontaine. We begin to notice that four centuries have made greater changes in the Poitou than in the Touraine. Whereas in the Touraine, especially on the terrain of the Picrocholine War, we saw things still remaining very much as Rabelais left them, we now begin more and more to see only the places where things used to be. This is the best reason for beginning a pilgrimage of this kind at Chinon. In that district one's imagination gets such a good start from one's physical surroundings that the force of momentum keeps it going when one visits ravaged and desolate patches like Fontaine, and largely, too, like Ligugé. Poitiers lets one down gradually from the intimacies of la Devinière, the willow-grove, the ford of Vède, "the bridge at the mill"; many things have been changed at Poitiers, but enough remains to keep up a full head of steam in one's imagination – the grottoes of St.-Benoît, Scotsmen's Street, the Lifted Stone, the great hall of the law courts. Yes, decidedly our itinerary is the right one.

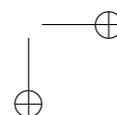
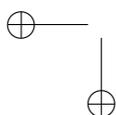
From Poitiers we shifted our base of operations about fifty miles westward to Fontenay-le-Comte, making brief stops by the way at Lusignan, St.-Maixent and Niort. The region that we thus entered is consecrated to the memory of the mermaid Melusine, half woman, half serpent. She came originally from Ireland, and made

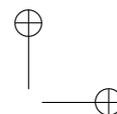
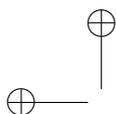




her headquarters in a hillside grotto at Lusignan, where there was a spring called the Font-de-Cé. She had magic powers, being especially handy at building; she could run you up a castle, a fortress or a church in a few hours, doing all her work at night. A guide-book to France, the old original French Baedeker, published in 1552 and still retaining a good deal of interest for the traveller, double-stars the châteaux of Lusignan, Vouvant and Mervent, and attributes their building to Mélusine. We made a note of this, for Vouvant and Mervent are only a little way from Fontenay, where we could easily run out by motor some day and see what souvenirs of the lady's handiwork have survived, if any. She is said also to have built the towers of Parthenay, a good twenty-five miles from Lusignan, and also the fortress at Pouzauges, which is some thirty-five miles beyond Parthenay in the same direction; so considering the state of the roads and also her physical peculiarities, it would seem that she must have had some magical means of getting around.

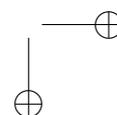
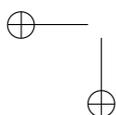
She took a bath every Saturday night, probably originating this practice. We have looked into the matter, and can discover no instance of the custom prevailing anywhere before her time. We have put our findings in the form of a dissertation, with an elaborate critical apparatus, to be presented to the academic world of America on our return, as a matter of "original research," and we expect to gain a great reputation among serious scholars as soon as it is published. Every Saturday night, after a hard week spent on construction-work, Mélusine came back to the Font-de-Cé, and gave herself a good thorough going-over. She had magical facilities whereby, if any intruder came along, she instantly became invisible.

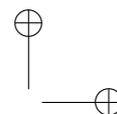
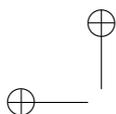




Mélusine was extremely chary and captious about being seen, for some reason, perhaps feeling a little embarrassment on account of her physique. There are several versions of the legend about the difference of opinion with her husband which sent her marriage on the rocks, but they all agree in ascribing it to some indiscretion of his upon this point. Before the marriage took place, she laid it down as a condition that at certain times, or under certain circumstances, her husband should not try to get sight of her; some say it was when she was taking her weekly tub, and others say it was when she was engaged in her building-operations. She gave him fair warning that if he broke over, he would never have a second chance. He did break over, she immediately vanished from sight, and he never again laid eyes on her. This husband appears to have been a man of quality, for in the Middle Ages the great feudal family of Lusignan, which distinguished itself in the Crusades, even furnishing some kings of Jerusalem, and gave its name to the town of Lusignan, claimed descent from Mélusine, and hence by implication from her husband also.

Pouzauges was Mélusine's last contract in the building line. Her inveterate objection to scrutiny was the ruin of it, and also of all the other structures she had put up. While she was at work at night in Pouzauges, some one came by and saw her, and in her surprise and wrath – probably she had been annoyed in that way several times already – she pronounced a comprehensive curse of slow decay, *un lent déperissement*, upon all her works; they should perish, she swore, “at the rate of one stone a year.” It seems to have worked out somewhat that way as far as the château of Lusignan is concerned, for there is very

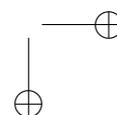
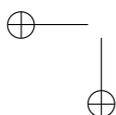


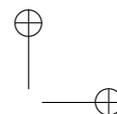
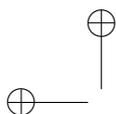


little of it left; some of the fragments have been taken up into a couple of newer buildings, and there is some debris of the early structure lying about. We shall look over the situation at Mervent and Vouvant when we get around to it, and take Mélusine's word for the others.

Rabelais knew the legend of Mélusine, and refers to it in the thirty-eighth chapter of the Fourth Book, where he describes the war against the Chitterlings. Making out that the Chitterlings are a considerable race, and not to be despised, among other distinguished representatives he cites Mélusine, saying that she "was woman from the head to the prick-purse, and thence downward was a serpentine Chitterling, or, if you will have it otherwise, a Chitterlingdized serpent."

One particularly interesting descendant in the family line coming down from Mélusine, was Geoffroy de Lusignan, called Geoffroy of the Great Tooth. Rabelais manages to get Pantagruel into Mélusine's family, too, as a kind of shoe-string relative, saying that Geoffroy was the grandfather of the beautiful cousin of the elder sister of the aunt of the son-in-law of the uncle of the daughter-in-law of Pantagruel's stepmother. Geoffroy was lord of Vouvant – another item of interest to take us there – and by all accounts was a most rampageous fellow in his earlier years, always on the war-path and thirsting for blood. He fell out with the abbot of Maillezais, summoned his servitors and put the place to fire and sword, for which he was promptly excommunicated by the pope. He "squared" himself, however, by rebuilding the abbey, making it better than it was before, and then giving it some large endowments. He died at peace with everybody all round, the pope lifted the embargo, the

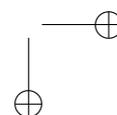
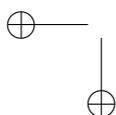


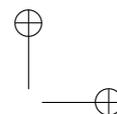
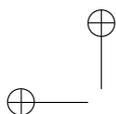


monks buried him in state, even erecting a fine cenotaph in his honour, with a stone effigy on it. All of which is but one more illustration of the mighty truth that you can't keep a good man down.

The head of the statue that the monks of Maillezais put up over Geoffroy's cenotaph in the abbey – he was buried at Vouvant, not at Maillezais – was accidentally preserved. It was raked out of some rubbish in 1834, and is now in the museum at Niort. A replica of it is on the railway-station at Lusignan, serving just as well, probably, for any one who does not wish to stop off at Niort to see the original. The monks evidently laid themselves out to compliment Geoffroy by representing him in full character. In the fifth chapter of the Second Book, Rabelais has Pantagruel studying this statue of his ancestor and somewhat terrified by his appearance, seeing him “set forth in the representation of a man in extreme fury, drawing his great malchus falchion half-way out of his scabbard.” The face is indeed that of a man in a great rage, the mouth half-open, the eyes glaring, brows drawn, and mustache bristling. Pantagruel took the charitable view that doubtless “there was some wrong done him, whereof he requireth his kindred to take revenge. I will inquire further into it, and then do what shall be reasonable.”

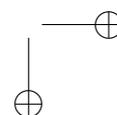
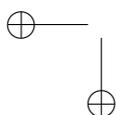
We found Lusignan a rather pleasant place of perhaps a couple of thousand inhabitants, in an agreeable situation on the Vonne, one of the many little brooks and creeks that Europe dignifies by the name of rivers. We have already spoken of the differences between Europe and America in the matter of natural scenery, and nowhere is a difference clearer than in the aspect of the rivers. In

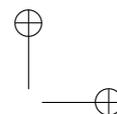
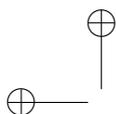




Europe, man has done his best to beautify them, with only an occasional lift from the Lord, while in America it is the other way. In their natural state, the rivers of Europe, such of them as we have seen, are quite unexciting; it is what men have done with them that counts. We have seen only one exception that is at all striking – the Mosel, between Trier and Cochem, would pass muster anywhere in America as a beautiful stream. Even so, the vineyards and villages help it out greatly. We have often wondered what visiting Europeans must think of the rivers on our Atlantic seaboard, the Kennebec, Penobscot, Connecticut, Hudson, Delaware, Susquehanna; they see nothing like them at home. Perhaps their eye never gets beyond the deformations that industry and commerce have put upon the natural grandeur of these noble possessions. Foreigners probably conclude that the state of our rivers shows clearly enough what the Almighty thinks of wealth, by the kind of people He gives it to.

Moving on to St.-Maixent, we found another agreeable and unpretentious town, and one that seems to have been uncommonly little affected by the passage of time. In Rabelais's day it was celebrated for its theatricals, which ranked with those of Poitiers and Montmorillon, and it was a reminiscence of these that brought us here. In the twenty-seventh chapter of the Third Book, Panurge tells of a scandalous scene that he witnessed here during a performance of the *Passion*, and while Panurge probably does not let the story lose anything in his telling of it, no doubt something of the sort sometimes took place on these occasions. Rabelais also picked up another local anecdote which he tells in the thirteenth chapter of the Fourth Book, a story of the poet Villon, having retired to

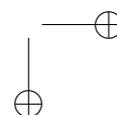
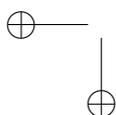


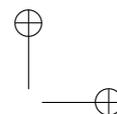
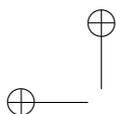


St.-Maixent “in his old age,” putting on a performance of the *Passion* in the Poitevin dialect. The tradition on which the story is founded is hardly authentic, for what little historical evidence is available seems to show that Villon died at about the age of thirty-three, and although he says in his *Testament* that he had casually learned “a little Poitevin,” it is unlikely that he could have managed the dialect well enough to write it into a drama of such character and such length. But the story is a great one, nevertheless; in fact, it is one of the achievements that mark Rabelais as an incomparable story-teller.

It runs thus: Villon picked his actors, assigned their parts, and being short of a proper costume for an old peasant who was to represent God the Father, he called on the sacristan of the Franciscan monks, friar Stephen Tickletohy, to lend him a cope and a stole. There was nothing unusual about this request, but Tickletohy refused, saying that their provincial statutes forbade lending anything to players. Villon told him that this was a religious play, and that the statute applied only to secular plays and those of a low order, but Tickletohy still refused; so Villon went back and told his actors that Tickletohy was a miserable fellow whom the Lord would probably punish.

On the following Saturday, Tickletohy went off on a begging-expedition, mounted on a young mare, to St.-Ligarius, a town some little distance away, and Villon saw his chance. He assembled in the marketplace those of his cast who were to act the part of devils in the play, all in full costume, armed with horns and cowbells, torches and fuses, led them out and hid them along the road

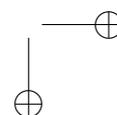
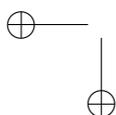


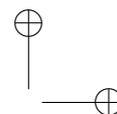
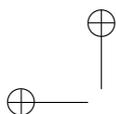


to St.-Ligarius. When Tickletohy came jogging home, they leaped out at him, “and in a frightful manner threw fire from all sides upon him and his filly foal, ringing and tingling their bells, and howling like so many real devils.” The filly took fright, threw Tickletohy, dragged him by the stirrup, and finally kicked him to pieces, “insomuch that she trepanned his thick skull so that his cockle brains were dashed out near the Hosanna, or High Cross.”

Tickletohy’s monastery is still here, reconstructed much as it was before the Protestants paid it their peculiar attentions, but it is now used as a barrack. The marketplace cannot have changed greatly; there are several buildings on it which were there in Rabelais’s day, notably one structure on a corner, easily identified by its overhanging upper storey supported by pillars. We walked out of town to find the scene of Tickletohy’s disaster, passing by the site of the “summer-house outside the gate which leads to St.-Ligarius” – the road-house at which Villon entertained his devilry. The town-gate is of course gone with all the ancient walls, but its site is easily discernible. The “Hosanna, or High Cross” – the cross to which the faithful walked in procession on Palm Sunday, singing *Hosanna* – survives in the name of the “Street of the High Cross,” which leads out of town into the road to St.-Ligarius; and it very probably stood at the junction of this road with a lane called the *chemin de Couperies*.

We walked some distance along this road to what seemed to be the most eligible point for Tickletohy’s accident to have taken place. There was an old property at this point which was long known as the “fief of the

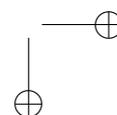
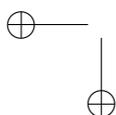


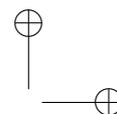
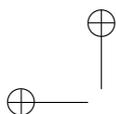


dead monk.” The origin of the name is unknown; perhaps some incident more or less resembling Tickletohy’s misfortune actually took place there, and a legend more or less like the one related by Rabelais grew out of it. The late afternoon was beautiful, we had been on our feet all day, so we sat down in the grass by the roadside and waxed imaginative, speculative, romantic, over the fate of Tickletohy. But not for long; it was a mistake. There were fleas in that grass, and they came out by companies and battalions and whole army-corps, and swarmed over us, so we adjourned in a hurry. No pressure of romance and imagination will ever again cause us to sit down in the grass of a French roadside until after the first frost.

Returning to town, we dislodged the fleas, doctored their bites – we are becoming expert in these exercises – had our dinner in such peace as we could find, and then started out again for an evening walk around the town park, an enormous esplanade surrounded by a prettily wooded boulevard. We wondered at the size of it, as it is spacious enough for a town four times as large as St.-Maixent. However, French towns are usually pretty generous with open spaces, and early evening walks seem to be the regular thing; we had the whole population with us here. We made the circuit of the promenade, and then turned in, sleepy after a long day in the open.

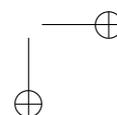
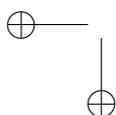
Next morning we moved on to Niort, where we found little to interest us except the head of Geoffroy’s statue, that was salvaged out of the ruins of the abbey at Maillezais. The history of Niort is of the usual kind, such as the tourist in these regions soon comes to know by heart. The town was bandied about awhile between the English and the French, and more or less knocked

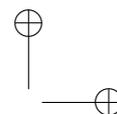
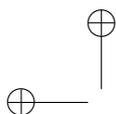




to pieces in the course of these transfers, during the Hundred Years' War. Whatever of it survived this progressive buccaneering received the customary attentions of the Protestants in 1588, whereby Niort lost a fine cathedral. Henry II of England built a castle here on the bank of the Sèvre, about the middle of the twelfth century; most of it still remains, an uncomfortable and forbidding affair, but impressive enough, and it presents the visitor with an unusual advantage, in that he does not have to climb a hill to get to it. Madame de Maintenon, of evil memory, is said by some authorities to have been born in the second-storey room of the tower; by others, in the Hôtel Chaumont, 5 rue du Pont, which was used as a town jail at the time; her family being in durance as political prisoners. Another tradition has her born in an old house at the end of a court off the rue Victor Hugo, no. 13, but this is discredited. We did not pursue the legend; she was a success in her way, and her field of operations made her conspicuous while the going was good, but many American women of our own day seem to have done about as well in the same line of trade, so her career presented no new interest, and we decided to let her memory rest.

Niort has a rather fine old house on the rue du Petit-St.-Jean, which bears the name of the d'Estissac family. We went to see it, but were unable to turn up any particular connexion with Geoffroy d'Estissac, so we moved on. This town possesses the largest public square we ever saw; possibly it was the scene of the noisy rowdyism that Rabelais speaks of as prevailing at the local fairs, and perhaps it was the scene of the local drama that he mentions. Its surface is of yellow clay that dries to





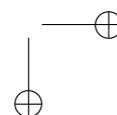
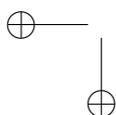
powder, and a breath of wind over it sets up a cloud of dust like a Sahara sandstorm. Dust is a vicious plague of French towns, and one that our own towns and countryside have made fairly good progress with allaying, though our large cities could do a great deal better with it than they do.

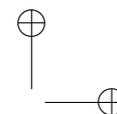
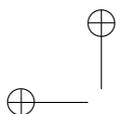
We left Niort, rather tired of our run of one-night stands, and glad of a prospect of settling down under one roof for a week or so. Our mail caught up with us at Fontenay, most of it utterly trivial and worthless, causing us to reflect seriously whether modern progress in rapid communication is anything to be proud of, considering the uses to which it is mostly put. Occasionally it is serviceable, like a revolver; but why let everybody have a revolver at three cents a shot and keep firing it off continually to no purpose? Our notion is that if it cost twenty-five cents to send a letter, the quality of one's correspondence would improve surprisingly. It is possible to make a good thing too cheap, and our postal service gives far too much pork for a shilling, as the Virginians say.

In our mail at Fontenay, however, we found an amusing note from Harris, who is wandering around some little French and Spanish villages, looking at architecture. He wrote us from the French border, and his letter ended characteristically:

Don't come here. The filth in these parts is indescribable, and the stench from this surface drainage is worse than anything you'll encounter in the lowest depths of hell.

Harris is an engaging young numskull from Missouri who went through the regular line of athletics and "stu-

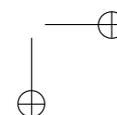
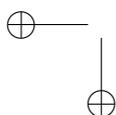


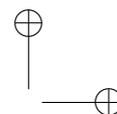
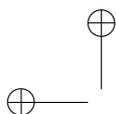


dent activities” at college, thus developing a mortal aversion to work, which resulted in his deciding to “go in” for architecture and art in Europe before settling down to honourable labour. His well-to-do family sent him over, which they should never have done, because while he is really one of the most winsome fellows alive, he is the sort of guileless ass that seems marked out by fate to wander innocently into extraordinary situations which breed no end of trouble. When we last saw him, two years ago, he had married a French wife, and had also just returned from a trip into the Savoie. His mother’s family being Savoyard French, the idea occurred to him one day, out of a clear sky, to go over there to the ancestral village and see if he could turn up any of his kinfolk. He told us the story of his adventures, and we repeat it here in his own words:

Well, as I was saying, I finally got to this place, which wasn’t any more than a double handful of houses plastered up against a mountainside. At a distance they made a pattern like a loose charge of buckshot – sort of scattering, you know. I didn’t see how people ever managed to farm on that slant, it was so steep, but they did it somehow, for there were vineyards and ploughed places almost all the way to the top. They must have to use side-hill ploughs in that country – you’ve heard that old joke about farming in Vermont. I was pretty hungry, and it looked as though I’d be hungrier still by the time I’d shinned up to where those houses were, so I thought I’d get a bite at the railway station.

There was a lunch-counter there, but it wasn’t much, only a little kind of bar, and there were a couple of dirty tables off to one side. I sat down at one of them. The barkeeper was a mean fellow with a bad temper – I could see that – and the stuff he gave me to eat was fearful. So was the wine. I said to myself, if that was the sort of thing they grew up there on the front of that palisade, it would account for a lot. Just then I



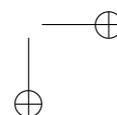
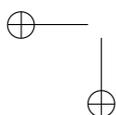


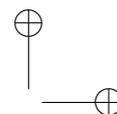
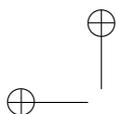
heard a commotion outside, and in came a big, wicked-looking fellow, drunk and carrying a shotgun, and five men with him who looked as tough as they make 'em.

The big chap went staving up to the bar, and called for drinks all round. Wild West fashion. He made me think of Arizona somehow, for he had on an Alpine hat with a feather in it, and looked as picturesque as an old-style cowboy. But I didn't have more than time enough to take him in before they caught sight of me, and right away they began to give me dirty looks, and talk about foreigners coming into the country, and how they ought to be run out on sight, or maybe killed. They kept this up a long time, and I lay low, pretending I wasn't paying any attention and didn't understand what they were saying, but I was worried, I tell you, for there were six of them and only one of me, and I thought any minute they'd start something in earnest. However, they didn't; after they had had three or four drinks, and said all the mean things about foreigners that they could think of, they trooped out, and I was mighty glad to see them go.

I paid up, and tried to get the barkeeper to tell me if he knew anything about a family around there named Lagrange. He was short as piecrust; wouldn't say a thing. I kept at him, telling him I had come all the way from Paris to hunt up that family, and I wanted to find them. After a minute or so of that, he suddenly blew up. He banged both fists down on the counter and yelled, "See here, what are you asking me all these questions for? What do you want of those people?" So I explained that they were my mother's folks – told him the whole story, in fact, straight out, with all the whys and wherefors. When I got through, he turned around and looked out the window for three or four minutes without saying anything; you could see he was thinking it over; and then finally he said, "Well, if that's all so, then that man who just went out of here is your cousin."

I got a room from a woman up in the village, and stayed there a week, and do you know, in all that time I could never get a sight of a single relative. The woman I boarded with knew them all, told me all about them, but I never saw hide or hair of one of them. Nor did I find out why, until long afterward, and then only by accident. Somewhere up on the side of that precipice there was a piece of land about big enough to bury



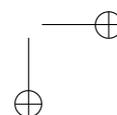
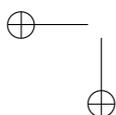


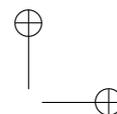
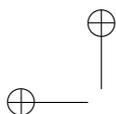
a dog in if it lay flat instead of on edge – not the dog, I mean, but the land – that under French law belonged to me, as my mother’s son, and those blighters thought I might somehow hear about it and would probably put in a claim for it. Now what do you think of a thing like that?

But what I really started to tell you about was the way I happened to get married. You see, in the summer, after I had worked awhile in the art-school at Paris, I went to a seacoast town where one of my teachers, who had gone down to do marine stuff, had set up a studio on the side to help pay expenses. He scratched up eight or ten students, mostly doing drawing and anatomy, and among them was a girl who commuted in by rail twice a week from somewhere out in the suburbs. I got the habit of walking to the station with her and chatting until train-time; nothing in it, you know, except that she was a nice girl, easy to look at and talk with, and I liked her first-rate – that was all. You know how such things go in the States, and nobody thinks anything of it.

After about six months, though, by jingo, one day she served notice on me that I couldn’t go to the train with her any more. Some woman who lived out there – one of the neighbours – had seen us together and told her mother, and the old lady wouldn’t stand for it. Either it had to stop, or there would be no more art lessons. Well, that was that. I told the girl I was sorry, which was true enough, and laid off. I didn’t want to get her in a mess with her folks, and yet I was a little sore too, because there seemed bound to be a nasty suspicion at the bottom of it, as there would be if it had happened in the States. However, I told myself that they probably have different traffic-regulations over here, and most likely I was wrong about this, so I gave the girl a wide berth and thought no more about it.

Next time she came in, I noticed she looked at me in a queer way, sort of sizing me up, more or less as if I was merchandise and as if she might take the notion to buy, if the price was right. You’ve seen that sort of look on a woman’s face when she has fished something up off a bargain-counter. I didn’t pay any special attention, though, and nothing happened; she went to her train, and I stayed where I was. In fact, I remember I was busy about something or other when she left the studio, and didn’t even know she had gone. When she came in again two





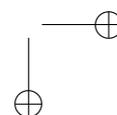
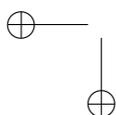
days later, however, she marched straight up to me, handed me a piece of paper with a telephone-number on it, and told me her father wished to see me at once, and I should call him up.

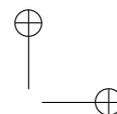
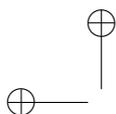
Now, I hadn't the faintest idea who her father was, or what sort of people her folks were. I wondered what the mischief he wanted to see me about, and while I had no reason to worry, I couldn't help feeling I was in for something unpleasant. After the lesson, the girl marched off with her head high in the air, I went to a telephone, darned uneasy and low in my mind, called up the number she gave me, and got an answer from the Navy Department. It startled the wits out of me for a minute, but thinking I probably had the wrong number, I gave my name and asked if Monsieur So-and-so was in; and presently word came back that the Commandant was in, and would be pleased to see me immediately.

Well, I went around there, pretty thoroughly scared; and when I arrived, the more brassboulder flunkeys I saw, the more scared I got, and there was a lot of them. They passed me along from one to another, till the last one turned me into a stylish big office with nobody in it but a fat man with a black beard, sitting in a swivel-chair in his shirtsleeves with his waistcoat unbuttoned, looking out a window. I could see he must be a top-notch by his being allowed around the Admiralty in that kind of undress. He didn't even turn his head when I came in; just sat there motionless while I stood at attention in the middle of the floor, the way I'd learned when I was in a military school at home. After a couple of minutes – mind you, without giving me a single glance or making a single motion – he snapped out, "How long have you been in love with Lucienne?"

Could you beat that? Rattled as I was, I thought I hadn't heard straight or that he was using some fancy French idiom and must have meant how long had I known the girl; so I told him, about six months. Again he never budged, never looked around, but kept on sitting there and staring out that window for as much maybe as two or three minutes.

Then all of a sudden he jumped up and went storming to and fro across the room, swinging his arms and waving them around like a lunatic, but didn't say a word. On his last trip across he went too far, and busted the leg off a chair with his foot. This seemed to bring him round, for he came over to where I was





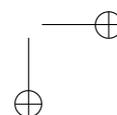
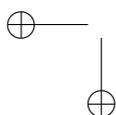
standing, dropped down on his knees in front of me, and turned loose.

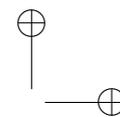
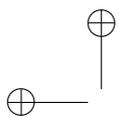
“Young man,” he said, and he began to shed big tears down into his beard, as big as cherry-stones, “you are kind and considerate. I see you are. I ask only one thing. Do not take Lucienne out of France. I could not bear it. It would kill her mother. See, I am an old man, and she is all I have. I love her. My wife and I get on well, we have always got on well, but Lucienne is my only joy in life and I can not part from her, so tell me you will be compassionate.

“But stay – an idea!” he scrambled up on his feet, and struck his forehead like a ham actor registering sudden thought. “One more request – only one – give me six weeks. Perhaps I can find her another man, a Frenchman, whom I can trust to keep her here. You are an American, no doubt you love your country, perhaps in time you would find the sacrifice too great even for your generous heart. Give me six weeks. You are experienced, you know the ways of women, you know that when a woman’s passions are aroused, she will have a man, come what may – well, perhaps I can find one for Lucienne in six weeks. If not, I shall say no more.”

He fired off all this French comedy-father stuff like shots out of a Luger pistol, and wound up on an attitude of majestic resignation for all the world like Napoleon. Then he began again:

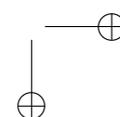
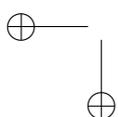
“If not, well, I will disclose my intentions. I will make an admission, for I see you are an honourable man who will respect my confidence. My position gives me large influence. I have not always used it scrupulously, I have made myself richer than I should be. As a man of the world, you know that one does not hold a position of this kind for nothing, if one has friends, and my friends are always glad to oblige me, as they have reason to be. I will do everything for you. I will get you naturalized at once, and my friends will put you in an excellent position where you can maintain yourself generously, and when I die, all that I have shall be yours, if only you consent never to take Lucienne out of France.”

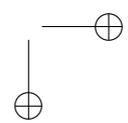
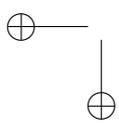
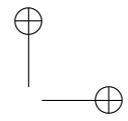
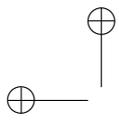


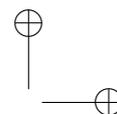
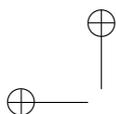


The six weeks' option expired and the girl married Harris, just as she had meant to do all along. Curiously, it turned out well, as far as it had gone. Harris spoke with sheepish pride of what a lovely wife she made him and how happy he was, and evidently he had no suspicion whatever that his wife and her mother had stacked the cards scandalously both on him and the old man. He asked us up to meet her at dinner the day after he told us this yarn, but we knew we could not keep a straight face, so we declined on the plea that we were going out of town.

American mothers and daughters never put up unscrupulous little jobs like this on eligible young men, so we thought that the novelty of Harris's experience might give it a passing interest to such of the fair sex as may be among our readers.



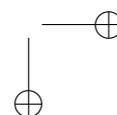
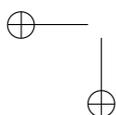


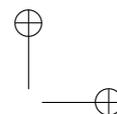
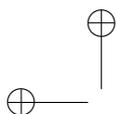


CHAPTER VIII

After Chinon, Fontenay is somewhat a secondary Mecca for the Rabelaisian, for it is here that Rabelais makes his first appearance in documented history. A letter exists, written by him to the great scholar and friend of scholars, Guillaume Budé; it is dated at Fontenay, the fourth of March, 1522. At this time he was a Franciscan monk in priest's orders, aged twenty-six, an inmate of the local monastery of Puy-St.-Martin; and he was so well advanced in Greek and Latin studies, and so well acquainted with Roman law, that even Budé does not hesitate to praise him for his proficiency.

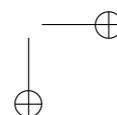
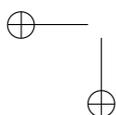
These few facts, simple as they are, give rise to interesting questions that no one, probably, will ever be able to answer. First, having set out to become a scholar, why did he join the Franciscans? Theirs was the last order in the world for an intending scholar to join, for they did no teaching and were in the main utterly illiterate and made no pretense to the contrary. Then, having joined them, why should he be at Fontenay? There were Franciscan establishments much nearer his home and apparently quite as eligible, one at Cholet, one at Clis-

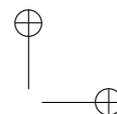
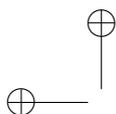




son, one at Mirebeau, only a few miles from where he was born. Again, where did he get his Greek? Greek books were almost non-existent in France at the time, and instruction in the language was practically unknown. The only significant record of Greek as an organized study is that two Greeks had given a few lessons in Paris, towards the end of the fifteenth century, and another individual had carried on a forlorn hope in Greek for three years there, from 1508 to 1512, in the university; traces of the study elsewhere are faint. Almost all the known facts of Rabelais's life and career are of a kind that provokes an intense curiosity which apparently can never be gratified, and none is more tantalizing than these that one encounters at the very outset.

Fontenay was at its best in his lifetime; it has lost character considerably since then, as we discovered on our arrival. It is *par excellence* the place one visits to see where things used to be. It was an old feudal town, very heavily fortified – the remains of the fortifications are still interesting and quite impressive – but not overly noteworthy until Louis XI took stock in it for some reason, and woke it up. He stimulated a good trade in several lines – trust him to see to that – especially in textiles and leather; he also gave it an impetus on the cultural side by establishing an appellate court with a personnel of scholarly and accomplished legists. Thus, as we have already said, Fontenay, rather than Poitiers, became the centre of culture in the Poitou; and it kept its distinction both in culture and commerce for many years. Francis I granted it the heraldic device, *Felicitum ingeniorum fons et scaturigo*, which was no great exaggeration, by all accounts. But then came the religious wars – the town

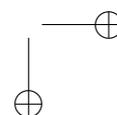
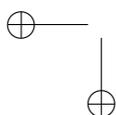


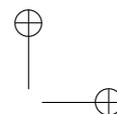
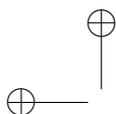


stood eight sieges – and then came the Vendéan war with the republicans – the old story once more, with the same old ending.

Some remains of Rabelais's period still exist, but they have to be enlivened with a great deal of imagination before they produce any striking effect on the visitor. There are a few old houses, mostly in poor shape, unlikely to last much longer. One of the houses on the rue Guillemet is said to have been occupied by André Tiraqueau, the great lawyer and friend of Rabelais, who began his career at Fontenay by an auspicious marriage with Marie Cailler, the eleven-year-old daughter of the *lieutenant-particulier*. This house was not the one frequented by Rabelais, when the local men of letters foregathered in Tiraqueau's garden for pleasant conversation "in the shade of wild laurels," on law, ethics, philosophy and poetry; it belongs to a later period, probably that of Henri II, when Tiraqueau had come up in the world. The fountain or spring-house of Quatre-Tias is intact, a first-rate specimen of Renaissance structure; it was built twenty years after Rabelais's day. It is no longer used; at least, we found the spring closed when we went there. A weather-beaten notice on the wall warned the public not to use the water without boiling it, so we judged that it had been closed rather recently, probably by the board of health or its French equivalent, if there be one.

The monastery is gone completely, the Protestants having attended to it with their customary energy and thoroughness in 1568, forty-two years after Rabelais entered its doors, and fifteen years after his death. It stood where the city hall now stands, and the pleasant little

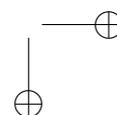
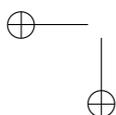


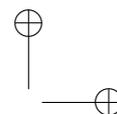
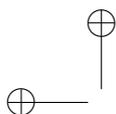


public garden, with its fine growth of trees, is now the only thing to suggest a reminiscence of its surroundings.

The château of Terre-Neuve stands on the edge of town. It was built towards the end of the sixteenth century for the poet and man of letters, Nicolas Rapin, and recently “restored.” Both the house and grounds are very charming; the interior is full of most exquisite objects of art. The best of these, however, are here at the expense of the neighboring château of Coulonges-sur-l’Autise, a dozen miles east of Fontenay, built by Louis d’Estissac, Geoffroy’s nephew, who befriended Rabelais after his uncle Geoffroy died, and who in his boyhood may just possibly – it is a long shot – have had Rabelais as a tutor. The late owner of Terre-Neuve was an enthusiastic collector, and by some unlucky chance was enabled to strip Coulonges of everything in it, and carry his loot to Terre-Neuve; this happened only a few years ago. These objects are very beautiful where they are – they would be beautiful anywhere – but one has one’s opinion of the proprieties in the case. We drove over to Coulonges one day, and found that there is nothing left of the château but the bare building; doors, fireplaces, structural ornaments, all are gone. One resents this kind of thing, and especially resents America’s wholesale devotion to such practices, for our country now is the chief of sinners in this respect.

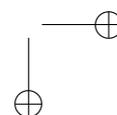
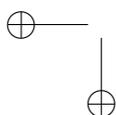
We also drove out to Maillezais, and saw the imposing ruins of the abbey’s church, which subsequently became a cathedral when Maillezais was made a diocese in 1317. A great deal of the structure remains; one would say that the iconoclasts had but got well under way with their work of destruction when something suddenly frightened

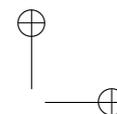
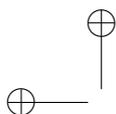




them off. Again, as at Fontaine and many other places, one looks in amazement at this gigantic church standing so far away from any population large enough to account for a hundredth part of its size; it is another testimony to the number of people inhabiting the monastic establishments. It stands on a broad mound, dominating the flatlands that were formerly a marsh, and earlier still were the alluvial banks of an estuary. The monastery itself, as usual, shows but a few fragments remaining, which have been converted to the uses of a farm-property.

Coming towards Maillezais, one begins to see evidence that in one respect, at least, the monks were useful citizens. They were great reclaimers of land. A brigade of them would settle in a swamp, build dikes, drains, canals and canal-reaches, until they had a valuable area in shape for cultivation. Here at Maillezais the ocean would sometimes back up over the whole region where the abbey stood, often bringing a generous assortment of sea-fish with it; and occasionally also an extra hatful of rain up-country would spread the Sèvre over an entire township. The monks stopped both these practices for good and all; there must have been some excellent engineering talent somewhere in the brotherhood, for one can see by the lie of the land that it was a workmanlike job. As one goes on to the south-west, one's respect for the monks' ability and enterprise steadily rises when one sees how much good soil they added to France's arable area. According to our observations, the district around Maillezais marks the beginning of the great mosquito belt. We wondered what the monks did about these pests in the days when they must have been even thicker than they are now. Probably nothing; probably it was the monks who laid

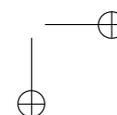
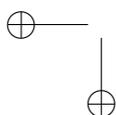


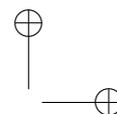
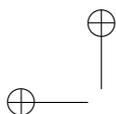


the foundation of that superb indifference to them which one finds prevailing in the local character to-day.

Fontenay seems a strange stage-setting for a feminist controversy, yet a great one went on here in Rabelais's time. The rising young lawyer Tiraqueau started it by writing a book on the marriage-laws and marriage-customs of the Poitou, in which he took the position that women are by nature inferior to men. The book made a stir, and another young legist in the group, a friend of Tiraqueau, named Bouchard, wrote a rather caustic reply to it which stirred the touchy Tiraqueau, and brought him back to the charge, horse, foot and dragoons. He set to work at once to revise and expand his original treatise, pressing all his friends into service, including Rabelais, until at the end of two years he had a volume of some four hundred pages, made up of all the evidence that he and his friends could rake out of law, literature, and the whole course of human history. His book remained in print for a century, running through several revisions. The deadly seriousness of all this pother of learned men over such a subject evidently struck Rabelais's sense of humour to good purpose, for, as we have already said, in the Third Book he devotes many chapters to ridiculing the whole controversy with delightful irony, in his account of Panurge's intended marriage.

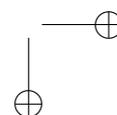
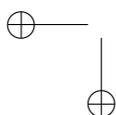
One gets up a feeling of affection for Fontenay, more than the town is worth, as it stands. In spite of its rather broken-down condition, and some few drawbacks that more matter-of-fact tourists might find hard to put up with, it takes one's fancy. There is enough – barely enough – left standing to suggest its history; but one has to know its history pretty thoroughly beforehand, and

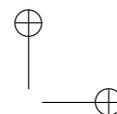
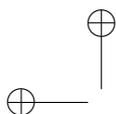




to be penetrated with a sense of that history's peculiar charm, in order to establish the connexion. Like Ligugé and Fontaine, Fontenay suggests what must have been a peculiarly interesting and attractive social life, albeit flavoured with monasticism – a kind of life which the modern world disallows without compensation. This life had few mechanical accessories; no doubt transportation was slow around Fontenay in the sixteenth century, drainage bad, lighting and heating bad, no newspapers, motion-pictures, radios; in all such respects, a primitive existence. But the human spirit was alive, robust, ardent; and there are moments when because of that, one would be glad to rough it awhile for the sake of sitting in with the groups at Fontenay, Fontaine, Ligugé.

Out of respect for the memory of Mélusine we went out to Vouvant and Mervent one day, and found that her prophecy had come true concerning the evil fate that was to befall her handiwork. The castle that she put up at Vouvant must have been enormous; one can make out its ground-plan well enough to get that impression. It is gone now, and we judged by its size that it depreciated at something over its scheduled rate of one stone a year. Probably Mélusine indulged in a little poetic exaggeration when she set that figure, but her main point seems to have come out very satisfactorily. The donjon remains, apparently in first-rate condition; it is called Mélusine's Tower. The visitor may go up in it if he likes, and see the country, but we did not go; we had our doubts whether the view warranted the climb. We waited awhile, seeing a good many people around, and thinking that perhaps some one would make the

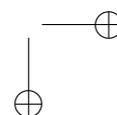
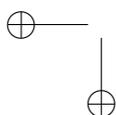


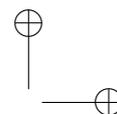
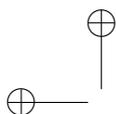


ascent and we could ask whether he had realized on his investment; but nobody took the chance.

As we went away, we debated the question whether our hesitation was due to our having no German blood in our veins. A German would have made straight for the top of that tower, whether there were any view to be had or not. Also he would have done it by preference at five o'clock in the morning. Apparently the German and the brown thrasher have the same instinct, to get up on the highest practicable point in the landscape at the earliest possible moment and sing. As a rule, too, the German will climb up there again once or twice later in the day, probably to keep in practice for the next morning. Go where you will in Germany, in the summer-time, if there is a hill nearer than the next county, you will find an endless procession of Germans stalking up it all day long. The women and children seem to be as completely addicted to this dissipation as the men, and get as much exhilaration out of it.

At Ems four years ago we studied this phenomenon with admiring interest. The right bank of the Lahn at this point is about as high and nearly as steep as the Palisades above Weehawken, and the climb up to the top looked arduous, considering what one was likely to get out of it. As we lingered on the river-level, watching Germans file by us headed for the ascent, and in our unambitious way wondering what they did it for, a middle-aged American couple came along; we judged by their intonation that they were from Ohio. The woman sank down on a seat beside us, fanning a good-natured, florid, alfalfa-fed countenance with her handkerchief, and said, "Now, Elmer, I just won't try to do anything as silly as climb

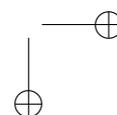
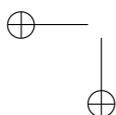


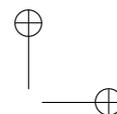
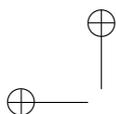


up that mountainside with you, and you needn't think I will. Ill go back to the hotel, and if you want company, you can get one of these husky German girls to go along, for I simply will not be such a fool." There, we thought, spoke the sincere and practical wisdom that has made America great, and we felt a thrill of pride in our country and its starry flag. Elmer considered the matter awhile, and then suggested as a compromise that they might get the German girl to make the trip alone and then come back and report. On this they strolled back into town, followed by our admiring consciousness that we too belong to a conquering race.

The church at Vouvant is of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, remarkable for several architectural features, the one which most interested us being the sculptures of the portal, especially those of what Rabelais calls the zoöphore, the frieze on which figures of animals are sculptured, interspersed with grotesques and caricatures. The legend of Mélusine appears regularly in figures of mermaids on church-portals in this region; and the church at Maillezais has a frieze of wild geese in flight, one of the most beautiful and graceful pieces of sculpture that we have ever seen. On the way back to Fontenay from Mervent, we took a short detour to see the church at Foussais, and found its sculpture to be something worth a great deal more trouble than the sight of it had cost us.

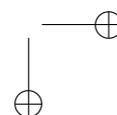
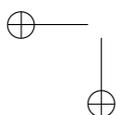
We reentered Fontenay in a cloud of dust, and noticed ahead of us a boy on a bicycle, with some loose loaves of bread protruding by something more than half their length from a wicker basket attached to his handle-bars. The loaves were of the regular shape, about two feet long by five inches thick at the centre, and pointed

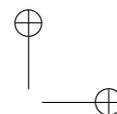
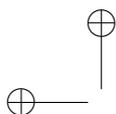




at both ends. One of them fell out on the road; the boy dismounted and recovered it, polished it on his pantaloons until he got all the dust off it but one layer, then replaced it in the basket and went his way. The incident put us in mind of a long-neglected project of ours, to write an elegy or threnody or whatever the proper title may be, on the unprotected life of a loaf of bread in France. We have meant to set about that task ever since the commencement of our acquaintance with French life, and our failure to do it has not been due to any lack of inspiration, but to distrust of our ability to do justice to the subject. However, this little episode at Fontenay reminded us that the matter must be attended to, and we shall get at it in due season.

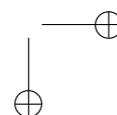
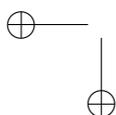
The French are oppressed by a strange superstition about bread. The newspapers feature the price of bread; we are told that some of them carry it under a standing headline, like the weather-reports. If the price of bread goes up by the fraction of a centime, the effect on the country is like the effect of a stock-market crash on the United States. The French do not charge for bread served with a meal, for they say it is the gift of God. This belief may be the reason for their inflamed interest in bread and the peculiar ways they have of expressing their interest, though we cannot understand either the one or the other, even on this hypothesis. They carry bread through the streets, exposed to all the settlings of microbe-infested dust, and subsequently devour it "as is"; the boy we saw at Fontenay was doubtless making deliveries – we have seen hundreds of such in France. Women carry bread home under their arms, pressed tight against effluvious armpits, and against smocks that have not been washed

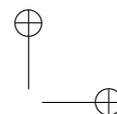
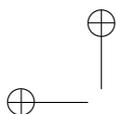




since the fall of the July Monarchy. Men pause on park-benches to rest and read the newspaper, standing their bread up on end beside them, where dogs sniff at it and make it the object of their peculiar etiquette, and where that portion of it which rests against the bench and the owner's trousers accumulates a rich and varied bacterial content. Yet in its official capacity, as one might say, bread is the French nation's measure of all secular values, its pride, its fetich, its Caaba-stone. Decidedly, this problem is too deep for us; we cannot solve it.

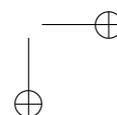
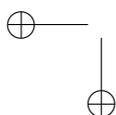
In our youth we used to hear the proverb that bread is the staff of life and whisky is the stilts, and that both should be revered accordingly; but while we have managed to preserve a reasonably orthodox attitude towards whisky, our childhood's faith in bread has lapsed. We believe that people are induced to swallow bread for the same reason that leads certain savages to swallow earth, merely to allay the gnawings of a morbid appetite, with no chance of nutrition. The French make their bread of white flour – flour that has had every grain of food-value bolted out of it – which they work up into a paste with water; and while flour-paste is first-rate stuff to hang wall-paper with, we doubt its value as an article of diet, especially when kiln-dried by the French baking process until it takes on a quarter-inch or so of impregnable shell, like armour-plate. When we first visited France, many years ago, we got quite worked up and sympathetic over one of their recurrent crises in the price of bread; but after we had seen and sampled the article, and had broken a tooth or two and found out what sort of thing it was that they were making such

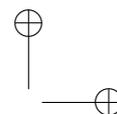
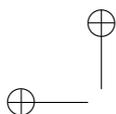




a fuss about, our interest fell to zero, and we shortly stabilized it at that point.

After a few days spent in a pleasant lackadaisical fashion at Fontenay, we took to the road again, this time for Rochelle. The way leads through an uninteresting flat stretch of reclaimed land which continues to bear testimony to the industry and engineering skill of the early monks. Peasants still cross the remaining wet spots on stilts, after the traditional manner; one admires their excellent skill and dexterity. We presently had occasion to notice also that wooden shoes are a noble good thing to wear in a swampy region, because they keep your feet dry and do not need to be greased or treated, as leather does. The French put out a first-rate commercial wooden shoe, machine-made, which commands a great deal of respect when one sees it in service. If we lived in this district we would wear them. Besides being serviceable they are also apparently indestructible. You need never buy more than one pair unless somebody steals them, which we should say would be more or less likely to happen if the chance offered – the rural population in these parts has an unscrupulous look – and you can pass them on to your descendants, in the fullness of time, as an heirloom. What bothers us is how the French manufacturer keeps the market from permanent saturation under these circumstances. Our makers of leather shoes have this situation well in hand; a friend of ours paid twelve dollars for the last pair of American shoes he bought, and they did not last as long as the strings, because in one shoe the maker had put a piece of shaky leather just over the great toe-joint, cunningly timed to split in about four weeks – as it did. Perhaps

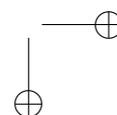
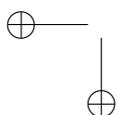


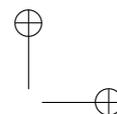
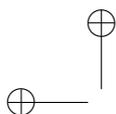


the French wooden shoe expert has devices like this, but we could not make out what they are; yet without them, and with any kind of factory, one would say he must work himself permanently out of a job in six months at most.

We reached Rochelle in the evening, just as the day-shift was quitting and the night-shift was turning out refreshed and eager. We refer to mosquitoes, the earliest inhabitants of Rochelle, and still its foremost citizens. French hospitality is said to be rather chill and calculating, as a rule, but our experience here was quite to the contrary. Nothing could be more assiduous and intimate than the welcome we had from the aristocracy of Rochelle; they met us at the station and kept up their attentions all night long, sparing neither pains nor expense in the effort to show that our presence was highly appreciated; and when the original reception-committee knocked off, about daybreak, they turned us over to another large delegation that had just arrived from headquarters to see what they could do for us during the day.

One of the impenetrable mysteries of European life is the absence of screens. In all France we have seen but two screened windows, and those, curiously, were in one of the poorest houses in the very poorest quarter of Aries. We have slept under a mosquito-net in a hotel at Hyères, but we never found one anywhere else, not even in Germany, though we hear unauthenticated rumours that they have been seen there. The inhabitants of these southerly districts of France wage intermittent wars against flies and against that curse of a wine-producing region, the *mouchette*, but only in a half-hearted, left-handed way that is wholly ineffectual. The *mouchette* is a fruit-fly

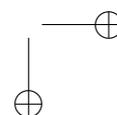
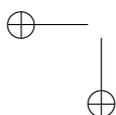


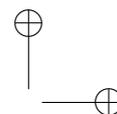
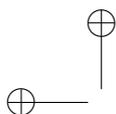


hardly bigger than the head of a pin; it exists in swarms so dense as to obscure an electric street-light – we have seen this phenomenon repeatedly on exhibition in the Bordeaux region and in the Mosel Valley – and one inhales a myriad of them with every breath. We have often wondered why it does not occur to the intelligent native to screen all these winged pests out, instead of giving them free entrance and then fussing at them with sprays and swatters. It strikes us that a manufacturer of wire goods, with a little capital to put into a campaign of education, might make his everlasting fortune over here; but one can never tell – there may be some obscure and powerful reason against it, which none but a native can appraise.

Rochelle was the principal Atlantic seaport of France in the first half of the sixteenth century; it later became the great stronghold of French Protestantism, which is less to its credit. It stood a couple of hard sieges in behalf of its religious tenets, and won the first, in 1573, whereby the Calvinists were put far on their way to secure the official toleration that came to them a few years later, by the Edict of Nantes. It lost the second siege, which was laid against it by Richelieu in 1627, and lasted eight months; when the city capitulated it had only a remnant of about a hundred and thirty men fit for service. After this, Rochelle's commerce dwindled to nothing, and its history became blank, though of late it has picked up somewhat and is comfortably prosperous.

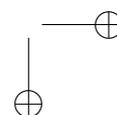
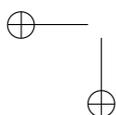
It remains an interesting town for the tourist and pleasure-seeker, however, because its architecture is in large part undamaged, and it has an excellent bathing-beach where the idler may loll and swim to his heart's

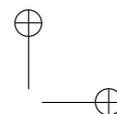
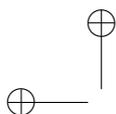




content. One fares well for food, especially sea-food, which comes into the port daily in great quantities. We never did better with lobsters than here, at one of the restaurants on the harbour. The proprietor brought one in to us alive for our approval; it looked at us with a sinister expression, and whacked its tail viciously against its breastplate. Then it was taken out in state and cooked, and when it made its second appearance it was fit to set before kings and princes. We dined on a terrace overlooking the port, a delightfully picturesque view, which we would have enjoyed more if the mosquitoes had not kept our mind off it most of the time.

Rabelais mentions Rochelle only twice or thrice, but with his usual touch of intimacy. He knew the town's reputation for a leaning towards Protestantism, and makes a jocular reference to it in the Third Book, where Panurge declares that the dying poet Raminagrobis "Is, by the virtue of God, an arrant heretic, a resolute formal heretic; I say, a rooted, riveted, combustible heretic, one as fit to burn as the little wooden clock at Rochelle. His soul goeth to thirty thousand carts full of devils." The allusion is to the case of a Protestant named Clavelle, the inventor of a curious type of wooden clock; the legend is that he was burned at the stake at Rochelle in one of Francis I's spasmodic persecutions, and his clock was burned with him. Rabelais twice speaks of the "lantern-tower" or lighthouse at the entrance to the port of Rochelle, apparently admiring it as a model of its kind, as indeed it is. The visitor should approach it by the street called *Sur-les-murs* for the best view of its architectural excellence. It had been standing nearly a

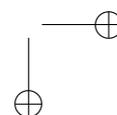
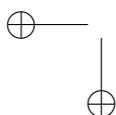


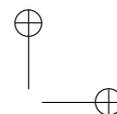
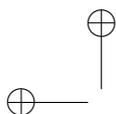


century when Rabelais wrote, and that was four hundred years ago.

But what particularly took us to Rochelle was our desire to see Pantagruel's chain. Rabelais says that the infant Pantagruel was restless in his cradle, and was all for getting out and seeing the world; so they fastened him in with four great chains, and "of those chains you have one at la Rochelle, which they draw up at night betwixt the two great towers of the haven; another is at Lyon, a third at Angers, and the fourth was carried away by the devils to bind Lucifer, who broke his chains in those days by reason of a colic that did extraordinarily torment him, taken with eating a sergeant's soul fricasseed for his breakfast."

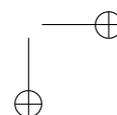
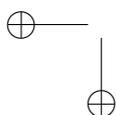
Chains were used at Lyon and Angers to close the rivers against navigation at night, as in like fashion one was drawn across the Hudson at West Point during the Revolution for the same purpose. Here at Rochelle one was drawn across the port-mouth between the Tower of the Chain and St. Nicholas's tower, both of which are standing quite as they were, except for some damage done the former by an explosion in 1651. This chain is the only one of the three that has been preserved; we heard that it was in the museum here, and came down to see it out of regard for the great Pantagruel's memory. We had a great deal of trouble about getting into the museum, because it was open only on certain days and this was not one of the days. Our clamour at the gate finally brought out a young woman who was not for admitting us; she was uncommonly pleasant and willing to parley, but showed an inflexible streak on the idea of letting us in. Finally we prevailed, however, by dint of bribery,

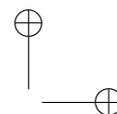
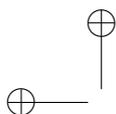




corruption, embracery and judicious misrepresentation; as we remember, we said we were curators-in-chief of the archaeological branch of the Smithsonian Institution, and backed up our statement by showing her a large accident-insurance policy with a gilt seal on it, as our credentials. She weakened at this, and took us in; and we were disgusted with ourselves at discovering that the chain was not in the museum, but in the garden, strung along the ground directly beside the wall of our hotel. We could have seen it at any time merely by looking down at it from our windows. The annoyance caused by this discovery took some of the romance out of the situation for a moment or so, but not for long; after all, the intimate view was best, and our trifling investment of money and mendacity was justified.

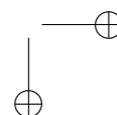
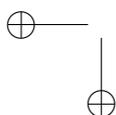
We liked Rochelle. Its arcaded sidewalks are a pleasant feature, as well as a sure sign that one is where the midsummer sun is hot. One of the city-gates remains, called the Gate of the Great Clock, a very massive square structure surmounted by a clock-tower; it stands in the oldest quarter of the port. We did not explore the town thoroughly; the port fascinated us and took up all our time with doing nothing in particular but roam about, looking at the picturesque groups of red-sailed craft tied up at the quays, climbing the St. Nicholas tower for the view, or straying down past the mouth of the harbour to the beaches. We did muster enterprise enough to examine the remarkable city hall, as every visitor should do; it is worth it. But aside from this spurt of ambition, our few days here were not educative in the technical sense; we were properly lazy, gave ourselves up to vagrant dreams and fancies, enjoyed ourselves thoroughly, and

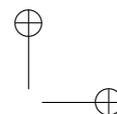
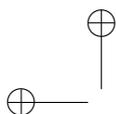




gloried in our shame. Some day we shall come back and do it all over again in the same way.

From Rochelle we went a long way southward to Toulouse, passing through Agen, Moissac and Montauban. There is a suspicion, but no distinct record, that Rabelais once made a stay at Agen. The only fact pointing that way is that he was acquainted with persons who lived there, and this is beyond doubt. One of them was the eccentric physician Julius Caesar Scaliger, who would be regarded to-day as an irregular practitioner, but who seems to have had a good clinical sense, as well as other natural qualifications which made him about as successful as many of his brethren who had gone through the regular course of study. He and Rabelais fell out about something, no one knows what, and Scaliger, who had a genius for epigrams, lampooned Rabelais vigorously in Latin elegiac verse, representing him as an atheist, a renegade monk, and a low-lived drunken scoundrel who passed his time roistering in taverns among the dregs of society. His efforts and those of Puy-Herbault at Fontevault mark the beginning of the unsavoury reputation which still clings to Rabelais, and which most of his American and English admirers, especially his youthful admirers, seem loth to give up, notwithstanding the absence of any historical ground for it. The most that can be said for Rabelais on this score is that he was an experienced man of the world, completely at home in any society, of highly cultivated tastes, singularly objective and free from prepossessions. Otherwise, he was a highly serious person, known and praised as one of the best physicians in Europe and one who held very responsible positions; and in addition,

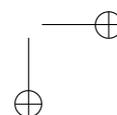
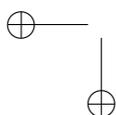


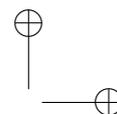
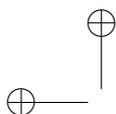


a scholar and man of letters second only to Erasmus. Perhaps this combination of qualities would be in itself enough to give a man a bad name in latter-day society, or at least put him under suspicion, since it has a strong nonconformist tendency, which the dominant influences in modern society especially dislike and distrust – as, for reasons of their own, they should. The element in French society which was rapidly rising to predominance in Rabelais's time disliked and distrusted it too, and for the same reasons; hence the reputation which Scaliger attached to Rabelais was passed along without losing either force or volume on its way, and soon became general.

We did not stop at Agen, but dropped off at Moissac to see the cloister there, which is probably the finest in Europe, and also the church's portal, which is well worth a day's delay *en route* for any one passing this way, if only for the fine humour displayed in the sculptures. The portal has a figure of the Saviour come to judgment, sitting in the midst of the four-and-twenty elders of the Apocalypse, who all have their faces turned towards the central figure, looking over their shoulders – it makes one's neck ache to think of holding that pose. One of them did not hold it; the last elder on the right has slumped into a comfortable attitude, as one who should say, "Oh, thunder, I'm tired, I don't want to do that any more." Among the animals sculptured on the zoöphore are some mice and a rat or two, which are as much in the tradition of a grain-growing region as the wild geese and mermaids are in the tradition of the country around Maillezais.

We made some interesting observations at Moissac. Wandering towards the edge of town, we heard a pig

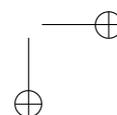
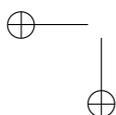


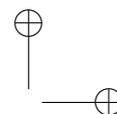
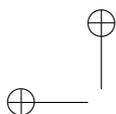


lifting up its voice in an earnest way, and we followed the sound to see what the trouble was. We soon came upon a farmyard where a woman was scrubbing a large white pig, using an ordinary household scrubbing-brush and some sort of strong cleansing compound which we did not recognize. The pig evidently liked it, for it stood still, and when the woman bore down hard on the brush, it braced itself and scrooged against the pressure as a cat does when somebody scratches its head; so we judged that the pig's cries betokened satisfaction. We wondered at this performance, for nothing in the whole neighbourhood showed any signs of ever having been scrubbed, or even of any intention of the kind; but we found out presently that there was a district fair going on, so we inferred that the animal was being prepared for exhibition.

At Moissac we noticed that we were in the Brick Belt; the prevailing building-material is the pink Roman brick, about a foot square and two inches thick. We were to become very familiar with this material later on. Moissac does not get up any particularly striking effects with brick, and conceals a good many which might be striking, for most of the best-looking brick houses are covered with stucco; but the two bridges and one or two unpretentious buildings were enough to suggest what artistic effects might be got out of this particular style of brick, and they aroused our imagination accordingly.

Speaking of these bridges, the lower one presented us one day with a curious puzzle. It is an uncommonly massive structure, lying some distance below town. We had noticed in an idle way that there seemed never to be any traffic going over it, and we wondered why

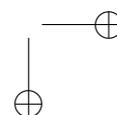
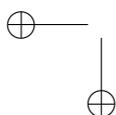


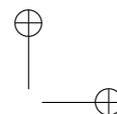
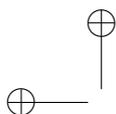


such a heavy bridge should be put up apparently so far away from everywhere; but we did not take the matter seriously enough to inquire. One afternoon, however, we did see the head and shoulders of a man crossing the bridge with astonishing speed; the lower part of his body was hidden by what we took to be, naturally, a solid brick guard-railing. He was going as though he had been sent for; we estimated his gait at about seven miles an hour; yet the upper part of his body seemed oddly relaxed and at rest. Presently he turned around, facing backward, still going at the same rate of speed. Presently, again, he turned sidewise, facing us and still going; these gyrations were one of the strangest sights we ever saw. We went back to our hotel, discussing this magician and his miracles, and after lunch we girded up our loins and set forth down there, determined to investigate.

We felt rather foolish at discovering that the bridge is nothing but a huge brick trough, with a full-grown canal running through it. The man we saw was standing at ease on the raised stern-deck of a canal-boat pulled by a pair of stout horses. When he turned around, he was probably admiring the scenery astern, and when he faced us, he was taking a view of the town. We took in the situation at a glance; everything explained itself; the only point left under debate was who should pay for the drinks, and we settled that by deciding that both of us should pay for them.

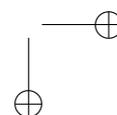
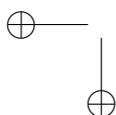
This canal runs from Bordeaux to Cette, on the Mediterranean, thus making the Iberian Peninsula an island; it was constructed in the seventeenth century. The sight of its traffic is highly instructive to an American. In

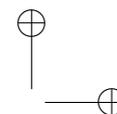
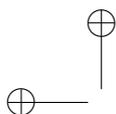




fact, the use of waterways all over Western Europe accounts for something that impresses a stranger at once; which is, that he never sees the railways carrying any low-grade freight to speak of. Europe has learned how to use waterways – anything carrying eighteen inches of water has to work for its living – and at the same time it has learned how to beautify them and make them attractive. Americans know how to do neither, nor do they care to learn how. We have never been able to see why a single ton of low-grade freight should be carried by rail anywhere on the Atlantic seaboard, with no more waterway development, or very little more, than is already available. The extinction of cheap water-borne freightage by the unscrupulous rapacity of our railways merely illustrates the difference in a general point of view; that is to say, in Europe transportation is regarded as a public service, and in America it is regarded as an opportunity for a crew of rascally enterprisers to make their fortune.

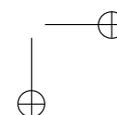
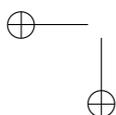
Moissac remains in our memory as the scene of a unique experience; we scraped an acquaintance there which developed the actual mystic sense of friendship, a thing which never happened to us in France before or since, and which we should have said could never happen between an American and a Frenchman. The French have great virtues, but in our experience and from all hearsay, they keep them strictly for themselves; no matter how intimate one's acquaintance may be, one has the sense of being held steadfastly out of their realm of sentiment and affection. In this we believe they stand alone among Western European peoples; even the English are capable of a disinterested sentimental attachment

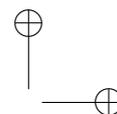
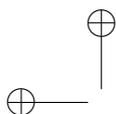




for a foreigner, though their ways of showing it are usually somewhat hard to understand at first. One of our Italian friends told us lately – it was at the time of the recent friction between the two governments – that he said to his French sister-in-law, “Isabeau, you are a Frenchwoman, tell me why it is that the French hate the Italians.” The girl replied, “The French do not hate the Italians. The French hate everybody; they love only themselves.” We are not quite sure that this is true, except by a stretch of terms that is hardly justifiable. It has struck us rather that such French people as we know keep their inner nature singularly indifferent and inaccessible to everybody outside their own ilk and kind. The general effect is perhaps the same, or nearly so, but there may be a difference in intention.

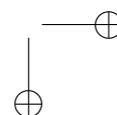
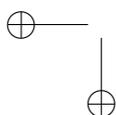
One afternoon we were considering something that looked like a banana-tree growing in a garden in Moissac, and debating whether it really were that; and if so, how it got through the winter, whether it ever bore fruit, and kindred questions. Presently a rather kindly-looking old man came along, plainly dressed and wearing wooden shoes, and we made bold to ask him about these matters. He told us that the tree was only for ornament, that it never bore, and that it was cut close back every winter and piled over with leaves to keep the frost off the roots. He imparted this information with agreeable dignity, and moved on. Next day we met him again; he recognized us pleasantly. We had been looking across the street at some ancient buildings which showed patches of brick here and there where the stucco had peeled off, and something prompted us to ask him why such handsome brick-work as that had been defaced with stucco.

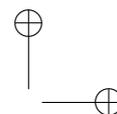
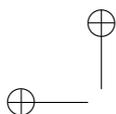




The old man's manner instantly changed; from being courteous, dignified, kindly, he became affectionate and charming. He "came through" at once, as our slang goes, gave up the rest of the day to us, took us hither and yon, showed us a hundred interesting things that we would otherwise have missed, and told us their history. His shabby appearance was misleading; he turned out to be a highly prosperous wine-merchant, whose family had been pillars of the region for generations. We never experienced a more simple-hearted friendliness and a more captivating charm than in his society. When we left him he insisted that we should go to Albi; he insisted on it with a solemnity appropriate to the last injunctions of a dying relative. "You must go to Albi," he said. "You will never really know brick-work until you have seen it at Albi"; and he made us promise him faithfully that in very deed and truth we would go to Albi, a promise that we fulfilled within two weeks or less.

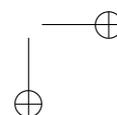
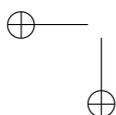
In the course of our conversation we asked him about Narbonne, and among other things he told us that the wind down there was sometimes so strong that it had been known to upset a loaded cart. That story is four hundred years old. Rabelais tells it in the forty-third chapter of the Fourth Book, in praise of "the good Languedoc wind which they call Cierce," and fathers the story on the physician who was his sponsor and preceptor at the University of Montpellier. He says that "the famous physician Schyron, passing one day by this country, was telling us that it is so strong that it will make nothing of overturning a loaded wagon.'" It is pleasant to be in a country where little local legends like this have such a long lease of life.

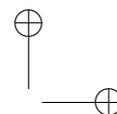
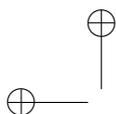




Certainly Europeans' eyes differ from those of Americans. Here in Moissac we see old people reading and doing various kinds of close work by light which to an American would be practically no light at all. French hotels and French houses seem very inadequately lighted. One evening at Vichy three years ago, we saw in the gloom of our hotel-lobby a Polish woman reading a newspaper, apparently without any trouble. Both of us have unusually strong eyes, so out of curiosity we got a copy of the same newspaper and tried to read it, but could not. Perhaps this ocular accommodation is a by-product of the tax on windows; yet we have noticed the same thing in other countries where, as far as we know, there has never been any such tax – in Belgium and Holland, for example. In Germany one would say that every third person wears spectacles, and the other two have them in their pockets but have neglected to put them on. Yet Germans regularly accomplish feats of eyesight that we can not match, and if we can not match them we are sure that very few of our countrymen can do any better.

Matters like these appear to us to defy conjecture. In the Low Countries, for example, a high light is unknown, it rains nearly all the time, and most of the year the day's length is practically negligible. We have lived there many years, and we know what it is to flounder about in a forlorn rain for weeks unending, under a leaden sky so low that it seems to be resting on the roofs. How is it that the world's greatest painting was done in such incredible abundance under those conditions? How is it that the amphibians who were bred in such a depressing and benumbing climate taught the lightest, most joyous and most deeply moving of all the arts – music – to the

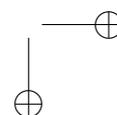
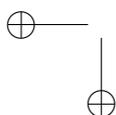


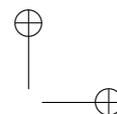
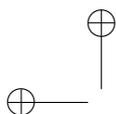


rest of Europe? The best one can do with these questions is to fall back on the New Testament doctrine that “the spirit breathes where it will.”

At Moissac we came on first sight of the Spanish influence in architecture, in the shape of a flat-faced triangular church-tower that had its bells hung in the open, California-mission style. The building is very old. We also encountered the advance-guard of the local food-specialty called *cassoulet*, the French equivalent of pork and beans. The natives are monstrous proud of the cassoulet, and think well of it; so well that each district is ready, if need be, to start a civil war in behalf of its own way of making it. Toulouse, for instance, makes it of mutton and maintains that this is according to the pure and authentic tradition of the Founding Fathers. Castelnaudary, half-way from Toulouse to Carcassonne, makes it of goose-meat, and insists that the Tolosan cassoulet is a rank and despicable forgery, not fit for dogs. Down here, too, one finds the Cantal cheese, which is good; one seldom runs across it outside its native lair in the Auvergne, but for some reason it has made its way over into these parts, and is quite common. French connoisseurs turn up their nose at it, we are told, but we look at it disinterestedly, from the viewpoint of free-born children of the setting sun who are untrammelled by effete tradition, and we pronounce it exceeding good.

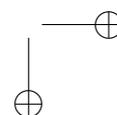
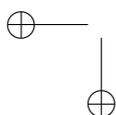
We do not know precisely what the word *cassoulet* means, and the dictionaries do not help us to any extent. We have often wondered how certain dishes came to have the names they bear. The Flemish equivalent of stewed chicken, for example, is called *waterzoeï*, and we have never found any one who could tell us anything

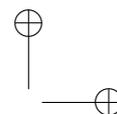
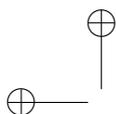




about the history of the name. In this case again there are pronounced local specializations; waterzoeï at Ghent differs sharply from that of Malines, and if the visiting stranger in either place knows what is good for him, he had better abstain from comment on these differences until he reaches neutral ground. Speaking for ourselves, the waterzoeï produced at that (to us) most attractive and best of all the innumerable restaurants in Brussels, the *Écrevisse*, is perhaps the noblest work of God. Cultivate the proprietor's confidence, make obeisance to his beautiful cat Fifi, give him a day's notice, and the memory of what he sets before you will forever bless your exile from hospitable Flanders.

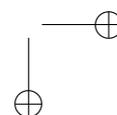
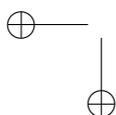
Speaking of these interesting names of food-specialties, we ran one to earth the last time we were in Brussels. Late one evening we dropped in for a Welsh rarebit at a Flemish café on the Place de Brouckère, and among the signs on the walls we noticed one that read, "*Specialité Uitsmijter!*" We translated that to our own satisfaction into the corresponding American vernacular, as "chucker-out" or "bouncer." A handsome girl sat next us, apparently Flemish and apparently affable, and on inquiry she told us that this delicacy consists of a piece of toast with a layer of chopped raw beef on it, surmounted by a layer of chopped raw onions, with two raw eggs broken over the whole; pepper, salt and mustard to taste. As to the name, she said we had the correct idea philologically, but she could not tell us how the dish came by it. Later, however, a learned Dutch friend explained the matter. An uitsmijter, he informed us, is the last thing you eat at night. You come in after the play, concert, opera, and sit long hours in profound conversation over

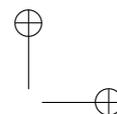
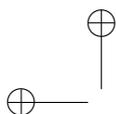




beer, Ardennes sausages, and one thing or another that the occasion calls for, and then when the cafe-proprietor is just about ready to close up and turn you out, you top off with an uitsmijter and depart.

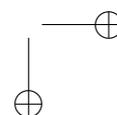
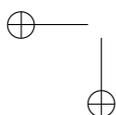
We stopped over a train at Montauban, chiefly in order to see the handsome public square called the Place Nationale, which has been taken over entire as a “historical monument,” although it is of comparatively recent construction – seventeenth century. It is done in brick, with superb double arcades, and old-style gates at the corners; nothing could be better. We also visited the Ingres museum; he was born at Montauban. His painting never interested us; but what a draughtsman! The museum was his studio; it has a vast number of his drawings, and one examines them with the peculiar reverence one has for the man who really knows his trade, the really capable and accomplished workman, be the trade what it may. In the gallery, two-thirds of the way down from where we entered, hung a painting by Jordaens which excited a like reverence. It was not one of his best, not even a very good one, but the effect of its presence in simply wiping out every other picture in the room was most astonishing; it was as striking an effect as one can imagine would be produced by a distinguished-looking person in an audience at the Metropolitan opera, or by an honest man in Congress. One could see or think of nothing else the whole time one was in the room.

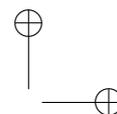
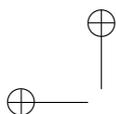




CHAPTER IX

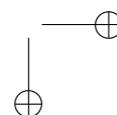
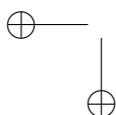
We picked up the trail of Rabelais again at Toulouse, where it is indistinct but fairly discernible. His local allusions and local acquaintances seem to show that he had been there, probably at some time in the period 1529–1530, inclusive, which is quite blank as far as any historical record of him goes. The best guess is that during this period he was at Paris, Agen and Toulouse, studying medicine. The evidence of his having been at Paris is the intimate knowledge of the city which he displays in the Second Book, and which he could hardly have got at any other time than this; and as for his having studied medicine, the fact that he took his bachelor's degree in medicine at the University of Montpellier three months after his entrance presupposes considerable previous study elsewhere, since normally the course for the baccalaureate was a matter of two full years, at least. There were good schools of medicine at Agen and Toulouse, and the fact of Rabelais's intimate acquaintance with eminent men in both places gives some likelihood to the guess that he studied in them.

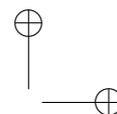
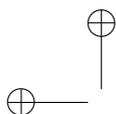




Toulouse suffered recurrent outbreaks of the plague at this period, so probably he did not stay long. Worse than the plague, moreover, was the town's bloodthirsty orthodoxy. Its social orthodoxy was as terrible as its theological orthodoxy; the combination was something like a blend of 1880-Boston with 1920-Tennessee, if one can imagine such a thing. Between the neighbours and the Inquisition, one had to walk a chalked line in Toulouse. The character of the secular government gave rise to the popular saying, "Toulouse for severity, Bordeaux for humanity, Rouen for mercy, Paris for justice." On the theological side, in 1532, shortly after Rabelais's visit, one of the law-professors at the University of Toulouse, Jean de Caturce, was burned at the stake for heresy, in the Place St.-Étienne. Rabelais refers to this in the fifth chapter of the Second Book, saying that Pantagruel did not stay long at the university, seeing that they did not hesitate "to burn their regents alive, like red herrings."

More than a century before Louis XI, Toulouse had established an inflexible, uncompromising bourgeois view of life; this, coupled with the sudden rise of an unusual number of large individual fortunes, had its inevitable issue in the kind of civilization that prevailed there in Rabelais's time. There was a great predominance of a spirit which was not up to its own pretenses and ambitions, except by way of money, and the consciousness of this inferiority caused it to take on the protective apparatus of impossiblist prejudices, conventions, intolerances. One looks back at the civilization which it created, much perhaps as the historically-minded amateur of four hundred years hence will look back at the civilization of Pitts-



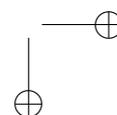
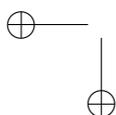


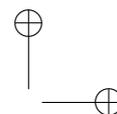
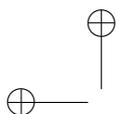
burgh, Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago, as an interesting embodiment of this repellent mode of mind.

In this view, however, one gets some encouragement to hope that in four hundred years or longer, the civilization of the typical American town will have survived asphyxiation by this spirit, and will transform itself into something as amiable and satisfying as Toulouse is now. The city has great charm; one breathes freely in the atmosphere of a painfully-won freedom. It also has great beauty. It is a pink city, everything being built of the pink Roman brick; the total effect, seen at a little distance in the light morning river-mist, is indescribably lovely. One feels much at home here, quite as much so as one feels at le Mans, almost as much as at Chinon, and one resorts to all sorts of pretexts for spinning out one's stay.

Toulouse has an unusual number of the finest Renaissance houses to be found anywhere, and each of them shows plainly that it was built to take the shine out of the last one; exactly what took place in New York when the great irruption of raw Western money broke over it, towards the end of the last century. The rue de la Delbade, from 1550 to 1570, was the scene of the same rivalry and "splurge" that Fifth Avenue saw in the 'nineties, and that New York shows today in the matter of office buildings, now that conspicuous waste on residences has become so common as to be no longer conspicuous.

Besides its mansions, Toulouse has so many attractive public buildings and objects of archaeological interest that one needs all the time at one's disposal to appreciate them properly. We saw a superb Roman tomb, probably

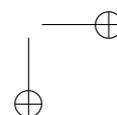
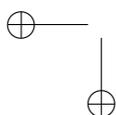


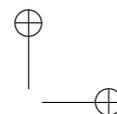
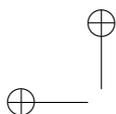


as fine as can be found anywhere. The church of St.-Sernin is one of the most magnificent structures we have ever seen, especially its interior. It is built of Roman brick, and one observes that this brick will take sculpture as handily as stone. The outside wall has some stone trimmings, and the inhabitants point with pride to the fact that the stone is badly weatherworn, while the brick is as sound as when it was laid.

The cathedral is a strange, meandering affair, the result of imposing one architectural mode upon another. The nave is in the regional Romanesque style; it was built in the thirteenth century, in the stirring times when the city was besieged by Simon de Montfort, and the work never ceased while the siege was going on. There is something rather good about this steadfastness; the town was building a cathedral with one hand, you might say, while standing off a crew of thugs and plug-uglies with the other. Many years later, the bishop of the diocese decided to replace the cathedral with one in the Gothic mode, and a good deal of work was done in that style around the nave, but never carried through to completion; so as the building stands, it is about half-and-half. Its incongruities have an interest of their own, like those of the city hall in Brussels, and one hopes they will never be regularized.

Stopping by the cathedral on a Sunday afternoon, we noticed a couple of disreputable-looking brethren who were considering the structure, one of them explaining its peculiarities to the other, and telling him just what ailed it. He did this in such a well informed and compendious way as to hold our attention spellbound. We decided that very likely he had a cousin, or maybe some kind of in-

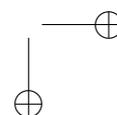
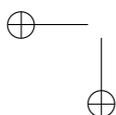


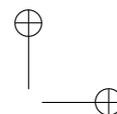
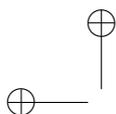


law, who was a stone-mason, and that this authority had probably come over to visit him the Sunday before, and had expounded the matter professionally while on his way around to see the sights. The chap himself did not sound quite professional enough for a practicing stone-mason. The point of our interest was that traditionally these matters were in a stone-mason's line, not an architect's, and the tradition seems to persist. Some of the finest structures of the sixteenth century and earlier, including some of the great Renaissance châteaux of the Loire Valley, were built by what would be classed nowadays as artisans; just as some of our best New England residences were built by carpenters.

The fact that these two connoisseurs were poorly dressed, we hasten to add, was nothing against the chance of their being well-to-do pillars of Tolosan society. We notice that a laudable independence in dress seems to prevail more largely among the French than among Americans; they wear what they like when they like. While breakfasting outside the Café de la Régence, in Paris, one Sunday morning, we saw an extremely well-dressed young woman with blue felt slippers on, standing by the fountain opposite. She may have had a stone-bruise or a blister or maybe corns; but on the other hand it is quite as probable that she merely took a notion to wear the slippers as the most comfortable thing she could lay her hands on at the moment. No doubt she would wear them to church with the same placid assurance, or to a ball at the Élysée Palace, if she were still in the mood to do so.

One has great respect and liking for this trait, which seems to become more marked as one progresses south-

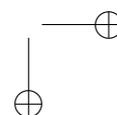
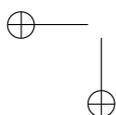


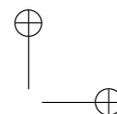
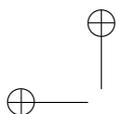


ward. Here in Toulouse one Sunday morning (the same Sunday, by the way, on which we were eavesdropping on the free lecture about cathedral-building) we saw basking on the boulevard a couple of very dilapidated citizens whom we would have taken for tramps if experience had not taught us to reserve judgment in such cases. Presently a distinguished-looking man in a top hat and full Sunday regalia came along and gave them a joyful hail. The three held a friendly confab for a few minutes and then strolled off together. Probably they were neighbours, all in the same social stratum, and all with about the same income.

Rabelais speaks casually of the duelling, or fencing-bouts with two-handed swords, that the university-students here indulged in. He also mentions the famous mills of Bazacle, which are still standing; and he makes reference to the goose-footed queen, the legendary *reine Pédauque*, who was celebrated in painting and statuary throughout this region in the sixteenth century; one of the bridges over the Garonne at Toulouse formerly bore her name, and after we left, we heard that there is still a street called Goosefoot Avenue, though we did not see it – another example of legend persisting in street-names. Beyond these few observations, however, and the one or two that we have already cited, Rabelais has nothing to say about the city, and he manifestly had no love for it.

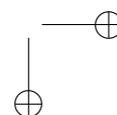
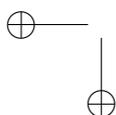
We looked up such vestiges of these legends as we could find, and of many more; the legend of Clemence Isaure, for instance, and the origins of the floral games which are still celebrated. By way of an evening's diversion, we went to hear *The Barber of Seville* done in French by and for Frenchmen. It was an amazing performance, in

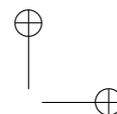
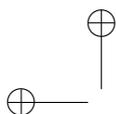




its utter unlikeness to anything we had ever associated with that opera. Internationalism is a noble ideal, and in principle we are all for it, thinking that it would probably work out very well in politics and commerce – we do not know anything about either of these pursuits, so our opinion is not valuable – but it runs hard aground on opera. We are a little better posted on opera, and declare without hesitation that in the realm of opera, internationalism is a dismal failure.

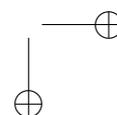
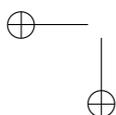
No American company that ever was put together, even if it were trained intensively for half a lifetime, could ever sing an authentic *Beggar's Opera* as Mr. Play-fair's company sings it at Hammersmith. No English, German or Russian company could make anything better than a travesty of the *Barber*, of *Don Pasquale*, of the *Elisir d'Amore*. It was worth the price of admission to hear our accomplished Russian friend, Dr. Michaelovsky, hold forth one evening about the witch's work that the Metropolitan's hybrid casts make of *Prince Igor* and *Eugene Onegin*. The best and most intelligently presented opera that we have heard in Europe – the best, we mean, taken day in and day out, or by run-of-the-mine – is in Brussels; and in our time there, we have heard that sterling old sob-starter *Rigoletto* reduced in all good faith to roaring farce, so that we laughed throughout it most indecorously, from beginning to end. We were not sorry to have heard the *Barber* at Toulouse; we would not have regretted it even if the performance had been bad, which it was not. Far from being bad, it was exceedingly good, according to its lights; but its lights were somewhat such as would shine on the best possible French translation, say, of one of Mr. Ring Lardner's stories,

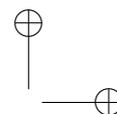
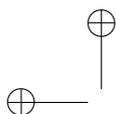




not necessarily one peppered with American slang, but a standard specimen of his humorous narrative. The translation might be scrupulously faithful, but it could not convey the spirit of the original, and an American would perceive this immediately on reading it.

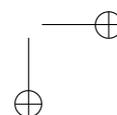
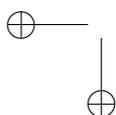
When we say that the Brussels opera is the best we have heard, we mean that it meets better than any other our personal notions of what opera should be. It is put on with a very high degree of intelligence and professional competence, and also with as high a degree of sterling amateur spirit – a combination that we have seldom seen elsewhere, and have never yet failed to see at the Monnaie. New York saw it twenty years ago; the Monnaie does regularly just what Hammerstein did in those days, and what Campanini somehow managed to do pretty often in Chicago. To our way of thinking, this combination is what makes a really great performance; it would make a great performance out of raw material far inferior to the Brussels direction and its artists. The ground of our lukewarmness to high-grade opera in general, especially at the Metropolitan, is its benumbing professionalism. The Metropolitan delivers a finished product strictly up to all professional standards, and that is all it does; no doubt that is all it is expected or encouraged to do. It never fails to remind us of Sir Joshua Reynolds’s criticism on a painting. “Composition right, drawing right, colours absolutely right, but,” he said, with a great snap of his fingers, “dammit, it hasn’t got *that*.” To us, *that* is the essence of opera, and it appears to be generated only by the combination of qualities that one finds in perfection at the Monnaie.

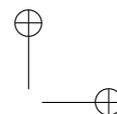
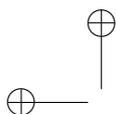




We did very little in the way of excursions out of Toulouse, but we kept our promise to our kind old friend at Moissac by visiting Albi. We went by motor-car one morning and stayed overnight, returning to Toulouse by rail next evening, which was bad judgment; we could have walked it in less time, and been less fagged. Our friend was right; probably no such brickwork is to be seen anywhere else. The fortified cathedral at Albi is a great curiosity, ugly but magnificent in its general appearance. It convinced us that one can build anything with Roman brick and make it impressive, even a fort. In itself, it is one of the finest structures imaginable, in good Southern Gothic of the thirteenth century. The lacy sculpture in white stone that forms the southern porch is very fine too, but does not go at all well with the building; it has a frivolous air of having been applied on as an afterthought, or of something that had been run up temporarily and not intended as part of the permanent architecture.

We were chiefly interested in the old houses which are mostly found in streets near the river. One gets a fine general view of them from the bridges. When one inspects them at short range, one sees that they can not last long; the tourist who wishes to see these noble objects that will never be duplicated or even approximated in this present world, had better hurry up about it. We stopped in front of several of the best houses, estimating on what could be done to keep them habitable for even the most unexacting tenants, and saw clearly that nothing could be done; they are past redemption. This thought saddened us, for they are very beautiful and it seems a



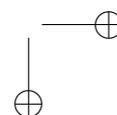
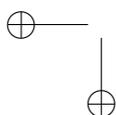


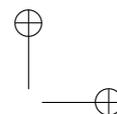
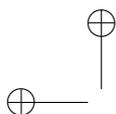
pity that they must go, but to the best of our observation there is no help for it.

Albi has other distinctions which we duly took in. It was the cradle of the Albigenses, the religious sect which was persecuted for its convictions in the thirteenth century, their suppression amounting to a religious war which involved the whole district in terrific bloodshed and destruction. Albi also gave birth to the intrepid navigator Lapérouse, whose explorations in the Pacific set French imperialism to looking in that direction, and therefore interested the far-seeing mind of Thomas Jefferson; the town has put up a moderately good statue in his honour. But when one comes down from the attractions of antiquity to the realities of the present, Albi presents a rather squalid aspect, bedraggled and grubby. After twenty-four hours there, one suspects that Virgil got what he knew about *dira illuvies* from hearsay.

A poem by Salmon Macrin gives a hint that after taking his degree at Montpellier, Rabelais practiced medicine for a few months in the neighbourhood of Narbonne and Béziers, but we could not make it seem worth our while to visit these places, since there are no traces of any association with him in either. We decided to push on to Montpellier, knowing that the great heat of late summer would probably end our wanderings for the time being at that point. One can stand the earlier summer in these parts fairly well, but after a month or so of it, one's interest exudes in perspiration, and it is best to give up.

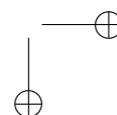
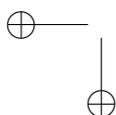
We stopped in Carcassonne on the way, this being the regular thing to do. When we got up into the walled town, we were astonished to see a number of men in mediaeval

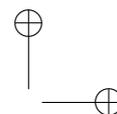
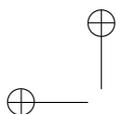




armour, lounging about in indolent attitudes, smoking cigarettes. Presently they assembled, and began a tournament. We watched them joust for quite a while before it occurred to us that they were staging a motion-picture – and we from the land of motion-pictures! Probably if we had been Californians instead of unsophisticated Easterners, or even if we had been in California lately, we would have thought of it at once. As it was, knowing Carcassonne’s inflated reputation, we thought the show might have been put on as tourist-bait to help out the local colour and glorify Viollet-le-Duc’s “restorations.”

We have nothing to say about Carcassonne; for further information apply at the box-office, and see small bills. Carcassonne is sufficiently press-agented. There is no danger but that any American landing in France will have every facility offered him at once for knowing all about it. Nobody can escape this information; he absorbs it through the pores of his skin. We found that we had acquired so much of it in this effortless and incidental way that when we arrived there was really nothing to show us; we knew the place as well as Viollet-le-Duc himself, and could identify every stone in its structure, blindfold. One feels let down by an experience of this kind. All the time we were in Carcassonne we felt as though we were looking at everything through the eyes of the general passenger agent instead of our own, and we became convinced that propaganda can overplay its hand. Besides, we have of late been fired by a smouldering resentment against wholesale “restoration.” A little of it will go down with us, but Viollet-le-Duc’s efforts are too ambitious; his pot-covers on the choir of St.-Sernin in Toulouse exhausted his credit with us, and henceforth he goes to protest

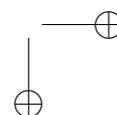
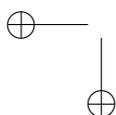


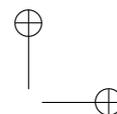
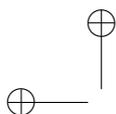


at sight. Those who are ravished by the grandeur of Carcassonne have our cordial respect, and hereafter we will listen to their troodlings with patient approval, but that is all we can promise.

We reached Montpellier after a tedious ride, aggravated by the heat and dust, and by the various stenches that they enhance. Why is it that five or six hours of railroading are more tiring than twenty-four? We have noticed this when travelling on American railways, as well as in Europe; we are never so played out by a ride from New York to Chicago or Kansas City as we are by a ride to Boston or Washington. It is a matter of mental attitude, probably. Going to Chicago, one knows that one is elected for the long term and settles down accordingly, while the short haul to Washington makes it seem not worth one's while to settle down; so one merely fidgets, fusses with newspapers and counts the hours, minute by minute – this being the most fatiguing exercise, probably, in the world.

One reverences the victorious adaptability of human nature when one notices how handily the European has figured out a way to beat the acute distresses of his native railroading. He sleeps. The French traveller piles himself and his luggage into a compartment, and instantly drops sound asleep, usually with his mouth so wide open that you can throw an apple in it if you have one. He will also time himself to wake up at exactly the right moment to make his station comfortably and with no undue haste. We do not know how this is done; it must have taken whole generations of practice, for it now seems to have become a secondary instinct. We have noticed the same thing in Germany, and we always admire it wherever we

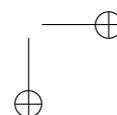
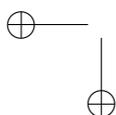


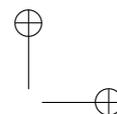
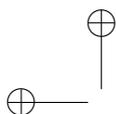


see it, probably because we have never been able to sleep on a train; one usually lavishes one's best admiration on proficiency in something that one can not do oneself.

The heat of the Midi causes the American to need a great deal of drinking-water in order to keep square with the world; there is no doubt that water-drinking is preeminently an American practice. Europeans seem to do without water as easily as camels. Fortunately, in France one can generally get good bottled drinking-water from Evian, even at railway-stations; it is light, mostly flat and lukewarm, but it will do, after a fashion. In Germany, under like circumstances, we have never been able to find any but charged water, the sort that our handsome friend Marjorie's brother-in-law, whose German is a little shaky, called "hop-up water." Marjorie told us that he fell into dreadful thirst while the family was crossing Germany in midsummer, and declared that at the next long stop he was going to find some "plain everyday water" or know the reason why; the dining-car carried nothing but carbonated water of various kinds, mostly with a pretty high medicinal content. Accordingly, when the train pulled up, he made for a handcart that he saw on the platform, full of drinks and engineered by a fine figure of an old German woman, and demanded water, "jeder-Tag Wasser, wissen Sie – nur jeder-Tag Wasser – nicht Auflaufwasser!"

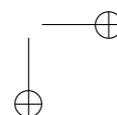
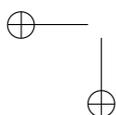
Marjorie said that the old woman sat down on a bench, threw back her head, and turned loose a laugh that woke the echoes. He never got his water, nor did the rest of her thirsty customers get anything; she laughed herself into complete incapacity for business, and when the train went out she was still at it.

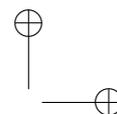
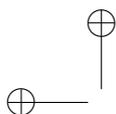




We have never found it possible to get a satisfactory drinking-water in Germany. We could not share the native preference for *Auflaufwasser*, and the every-day water, while pure enough, is harder than Pharaoh's heart; so hard that a glassful of it feels like a square meal, and your thirst remains unquenched. Italy has good table-waters, and Belgium has the best, as far as our knowledge goes. The Belgian still waters of Spa, Spontin and Chaudefontaine are perfect. The best thing for an American in Germany to do is to arrange for regular consignments from Belgium; the initial expense would be something, what with duty and freight-charges, but in the long-run it would pay.

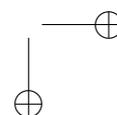
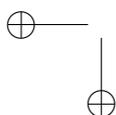
Now that women have the vote in so many of these new European republics, it often occurs to us to wonder why some one does not get his start in provincial politics by running for office on a soft-water platform. Municipalities ought to soften water just as they now filter and purify it; this can be done, and we doubt that the softening process would be more expensive than filtration, and good engineering skill might work out some economical combination of the two. We believe it would be a good thing financially, even from the political point of view, because people would save a vast lot of money in soap and in the terrific wear and tear on clothes that comes from washing them in hard water; and of course the more money people have, the more can be squeezed out of them in graft and taxes. When we return to the States we shall probably try out this idea in municipal politics ourselves. We shall be needing money by that time, and we believe that with a little practice we could get up enough of a line in mendacity, effrontery, and general

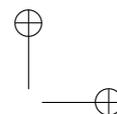
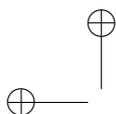




scoundrelism to make a moderate success at politics. We feel that even now we are qualified in a small way, and by diligently improving ourselves who knows but that we finally might reach a senatorship or the White House or the Supreme Court? It is every American's privilege to indulge these dreams, and we think a soft-water platform might be just the thing to make them come true.

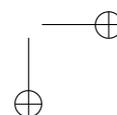
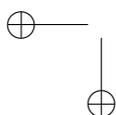
Soap is a problem in Europe. A soap that is strong enough to overcome the hard water and take the dirt off is likely to take one's skin off too. It will do that by degrees, at any rate; one's skin becomes mottled and scaly, and one layer after another dries up unpleasantly and comes off. On the other hand, a soap that is not too strong to use is ineffectual; one might as well try to get a lather out of a porcelain door-knob. After experimenting with a number of expensive soaps which all smelled first-rate but turned out unsatisfactorily, we found that the best article all round was also the cheapest. It is a high-grade laundry soap, made somewhere down in that French perdition which they call Marseilles, and comes in huge dark-green square blocks. It smells a little unpleasantly like creosote, and bears the figure of a bee as a trade-mark, though we can not see why it should do this, since bees are notoriously unconcerned with soap; they care nothing whatever for it. But this soap answers the purpose, none too well, but better than any other that we have found, and we therefore praise it mildly. We know of only two places in Europe – there may be others, probably are, but none in our experience – that have soft water. These are Vichy and Gastein. Their water is not soft by Puget Sound standards or even by

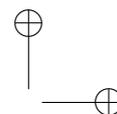
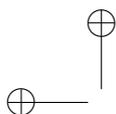




those of New York City, but after the general run of European water, it seems delightfully soft.

We found Montpellier a brisk modern city, prosperous, but not so taken up with prosperity that it forgets to be handsome and attractive. We took a liking to it at the start, and the impression deepened as we went on. Notwithstanding its air of business, it shows many of the pleasanter characteristics of a university town; even its business aspects seem uncommonly enlightened and urbane. In fact, this word quite suits the city at large; Montpellier struck us as in all respects alert and urbane, not with the Brummagem urbanity of the Elk-Rotarian – we have been mercifully spared the sight of that sort of thing anywhere in France, and we doubt that it exists there – but the genuine dyed-in-the-wool product of generations of good breeding. We happened to see several professors on the street; we knew them as such by the polite deference they received from passing students. They too were alert and urbane; a student stopped one of them with a question, and their colloquy was a study in elegant good manners. There seems to be a tradition of that sort of thing in the French universities; not so in ours. The American professor, at least latterly, appears to be regarded somewhat as a moderately privileged upper-servant, and to have taken on the general manner and address appropriate to that station. We discussed this matter and concluded that it runs back to established standards of relative importance – standards established largely by the academic authorities themselves. Speaking generally, American university-trustees and presidents regard buildings, endowments and student-population as the important thing, while on the Continent the pro-

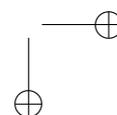
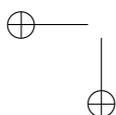


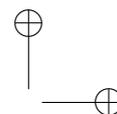
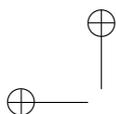


fessors are regarded as the important thing. A visiting German pundit the other day remarked this difference rather naively. “When Germans come to America,” he said, “you show them all over your buildings. When Americans visit our institutions, we introduce them to our professors.”

We talked this over for quite a while, and decided that the Continental authorities had the common-sense view. After all, you can teach in a tent or a barn to as good purpose as in a palace, if you have the right kind of student-material and are the right kind of teacher; and failing these conditions, a palace is no help – you and your students are all dressed up, with nowhere to go, and hence nothing happens. Trustees and presidents who have a good eye for buildings, moreover, have a notoriously poor eye for men, and the Continental is right in seeing that men are all that count, for education is something that is communicated only by contagion, like measles. If you wish to catch measles, you have to go where measles is, maybe in a palace, maybe in a hovel, no matter – you’ll get it. But if there is nobody around who has measles, you won’t get it, palace or no palace, hovel or no hovel.

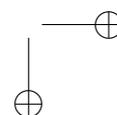
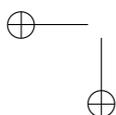
We thought we could reach the School of Medicine by way of the boulevard Henri IV, this looking like a pleasanter walk than the way through town, but it turned out to be impracticable, though the map of the town does not show it so. We might have managed, perhaps, by a climb up some steep and hidden by-way, but nothing looked promising, so we retraced our steps and “pointed” for the cathedral, through narrow streets in the oldest part of town. The last street led down a short declivity

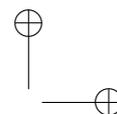
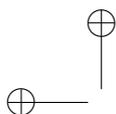




to the doors of the cathedral, where we turned to the left and came upon the adjacent building, which was once a monastery, then an episcopal residence, and now bears the impressive legend, *Faculté de Médecine*.

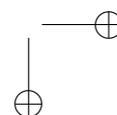
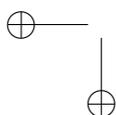
This famous school of medicine was established in the early years of the thirteenth century. It has maintained its distinction with singular uniformity, more consistently perhaps than any other faculty in France; for a time the Faculty of Medicine at Toulouse had a somewhat higher reputation, but not for long. Montpellier was always a great school, and still is, and the name of Rabelais is indissolubly bound to its history. He studied there, taking all his degrees in medicine, and he also lectured. After taking his bachelor's degree on the first of December, 1530, he lectured on the *Aphorisms* of Hippocrates and the *Ars Parva* of Galen. These lectures appear to have been interesting and to have attracted attention; in a dedicatory letter to Geoffroy d'Estissac he says they were delivered to a "full house." His notes were incorporated into an edition of the *Aphorisms* published two years later, at Lyon, by the publishing-house of Sebastian Gryphe. He proceeded licentiate and doctor in 1537, after which he gave a course of lectures on the *Prognostics* of Hippocrates, expounding them by the Greek text, which was a great innovation, with such success that his sessions were crowded. A more sensational innovation was that in the midst of this course he gave a demonstration of anatomy in the amphitheatre of the school; it was one of the first anatomical demonstrations ever conducted in France. His invention of the surgical instrument called *glottotomon* seems also to have been made during this period.

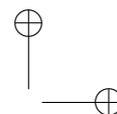
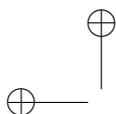




While at Montpellier he again distinguished himself in another fashion, by going on the stage with several fellow-disciples in the play which Mr. Granville Barker revived a few years ago, called *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife*. It has been thought that Rabelais wrote the play, but this is improbable; no doubt it had come down from mediaeval times in the repertory of French farce-comedy. The occasion was probably something in the way of college dramatics; Rabelais describes it in the thirty-fourth chapter of the Third Book. Among his fellow-players he mentions Saporta, who became a practitioner of note and a professor, subsequently chancellor, at Montpellier, and also Tolet, who became a distinguished surgeon and writer on surgery; the others whom he names are unknown to history. The original version of the play has been lost, unfortunately; Molière's *Médecin Malgré Lui* is reminiscent of the idea, and the version that Mr. Barker used is by Anatole France. One would like to know what part Rabelais played. As M. France's version runs, one thinks of him most naturally, perhaps, as cast for the part of master Simon Colline, the physician.

One or two traces of Rabelais's presence are still to be found here. In the *salle des actes*, just off the vestibule, are portraits of former professors, running as far back as 1239. Rabelais is among them, but the picture is not contemporary, though very old, and not especially good or pleasing. Considering Rabelais's eminence, it is strange that no contemporary portrait of him has been found. No one knows what he looked like. Several of the pictures here, including this one, look as though they were a job-lot that some talented sign-painter had produced on a blanket commission, using his judgment and

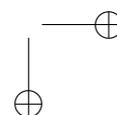
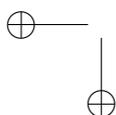


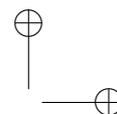
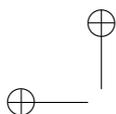


imagination on the likenesses as best he could. Saporta is there, and Schyron, Rabelais's sponsor at the university; also Rondellet, whom Rabelais is supposed by some authorities to have introduced in the Third Book, under a thinly disguised name, as the physician Rondibilis. All these portraits are of very indifferent workmanship.

In a glass case, on the opposite side of the vestibule, the Faculty of Medicine has hung the doctor's gown which a highly dubious tradition says belonged to Rabelais. We would like to take stock in this legend, but it is too uncertain. Most affecting of all these traces of a great man's passage upon earth are the entries made by Rabelais, in his own handwriting, in the Faculty's books; there is no possible doubt about the genuineness of those. His matriculation is there; also his acknowledgment of his degree as bachelor of medicine; the penmanship, like all of his that has been preserved, is bold and beautiful. The university also has the record of his lectures on the *Prognostics*; the writing is indistinct, but probably his own. The proctor's book has the acknowledgment that he had paid his fees, and there is official record, too, of his having received an écu, gold, for his demonstration of anatomy.

One goes away with reflections which only the sustaining doctrine of Pantagruelism can keep from becoming bitter, over the fact that a miserable little fly-blown piece of paper can so long – four hundred years already, and no doubt four hundred more if our misnamed civilization holds together – can so long survive the incomparable mind and graceful hand that devised the words on it. Most members of the human race live far too long, and many of the least eligible live longest. We have in mind

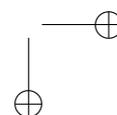
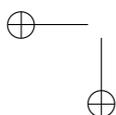


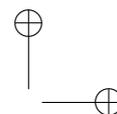
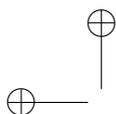


one or two notable specimens who seem unlikely ever to perish. We think that probably Satan has had it in mind now and then to foreclose on them, but the boys held a conclave over it and told him they were afraid it wouldn't do – they doubted whether public opinion would stand for it, and there was no telling what might happen – better go a little slow. On the other hand, there are a few who do not live half long enough, and among those few, once in an era, is a Sophocles, a Dante, a Rabelais, who should live forever. Indeed, if their personality does not somehow survive death and persist indefinitely, the order of nature seems to be more or less of a fizzle.

By way of contrasting two types of fortified town, and getting the taste of Carcassonne out of our mouth, we drove down to Aiguesmortes one morning. There you have the real thing, a fortified town that has not been tinkered up or “restored” since it was built, 1246–1275. It lies in a flat marshy district, surrounded by lagoons and ponds. Originally it was laid out as a seaport by Louis IX, who used it for embarking his ill-fated African expeditions in the Seventh and Eighth Crusades. In modern times a long stretch of alluvial deposit has set it back more than three miles from the coast, though connexion is still maintained by a canal.

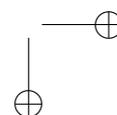
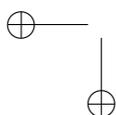
All the buildings are inside the walls, which are about thirty feet high, with towers and gates of the usual type; the walls are rectangular, enclosing an area, roughly, of one-third of a mile by one-sixth. The general view puts one in mind of an overgrown State prison, and indeed these fortifications have been put to such uses in their time. We got a deal of satisfaction out of learning that among other more worthy derelicts, a batch of Protes-

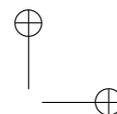
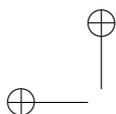




tants was hived up there after the repeal of the edict of Nantes, and left to simmer under a Mediterranean sun until some of the savagery was stewed out of them. If we could have heard that a couple of battalions from the Inquisition had been herded in to share their fate, we would have been quite completely happy.

Rabelais was here once, in an official capacity, as a member of the king's suite; Francis had given him an honorary appointment as master of requests – there was nothing in it but a certain amount of distinction, more or less like an honorary degree from Oxford or Cambridge. This was in or before the year 1538. In that year the Third Spanish War was brought to a truce by the historic three days' conference between Francis I and Charles V of Spain, at Aiguesmortes, and Rabelais was present at the session. We wondered what became of the royal retinues during those three days in Aiguesmortes, for it took many more people to move a monarch around at that period than it takes nowadays to move a circus. Benvenuto Cellini says that when Francis I travelled about his kingdom, as he was continually doing – he seems never to have stayed put anywhere for more than a couple of weeks at a time – it took eighteen thousand horses to move his caravan. Reckoning one man to eighteen horses, or to a hundred horses, and then looking at the situation of Aiguesmortes, one can not possibly make out what they did with themselves. Aiguesmortes had four thousand population when we were there, and it was bung-full; it must have had at least half that many in 1538. Did the royal suite commandeered the place and drive the populace out into the swamps? Moreover,

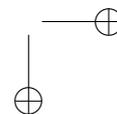
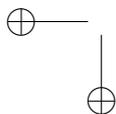


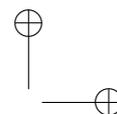
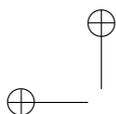


what became of the avalanche of Spaniards when it came along, headed by Charles V?

The sixteen or eighteen miles between Montpellier and Aiguesmortes is a sea-level plain, flat as a billiard-table; the late summer heat there must be terrific. The region gives rise to vineyards and olive-trees. The only interesting things we saw on the way were some bright-green horses in the vineyards. We had never seen horses of that colour before; they were something brand-new to us. Presently we saw that this was not their natural complexion. They had taken on this tint from the mixture used to spray the vines. Perhaps they got it in the course of their work, and it had not been cleaned off them, for doubtless they had never been cleaned in their lives; the French agriculturist is incurably diffident about cleaning anything. Perhaps they had been sprayed purposely, as the vines are, to discourage flies; it would seem a pretty good notion, though we know nothing of such matters. However it was that they came by their colour, they were a remarkable sight.

One can walk round about Aiguesmortes and tell the towers thereof in half an hour, easily; and there is nothing in the little huddle of buildings within the walls to hold a sightseer's attention longer than another half-hour, at most. We have a kindly feeling towards Aiguesmortes because most unexpectedly we got a good lunch there, the best we have had since our wanderings began, and the best but one that France ever gave us in thirty years' acquaintance. Seeing an extremely unpretentious hotel, we sidled up to it and reconnoitered, finding it to our surprise very neat, pleasant and inviting in a simple way which exactly suited us; so we went in and declared for

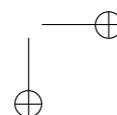
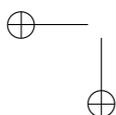


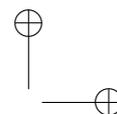
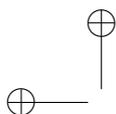


lunch, getting the further surprise aforesaid. We were not particularly hungry, as it happened, but the food soon stirred our ambition, and we ate like nailers, rejoicing in our luck.

The secret of it appeared to be that the landlady did the cooking herself, and she was a capable person of peasant origin, who knew good food and knew how to cook it superbly, with no frills. Her daughter waited on the table, and saw to it that things were right. There is great satisfaction in dealing with principals in these matters. The two best meals we ever had in France were peasant-cooked, cooked by the lady-proprietors themselves, and served by the daughters. The other one was many years ago, in a wretched little hamlet called St.-Saturnin, in the Auvergne, not far from Clermont-Ferrand – about half-way from there to Issoire. We were walking, and came on this village, and though again we were not hungry, we thought we might be pretty late reaching St.-Amand-Tallende, the nearest town, and we had better look up a lunch where we were, if we could find it. The proprietor of the local *estaminet* thought something might be done; he would take the matter up at headquarters, and report. During his absence we bought appetizers for ourselves and also for a friend of the proprietor, who was lounging there; he had “six fingers on every hand, and on every foot six toes, four-and-twenty in number,” like Goliath of Gath. He had an honourable pride in this peculiarity, and we encouraged it with our interest until the proprietor returned and told us that affairs were already moving favourably.

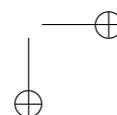
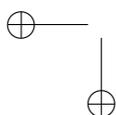
The excellence of that lunch is a mystery; we looked in at the kitchen for a word with the affable daughter

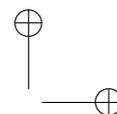
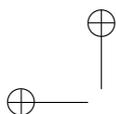




of the house, and saw it under way. The woman, to all appearances, merely took a piece of ordinary bull-steak and fried it in a spider. It was cut thin, perhaps half an inch, and it came out with the edges turned up all round, like a burnt boot. It was very dubious-looking, and was served plain from the spider, yet it tasted better than we ever knew fried steak could taste. She also fried some potatoes, with the same result. We would give a good deal to know what that woman did to those things to make them come out that way, but we could never even guess. Apparently she did nothing; we did not detect her in any overt act. She fried them and served them out; that was all – yet there they were.

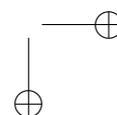
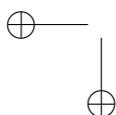
We can understand how high-life French cooking got its reputation, back in the late fifteenth century when it had no serious competition to speak of, but for the life of us we do not see how it has kept it, especially with Americans. Our countrymen – mostly our countrywomen – show an extraordinary sense of inferiority and self-abasement whenever French cooking is mentioned. Especially do we marvel when they spew encomiums on “the dainty, little, light, French luncheon-dishes.” Acquaintances of ours will put out a leaf or two of lettuce and a couple of sandwiches that you think at first are made of cigarette-paper, and tell you it is a delicate French luncheon. We never saw anything like that in France. The only French luncheon we know anything about is a pretty robust “square”; and it needs be, because the people who eat it have had practically nothing for fifteen hours, and as Panurge said, it is as good as a balsam for sore eyes to see them gulch and raven it – aye, and to hear them; but we have spoken of this before.

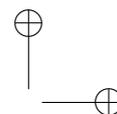
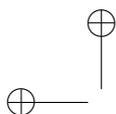




Perhaps the English perpetuate this superstition about French food, as they perpetuate the kindred one about the climate of the Riviera, and for the same reason. The English made the reputation of the French Riviera, and in so doing they utterly ruined a lovely region, bad cess to them! – well, after the English climate and English food, any conceivable change is bound to make an exaggerated impression. They would probably have shown as much naïve enthusiasm over the climate of our Lake region and a diet of raw dog, if they had happened to hit on them. As it was, however, the only good climate and the only good food that most Englishmen of the last century ever saw, were French, and they passed the word around accordingly. Such, at least, is our theory. The climate of the Riviera is good, and so is French food; our only point is that we have had liberal samples of both, and can see nothing in either to make a fetich of, as so many of our countrymen – again, mostly our countrywomen – do. In fact, while we reverence every virtue and excellence that the French and English can rightfully lay claim to, and while we think we know what most of those virtues and excellences are, it seems to us that our sedulous Francophiles and Anglophiles have picked on the poorest peoples to ape of any in the Western world. For this reason: their solid virtues are very difficult for an American to emulate, and their superficial characteristics are so conspicuously their own that mere mimicry is as conspicuously ridiculous. An American who has “gone Chinese” looks much less a born fool than one who has gone French or English.

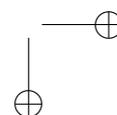
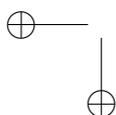
From Montpellier we went up through Nîmes, Aries and Avignon, concerning which we have nothing to say

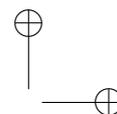
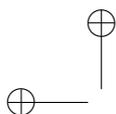




because, like Carcassonne, they are already quite well enough advertised. Rabelais himself was content to speak of them only once, and very casually, and *non est discipulus super magistrum*, so we do not feel called upon to muster our resources of flowery language. In the fifth chapter of the Second Book, Rabelais pays a mischievous compliment to the ladies of Avignon, and goes over their heads to pay another to the easy ways of the papal court there. He also says that Pantagruel, while on our present route from Montpellier to Avignon, built the amphitheatre at Nîmes and also the Pont du Card “in less than three hours, which nevertheless seems to be more than mortal man could do.” Beyond this he makes no mention of these celebrated show-places.

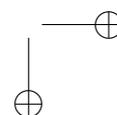
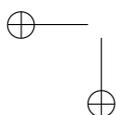
We stopped at Nîmes chiefly to sit where Thomas Jefferson probably sat while admiring the Maison Carrée – that is to say, on the terrace of a saloon, opposite. We reasoned thus: the saloon was there in his day; it is the best place from which to view the structure; and Thomas J. knew the best places, unfailingly, when he saw them, Q. E. D. Accordingly we sat, and accordingly we contemplated, comfortably conscious of being in the best tradition. Our main design in stopping at Aries was to see the altorilievo figure of a dancer, among the Roman remains in the museum. To our notion it is one of the most delightful objects we have seen. We were also interested in various historical reminders of the persecutions of Christians in Roman days. The last of these laudable undertakings was carried out under Diocletian in 303, with great severity; but it seems not to have been severe enough to avert the calamitous consequences

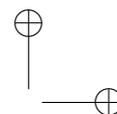
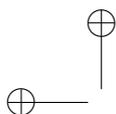




of the implantation of organized Christianity upon this unhappy soil.

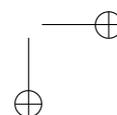
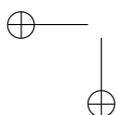
The great benefit gained by coming into these parts is that here, in the old Roman Province, one can actually see evidence of the continuity of history; one can see the transition of the ancient world into the modern. The formal division of school-history into ancient and modern tends to show the two civilizations as standing by themselves, with an open gap of centuries between. The Province bridges that gap; one sees that while the Roman civilization was dying at home, it was renewing itself here, and that the ensuing Gallo-Roman civilization connects itself with ours by a smooth and continuous transition. Literature reveals this continuity, of course; Ausonius, professor at the University of Bordeaux in the fourth century, writing graceful epigrams on his fellow-professors, celebrating the charms of the river Mosel in admirable hexameters, praising the sweet little captive German girl whom he brought back to Bordeaux with him after Valentinian's campaign in the Rhineland, to cheer his advancing age; the correspondence and poems of Sidonius Apollinaris, born at Lyon, elegantly and brilliantly educated, married to Papianilla, daughter of the Avitus who had himself proclaimed Emperor at Toulouse and Aries in 455; these and many others, thoroughly Roman, thoroughly modern, form a bridge over the transition-period. Yet one gets perhaps a little sharper sense of that period from the monuments remaining in the Province than one can get from literature, unless one has a sense of literary values developed a great deal above the common run of these times.

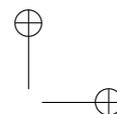
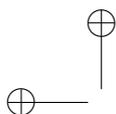




These monuments, moreover, throw light on the really representative civilization that existed there, which was no more the civilization of Claudian, Ausonius, Statius, Sidonius Apollinaris, than the representative civilization of America is the civilization of Henry Adams and Mr. Santayana. It was, like every other, necessarily, a product of the composite, a creature of the average, and the physical vestiges of it suggest that the average American would find himself thoroughly at home in it; they suggest that the composite first-century Roman must have been uncommonly like a composite, say, of Mr. Ford, Mr. Hoover and Mr. Hughes, and that he created his institutions after his own image, in his own likeness made he them. Resourceful, pushing, dogged, matter-of-fact, unscrupulous, unintelligent, legalistic, grasping – such appears to have been the Roman brother of those days; as a study, he is more interesting than pleasant, and one feels that the disappearance of his civilization was no great loss to the world. Such amenities as he patronized seem largely to have been borrowed; his diversions and dissipations were of a primitive type and probably his own.

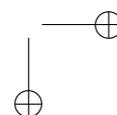
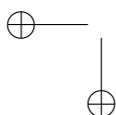
In support of this conjecture, when one is going through the museums of Roman antiquities in the Province, and in the Rhine-land as well, one is struck by the enormous quantity of luxury-products one sees there – jewellery, toilet-articles and the like. These things are so fragile that if so many of them have survived, there must have been a tremendous volume of them in circulation. They tell their own story eloquently. All the way from Marseilles to Trier, as soon as the legions had pacified the country, the rascally Roman go-getter swarmed in to

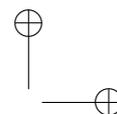
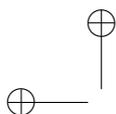




corrupt the inhabitants with his trumpery. Probably he had all the devices that modern business thinks it has invented to stimulate demand and overcome sales-resistance; very likely he sold on deferred payments and the instalment-plan. There is a fine sardonic humour in Caesar's observation that the reason why the Belgae kept their high character was that they were most remote from the debilitating influences of the Province, and that "drummers seldom get through to them with a line of goods that tend to effeminate the spirit." Julius was a wise old boy. He knew what he was fighting for, knew it like a book, and while he did not think much of it, he also knew which side his own bread was buttered on, and that was the main thing. American proconsular officers in the Philippines, Central America and the Caribbean might read the *Commentaries* prayerfully, with profit.

Sometimes the Roman enterpriser set up factories in the conquered regions, as Mr. Ford and others now do; the Igel column, near Trier, commemorates an undertaking of this kind. In Aries, too, one sees lengths of excellent lead pipe, with the maker's name on the end in raised block letters, exactly as you see it on the end of American railway-iron – *C. Cantius Pothinus fac.* Certain other exhibits show a touch of naïve humour that seems quite modern; as, for instance, the Latin inscription which states that a certain Cornelia "built this tomb for herself during her lifetime; her heirs saw to it that she was safely laid away therein." She may have been hard to get on with in her old age; the tone of the Latinity seems to suggest something of the kind. Again, almost every museum has a counterfeiter's outfit; some have quite an assortment of them, which might be taken as evidence of

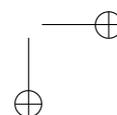
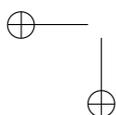


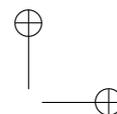
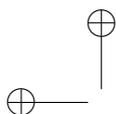


a flourishing industry. Three years ago an attendant in a German museum showed us one of these with the sage remark that even the Romans had a *Spitzbube* amongst them, now and then.

There is pathos as well as humour in some of these vestiges. In Mainz one sees a lead coffin containing the skeleton of a Roman girl of about seventeen, reposing just as it was found, with a tress of black hair, still glossy, underlying the skull. Her jewels were buried with her; these and the heavy lead coffin are evidence that her family was well-to-do, undoubtedly a family of conniving, thieving Roman gain-grabbers who had waxed fat on swindling the natives. One pities the poor little wench, up there where the country and climate must have seemed inhospitable enough to a child of the South. Perhaps she had been clandestinely flirting too late one night by the river with some personable descendant of the mighty Arminius, caught a cold which ran into pneumonia, and that was her end. One thinks of her as sweet, unspoiled, probably pretty well educated, much as Pliny describes the daughter of his friend Fundanus, sometimes a little wistful, wondering vaguely what there was ever to do with herself under the circumstances. Doubtless her father, in spite of his infamies, was capable of loving her and sparing neither pains nor expense to bring her up in the way an attractive young Roman parvenue should go. From what one knows and can guess, one feels that in her early demise, luck was with her, after all.

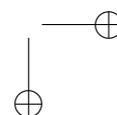
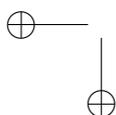
Thus one leaves the Province confirmed in some comforting certainties, the first of which is that people do not change much. They change a little, perhaps, but so slowly that the change can be measured only by ages, not

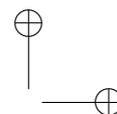
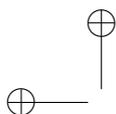




by decades or even by generations. Some great political upheaval takes place in a country, some great war or other disturbance, and immediately the literature of the day is full of comment on the changes that have taken place in the people. These efforts of our intelligentsia would lead one to suppose, for instance, that the “new” Germany or the “new” Italy is populated by a brand-new set of folks; but nothing like that is true. The “new” Germans are naught but plain Germans, exactly as their forbears were when Tacitus wrote about them, and when they were facing the legions of Varus on the banks of the Lippe. As for the new Italians, we have not been in Italy for many years and hence have no data, but on general principles we would wager any amount that Mussolini, Rienzi, Garibaldi and Massaniello, all rolled together and given a hundred years of absolute dictatorship, could not succeed in making anything but an Italian out of an Italian. With the world in its present state, this is a highly encouraging thought.

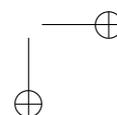
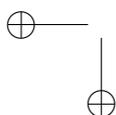
Another one, which is more or less a corollary to the foregoing, is that Americans are not the only ones who have tried to Americanize Europe. That is another favourite topic for the lucubrations of our intelligentsia; or rather, it was so up to the great crash of 1929, since when it has been not so much discussed, for some reason. The Romans tried their hand at that game quite a while ago, and it did not work; that is, it did not work as the Romans thought it should and would, and when the final accounting was cast up, the Romans came out considerably in the red. This is also an encouraging thought. One of America’s most acute and profound critics once said the trouble with Napoleon was that he

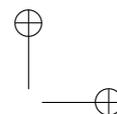
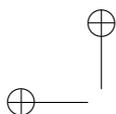




tried to do too much, and did it. That was precisely the trouble with the Romans in their efforts to Americanize Europe, and it will be the trouble of any who elect to follow their example.

Some ten miles north-east of Aries lies the wild rocky region of les Baux; one skirts it in going up to Avignon. Dante is supposed to have got his idea of hell from the forbidding and hideous Val d'Enfer; we think he may have got his idea of its inhabitants a few miles south, at Marseilles. We spent twenty-four hours in Marseilles once, some time ago, and except in one place – Times Square, New York, at any hour of the late afternoon or evening – we never saw such utterly dreadful people anywhere in the world. They seemed non-human, troglodytic, and we ventured among them only by daylight and in great fear. We always loathed the malign ferocity of the music of the *Marseillaise*, “smelling of blood,” as Mr. Baring Gould so well describes it, but having seen where it came from, we at least understand it. Coming thence, it could be only what it is; and being what it is, it could not have originated elsewhere. In the prosecution of her chosen industries, Marseilles asked for just the sort of population she got; and America at large did the same thing. In opening their doors to the world, Americans did not ask Europe for any Croces, Marconis, Wagners, Mommsens; they asked Europe for cheap low-grade labour, and, by thunder, they got it. Hence any sanctimonious talk about the sinfulness of “the foreign element” in our underworld population strikes us as a little far-fetched. Those chickens have simply come home to roost amid a fine heyday of organized crime affecting all orders in our society, just as any one might know they



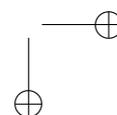
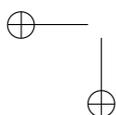


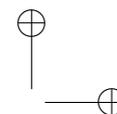
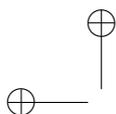
would. There is an interesting irony in the fact that the Times Building stands as an avatar of precisely the kind of people that surround it most of the time.

Rabelais does not give Marseilles even the passing mention that he accords Avignon and Nîmes; he leaves it out, as he does Carcassonne and Tours. One learns to admire this great man's discrimination as much by what he passes over as by what he notices.

Avignon, we ascertained, is the gateway to a region where a great many vegetables are raised; in fact, one sees so much traffic in vegetables going on everywhere in France that one wonders what becomes of them, for relatively few of them are served up, at least in the hotels and restaurants that we patronize. On the train near Avignon a ruddy beaming Provençal told us with immense pride that this district was "a land of vegetables." So it may be, but we notice that we never get any, except peas, string-beans and potatoes. Perhaps the French give these to strangers, and keep other varieties for themselves; yet picking up a French cook-book the other day, we read in the preface that the French are highly carnivorous and go at vegetables with long teeth, as a rule. From what we see around us, we are inclined to think the cook-book is right. Perhaps they sell the vegetables somewhere; if so, it would account for the Provençal's pride.

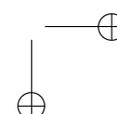
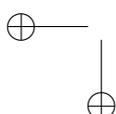
We are sick of peas and potatoes; we would be sick of them even if they were good and well-cooked. As for string-beans, we never see them now without thinking of Dan and the manurepiles of the Black Forest. We unexpectedly came across Dan and his wife at Bonn three years ago, just off the finish of a long motor-tour

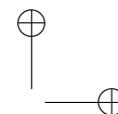
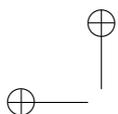




in the Alps; they were then on their way out through Holland to take a steamer for New York at Rotterdam. Anne was in high feather over having motored through sixty mountain-passes, and we tried to be polite and rise to the occasion, though we really saw very little in it, being lukewarm towards both motoring and mountains. Dan, on the other hand, was rather glad it was over. He said they had driven all around the Black Forest on the way up, and if he smelled one more manure-pile before he reached New York, he was going to jump right off the ship. Such are our sentiments towards string-beans. We want stewed tomatoes – not European tomatoes, which are as uninviting and impracticable as persimmons, but real ones, with heavy flesh and the good pungent American acid flavour – stewed corn, Lima beans, beets, okra, succotash, salsify, baked sweet potatoes; but we might as well stop wishing for them, for no one here would know how to cook them.

Over and above our own observations we have good authority for thinking that the cook-book was probably right about the carnivorous habits of the French. Rabelais appears to have had a fine virtuoso spirit towards food, and to have known a great deal about it. He often speaks of various foods, and always with such an astonishing particularity of knowledge that one would say he had mistaken his profession and was cut out for a cook. In the Fourth Book he gives long lists of the dishes sacrificed by the Gastrolaters to their repulsive idol called Manduce. In these he catalogues nearly a hundred dishes of meat, fowl and game, as many more of fish, a couple of dozen kinds of pastry, two or three fruits; and for vegetables, peas, turnips, cabbage and

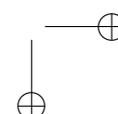
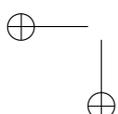


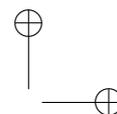
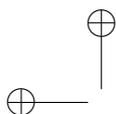


spinach. He mentions seven kinds of salad, but they hardly qualify with any one who has put in a good long apprenticeship on French salads, as we have; we have acquired the same untiring animosity towards French salads as towards string-beans. We think Rabelais's bill of fare was probably typical, and we accordingly submit it in evidence, as herein aforesaid.

* * * * *

That line of asterisks represents a period of several months, during which we went to the United States. When we returned, it was by the Mediterranean route, in order to reach directly the next point with which the memory of Rabelais is associated, the Islands of Hyères.

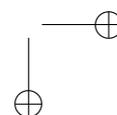
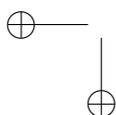


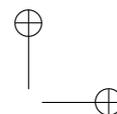
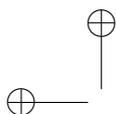


CHAPTER X

In the last chapter, where we were expounding our doctrine that peoples do not change, on a venture we cited the Italians. We have now returned to France on an Italian ship that stopped a few hours at Palermo and Naples, and we have assembled overwhelming evidence that the Italian is his old, familiar, inveterate self, and that no Mussolini or multiplication of Mussolinis can ever dragoon or train or bamboozle or cajole him into being anything else. Here are a few lines from a notebook which one of us kept on the journey over:

This ship puts me in mind of a remark that a friend made to me about a week before I sailed, to the effect that the modern drug-store is a pretty good symbol of our country, spiritually; the idea being that we like things duded up out of all resemblance to what they purport to be. I should say that this is rather the mark of a parvenu type than an American type, except that America has more parvenus than any other land. The last time I went over this route was twenty years ago, in a lumbering old farm-wagon of a British cattle-boat that had been commandeered into the passenger service, and took twelve days to make the trip. She had been scrubbed up a bit, and was very tidy, but she loyally remained a cattle-boat in spirit, responding to every wavelet with a grave and portly waddle. She

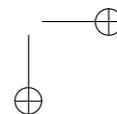
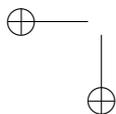


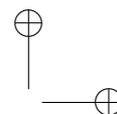
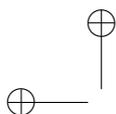


was tenanted mostly by school-teachers from the Mississippi Valley, bent on turning the trip into a real clubby, informal house-party, which even after twenty years remains a terrible thing to think upon. But the old barge was a real ship, just what she pretended to be.

Now I am on a huge Italian liner that makes the same run in eight days, and with a ship's company so thin that one feels like the Ancient Mariner. It consists mostly of a double handful of human detritus bound for a tepid climate in the hope of defrauding the undertaker yet awhile, and meanwhile living as much as possible as they do at home. They are a dispiriting spectacle, for they keep one thinking of death when one should be getting into the holiday spirit. Some of them are from up Boston way, and show the peculiar timidity that seems to belong to certain classes native to that region – the curious timidity which Mr. Howells, perhaps unconsciously, portrays so well in his character-drawing, and which, though originally an outsider, he soon came to share. It is a strange phenomenon. It was this unreasoning fear that prompted the murder of Sacco and Vanzetti; an appalling crime, the more so because brought about by people who should have been so far above that sort of thing.

Being Italian, this ship is splendiferously dolled up in all her fittings, but they mostly do not work. Those things which an Italian regards as important work perfectly; that is to say, all the apparatus of navigation. The Italians were great navigators long before Don Cristoforo, and ever since. The things that an Italian regards casually, however, pretty regularly do not work. The hot-water tap in my room works first-rate; the cold-water tap is most uncertain, and so is one of my light-switches. They are both amenable when you learn their ways; otherwise they refuse to turn their game for you. A fellow-countryman on my corridor behaved tremendous yesterday morning, because his wash-stand drain would not close, and he could not keep any water in the bowl. In the smoking-room lavatory, no water will run from any faucet. Moreover, with seven-tenths of the staterooms vacant, the management, being Italian, put me in one next a pantry where stewards raise Cain with dishes at seven-thirty every morning. Also, with four unused bathrooms in a radius of fifteen feet from my door, I have to walk the whole length of the passage, nearly – some thirty yards – in



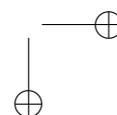
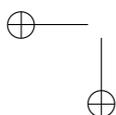


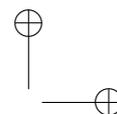
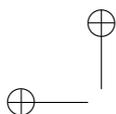
undress uniform, to get a bath. The bath-steward always comes down from the far end of the corridor, and being an Italian, he naturally stops and fixes up the first bathroom he finds in his path.

If I should go to the *capo alloggi* and kick about any of these matters, he would be almost affectionately sympathetic, and would put me in another room costing three times what mine does, probably with a bath and sitting-room attached, but he would not have the least idea, really, of what my kick was about. Being Italian, he has the Italian's perfect philosophy of trifles. Suppose the stewards do rattle dishes and wake you up at seven-thirty: what of it? Any man in his right mind would have been up and out on deck an hour before, his spirit responsive to the morning sun; he would be thinking about his best girl, not about crockery, and humming operatic airs. What if a light-switch goes back on you? Wiggle it a while and it will probably work, and if not, the other lights will give you all you need; why fret and carry on about it? You can get a plenty-good-enough wash, very likely, if you coax the decrepit tap a minute or so. If not, there is a first-rate wash-room just across the hall, and if anything is wrong with the taps over there, why, don't wash; just see how graceful and pretty the fittings are, and be happy. The Italian is ready to weep with you or to laugh, as occasion requires, and will put his whole soul into either. The one thing he can not do is to worry; it is impossible for him to make himself unhappy over what are, after all, trifles.

So I have made no kick. On the contrary, when I meet the *capo alloggi*, I foam up like a soda-flask over how fine everything is. Why? Because the Italian is right. He is as right as Epictetus, who said it is a sign of a badly balanced character to make a fuss about eating, drinking, bathing, and all such-like things that one should think of only as incidental to the main purposes of living. My stay in America has corrupted my sense of this. I perceive I need just the discipline that I can get out of this voyage. It will do me a great deal of good; the *capo alloggi* and I are firm friends.

The several clocks on board agree within a few minutes, and usually one of them is somewhere near agreeing with the noon whistle; but what are a few minutes? We reach Palermo some

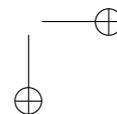
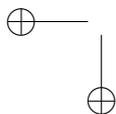


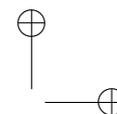
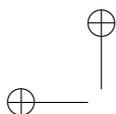


time between nine-thirty and three-thirty to-morrow, according to reports from various official sources; but when we get there we shall know – why anticipate? Admirable discipline for Americans who, like me, are mechanized into fussiness in spite of themselves! I am getting into a sensible estimate of comparative values again, and am happy in it.

Yes, we repeat, it would take more than a Mussolini to make over an Italian. The Italian seems born with a sense of history; he knows there have been many Mussolinis, and one or two more or fewer – what of it? One of them seems to have turned up about every so often, appeared for a little time and then vanished away. Does the Italian get in a state of mind because the pope has gone outside the Vatican? Not at all; there has been such a lot of popes, and every once in a while one of them has done something or other. But the sun still shines, the seasons come and go, the earth gives her increase, and life is pleasant – why worry about the pope? Why worry about any such small matters? They are not worth it, and the *Padre Eterno* seems to manage the great matters pretty well, so one does not have to worry about those; and besides, what good would it do?

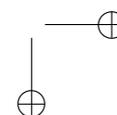
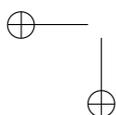
Our landing at Palermo, which did not get put down in the notebook, rounded off our observations on the Italian nature to perfection. We were to see the town for a few hours, and were told that passports were not necessary. An hour before landing, we were told that they were necessary; stewards flew around gathering them up and piling them on a table in the lounge. Presently two villainous-looking brigands appeared, seated themselves at the table with great flourish and ostentation, and began to look over the passports with unseeing eyes,

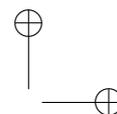
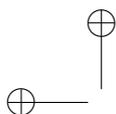




and stamp them. They had stamped about half the lot when a steward called their attention to the fact that they had stamped them with a date in the month of March instead of April. They glared malevolently at the stamp, considered the situation a while, and then began to change the date with a pen. This became laborious, and after they had doctored half a dozen they swept all the passports into a heap in the middle of the table and departed. Some of us went ashore with passports stamped a month overdue, a few of us with a corrected date, and half of us with no stamp at all. Nobody asked us for passports, however, so all that opera-buffa performance over them went for nothing, just as anybody who had ever seen Italians in action over anything that did not strike them as particularly important might know it would.

We left the ship at Villefranche, and went along the coast by motor, stopping at Cannes to call on an old friend. On our way to his abode, we noticed a small private garage that had a heraldic device sculptured over the doorway, with the device, *At spes non fracta*. We were fascinated by the appropriateness of this, for by that time we had made a rather elaborate acquaintance with French motor-cars and their peculiarities. We wondered whether the owner was a man of humour; yet that type of thing is rather out of the line of French humour. The spirit of it seemed more American than French, but not so the Latinity. We also conjectured that the place might belong to an obtuse French profiteer, and that some one had put up a joke on him. The house looked like a profiteer's mansion, as do most of those hereabouts.

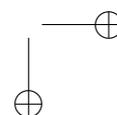
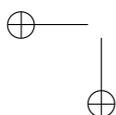


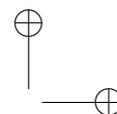
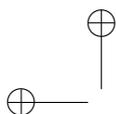


We saw something like that in Baden-Baden a few years ago. A physician, apparently prosperous, had put up the regulation brass plate on his gateway, bearing the name of the property in Roman block letters, VILLA MOPS, and some disgruntled classicist had added a tail to the P, making the words read VILLA MORS. The tail was very well executed, so that we were taken in by this sinister legend until we went up for a close view of it.

The road from Cannes to Hyères is a continuous reminder of California, even in the apparent newness of the settlements. Hardly a house seems more than five years old; they are built California-style and contribute a Californian colour to a landscape already enough like California to suit the most exacting taste. No wonder that so many Americans gravitate this way when times are good; though we suppose it might be asked why, if this is the sort of thing they like, they do not go to California for it. There is no advantage in their coming here, as far as we can see.

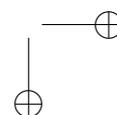
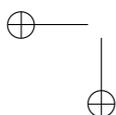
The vegetation is disappointing. We are told that very few of the trees along this part of the coast are indigenous; most of them have been brought here and cultivated. Semi-tropical foliage is not so attractive in colour as the northern greens, especially the greens of America; it looks tired and weather-beaten and a little jaundiced. One sees palms about, and the more of them one sees the less one cares for them. They have a romantic interest, but are really pretty ugly; their trunks have a leprous appearance, and their foliage is unkempt, reminding one of a man's hair when he turns out in the morning. Hyères is full of palmtrees, many being of the date-bearing kind, periodically littering up

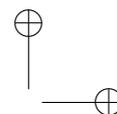
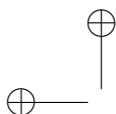




the whole face of the earth with dates, which squash unpleasantly underfoot and get one's shoes messy. We noticed that nobody gathered these dates or ate any of them, and on inquiry we were told that they were not of an edible variety. They looked like any other dates that we had ever seen; we dissected several of them, out of curiosity, and discovered no distinguishing mark, and we never could find out to a certainty whether they are poisonous, indigestible, unpleasant to the taste, or merely unpopular. Some citizens told us one thing, and some another; such being the way of the lucid French mind when giving information to a stranger. We could not understand why it was that when the region was importing date-palms it did not import some that were good for something.

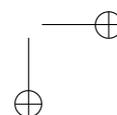
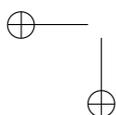
Hyères is the first settlement we have seen along the coast that seems to have any age; all those we passed through bear the mark of the twentieth-century real-estater, though it may be a counterfeit, and these communities may have that within which passes show. If it be a counterfeit, however, it is an uncommonly clever one. Hyères is quite old, and shows the usual signs of wear and tear, without any compensatory display of interesting features; its attractions, really, are few and feeble. It is the first winter-resort established by the English on the Riviera, the father and grandfather of all the others that lie along the coast as far as the Italian border. It still retains the tepid snuffiness of its kind; its atmosphere has the peculiar savour of valetudinarianism, half fragrance, half stench, and a sensitive person should not risk breathing it for any length of time.

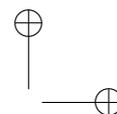
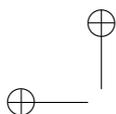




The town is set at the foot of a high and steep hill which is surmounted by the remains of a castle. One can climb up there if one likes; it is said that one gets the reward of a fine view for doing so, but we did not put in a claim, being wary of these representations. We compromised with the guide-book by getting up high enough for a clear look to seaward, which we decided would do very well; it showed us all there is to see, so there was no apparent advantage in going higher. The view is pleasant; it is made up of the town at one's feet, the alluvial plain between the town and the sea, the long peninsula of Giens stretching out into the Mediterranean like an elongated letter T; and in the water lying beyond, the horizon is broken by the silhouette of Porquerolles. We got up a proper enthusiasm over this last feature, for Porquerolles is one of the islands that we came here to visit, and this was our first glimpse of it.

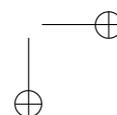
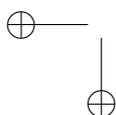
Rabelais mentions the Islands of Hyères only twice and very casually, but each time with an accent of peculiar affection. In the fiftieth chapter of the Third Book, describing the philology of a long list of plant-names, he says that the lavender-plant gets its name *stoechas* "from my islands of Hyères, formerly called Stoechades." The little touch of affection in the possessive *my* is especially noticeable here, as occurring in a mere catalogue, as purely impersonal and devoid of sentiment as a laundry-list. Then on the title-page of the Third Book he signs himself as "master Francis Rabelais, doctor in medicine, and calloïer of the Islands of Hyères." This term *calloïer*, or *caloyer*, is Greek, meaning literally "good old man," and was given popularly to Greek monks, much as devout people in the humbler class of Irish to-day often speak

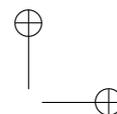
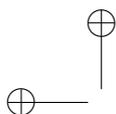




of their priest as “the good man.” Why he adopted this title is not clear; there have been several conjectures put forth about it. Whatever his reason may have been, the conceit is quaint and very charming; so charming, we would say, that it should draw his admirers to the Islands of Hyères from almost any distance, out of curiosity to see, if possible, what it was that made him apparently so tender towards them.

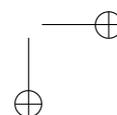
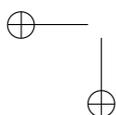
The islands lie in a fairly straight line east-and-west – for which reason the Greeks called them Stoechades – a short distance off the coast at Hyères. There are five of them: the smallest, Grand-Ribaud, lies close inshore, a mere speck, a scant half-mile long; then comes the largest, Porquerolles, about five miles long; then at some distance are Bagaud, Port-Cros and Levant, which lie close together. They have a long history; Pliny, Strabo and Dioscorides speak of them. The consul Scipio is said to have taken refuge there in 82 B.C., to escape proscription in the civil war which preceded the return of Sulla, and to have remained there for the rest of his days. Coins of twenty-five Roman emperors have been found on Porquerolles. Monasteries were built on Levant, Port-Cros and Porquerolles in the late fourth century, and they carried on business for five hundred years. In the Middle Ages the islands were knocked about from one ownership to another; they became infested by Barbary pirates, who found that they were an excellent base for operations in the Mediterranean, and continued to make themselves at home there for three centuries, dropping in for occasional visits afterwards, at intervals not too infrequent. In later times the English thought they would come handy for purposes essentially similar, and tried

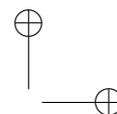
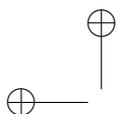




to get possession of them, but failed. Napoleon planted some batteries on them, with an eye to the maritime power of the British. During the last century some few enterprises of a commercial character were set up on them, but they were all short-lived.

Now they are practically deserted; only two of them, Porquerolles and Port-Cros, have anything on them that could be called a settlement. On the west end of Port-Cros is a little bay, about half a mile wide, on which are perhaps a dozen or fifteen old houses; the rest of the island is wild as when it was made. A few steps southward from this string of houses bring one to a tiny church, and a manor-house which the present proprietor of the island has rescued from dilapidation; its gardens also are coming out of ruin into something quite handsome. Above the settlement is an old fort which for some reason unknown to us bears the familiar name of d'Estissac. The heroine of M. Henry Bordeaux's novel, *La Fée de Port-Cros*, had lodgings with her lieutenant in this fort; and the heroine of the vicomte de Vogüé's *Jean d'Agrève* lived at the manor-house. The French romancer has a very restricted choice of places here in which to plant a heroine. The houses on the bay are too commonplace, there would be too great an air of fictitiousness about domiciling her in the church, he has to save up the cemetery for use at the end of her career when her dingy and dolorous romance is busted, and all that is left is the manor-house and the fort. An American novelist might get pretty fair effects out of having her live in a brush tent somewhere over on the east end of the island, but not for a French reading-public. The French know nothing whatever about the frontier type

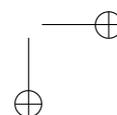
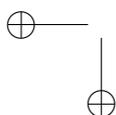


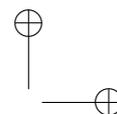
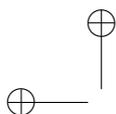


of romance; it would be too much of an innovation; they would be suspicious of it and would not buy it.

Curiously, speaking of innovations, there is a good hotel at Port-Cros, and of a style thoroughly familiar to Americans. The proprietor of the island has very recently put it up, and one would say he had got his basic idea from the United States. It is a small affair, beautifully kept, modernist in its decorations, American in its fittings and conveniences, but overlaid with enough French good sense to keep it habitable and actually attractive to civilized and experienced persons. We noticed one distinctively American touch in the service that we have never seen in a French hotel – water on the table, plain *jeder-Tag Wasser* in modernist stone jugs. We marvelled at this, for no Americans come here; we found no evidence that any Americans had ever visited these islands, and in America we never heard of any who had done so, or who thought of it, or who even knew what or where the Islands of Hyères are; except one, a professor of Greek, and he did not know until we mentioned their Greek name.

In fact, we wondered how this hotel could get enough trade of any kind to pay itself out, even though it purports to keep open all the year round. We could not help feeling that the future looks a little dark for it. The eminent physiologist Charles Richet, professor in the Faculty of Medicine at Paris, an adoring lover of these islands, remarks that the French, especially the Parisians, do not like to cross water, and even though the crossing to the islands is so short, they balk at it. Hence, he says, “visitors rarely approach these shores; but I must admit that this does not distress me. . . . My sentiment is

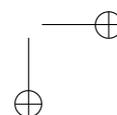
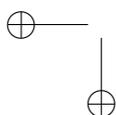


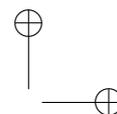
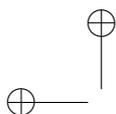


divided. On the one hand, I could wish these marvellous islands to become well known, much frequented, highly celebrated. On the other hand, I dread the swarming-in of a mediocre type of visitor, mere wanderers in quest of emotional stirrings, tourists hard-bound in vulgarity and snobbery, to dishonour this abode of peace and beauty.”

We have every sympathy with this, but we doubt the need for anxiety. As far as Americans are concerned, the type of visitor that M. Richet so properly holds in horror will never come here, could not be hired to come, because there is nothing here for such to do. They would fidget themselves into St. Vitus’s dance in two hours. The only sort of American who could be induced to stay overnight in Port-Cros is the sort that M. Richet might well be content to see go there. The English, now – that is another matter. We are not so sure about those. As for M. Richet’s own countrymen, he knows them far better than we, but as far as our knowledge goes, we have no anxiety. While we were at Port-Cros, the only other persons in the hotel were a group of a dozen gilded youngsters, boys and girls, who had put into the bay from a yachting cruise; they were listless, quite clearly bored with one another, and very hard up for amusement. They did not stay long. This type of underdone and underbred high-life seems to us, the more we see of it, to be the same in all countries; M. Richet need not worry about it; and the more substantial elements in French society, as he says, are for other reasons unlikely to overrun the islands.

No one with the mere vagrant lust of seeing things and going places should be encouraged to think twice of the Islands of Hyères. There is nothing there for them,



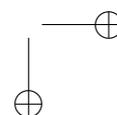
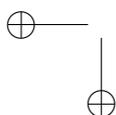


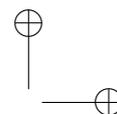
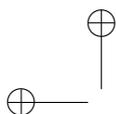
strictly nothing doing in their line. The islands are indeed the abode of peace and beauty, of profound peace and of a beauty that passes imagination, but that is all they are. They are for another kind, for the kind that does not take contact with them casually, as a diversion or as an incidental experience lumped in with others, good, bad and indifferent, but that takes it as fulfilling a need of the spirit. M. Richet says:

By living in the world of men, one ends perforce by losing one's identity; all one's differentiating originality disappears. One ceases to think for oneself, for the sake of thinking like others; which is equivalent to no longer thinking at all. One gasps for breath in an unwholesome and profitless palpitation, like the squirrel driving the wheel of his cage around and around to no purpose; and in spite of all the silly responsibilities that are piled on us, all the words we speak and all the mechanical measures that we multiply, one has only the illusion of activity.

But here, looking out upon an ever-changing sea, under a sun that is always kindly, among trees that are always green, one's true activity, that is to say the activity of the spirit, has a free rein. Here one indulges an activity of an indisputably higher order than the activity of doing; it is the activity of dreaming. For poets, artists, scholars, nothing else is worth as much as a few weeks of isolation and reflection in these dear islands. One sloughs off one's grubby vanities and harassing cares; one becomes once more a personality; one strengthens one's inner life, which is the only true life one has.

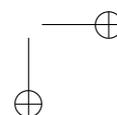
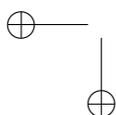
These are great words from a great physician, though from what we hear we judge they are a little out with latter-day American professional sentiment, now that the behaviourists and mechanists seem mostly to be having things their own way. However, America has had physicians who would know what M. Richet is driving at. William Osler could get that kind of thing through

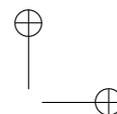
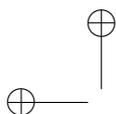




his head without any trouble at all; so could Pancoast, Mitchell and de Schweinitz. That being so, probably they could see a reason why another light of their profession in bygone times might have spoken of “my islands” as affectionately as M. Richet speaks of them, and why it might have occurred to him to write himself down in loving playfulness as “calloier of the Isles d’Hyères.”

Port-Cros has extraordinary vegetation. The catalogue of the flora of the islands covers one hundred and fifty-seven octavo pages, and Port-Cros has nearly everything mentioned on the list. We thought of counting up the actual number of varieties and sub-varieties represented there, but we became discouraged after a valiant start, and quit. The official list we had was one of the sort that gives no information to anybody but a scientific botanist. Knowledge of Latin does not help, because the Latin names do not correspond to the popular names; ditto Greek. For instance, it is no trouble to tell what a monocotyledon is, etymologically, or a melanogaster, but knowing one when you see it is another matter; we are not up to that. If the learned brother who compiled our list had not thought it beneath his dignity to sift in the popular equivalents for these names wherever he could, it might have helped a little; though after all, perhaps not much. In Brussels one day we stopped before a large window-display of fish, and we were very low in our minds because we did not know the French names for all those fish; we thought we knew the language better than that – not that we wanted to put on airs about our French, but the thing somehow seemed humiliating. Presently it occurred to us that we did not know the English names

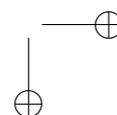
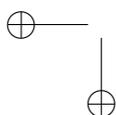


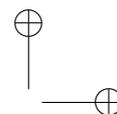
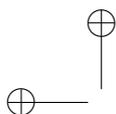


for them either, so we felt ourselves rehabilitated and our spirits rose.

In Port-Cros, however, we did notice one or two things that seemed odd; for instance, we saw huge cactus and clover, mouse-ear and forget-me-not, all out together. We also saw golden-rod out in the middle of May; it was the stocky, short-waisted variety that one sees on the island of Nantucket. One gets used to these queer concurrences of bloom in various parts of Europe. In Bavaria we have seen the snowdrop, crocus and hyacinth out on the thirty-first of March, quite as they might be at home, but blooming along with them were English daisies, columbine, sweet-William and iris, with peonies just showing!

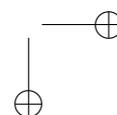
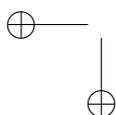
One of the most delicious things about Port-Cros is the unspeakably exquisite fragrance of the air; we could never have imagined so entrancing a fragrance. This is due to the presence of every kind of aromatic plant and herb, we should say, that is to be found on earth. It was on this point that we felt especially bitter against the pedantic jackass who compiled that list of ours. We would have liked to run down the names of all those growths; names, we mean, that a Christian could understand and attach to something he had seen and smelled and knew about. We picked out a few familiar specimens by sight, such as sage, pennyroyal, thyme, peppermint, lavender, valerian, catnip – we should think every cat in France would start swimming over here as soon as it got the scent of a south wind – but we were so aggravated by that pretentious nonentity of a list whenever we tried to extort some help out of it in identifying one we did not know, that we soon

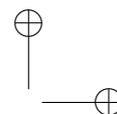
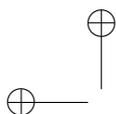




gave up and contented ourselves with the pure delight of respiration.

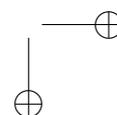
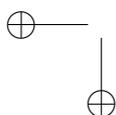
The apothecaries of Montpellier visited these islands regularly to stock up, that being in the days before pharmaceutical preparations were turned out by mass-production. The natural supposition is that Rabelais accompanied them on one of their trips, perhaps oftener, and in this way got acquainted with the islands and fell under their irresistible charm. At that time herborizing must have been something of a chore, on account of the absence of roads and paths; one suspects it, at least, when one sees how thick the growth is. There are paths on Port-Cros now; they are not what one finds in the Black Forest by a great deal, nor are they ever likely to be, but one can get over them. There are no roads suitable for modern wheel-traffic, and almost certainly there will never be; Port-Cros is Ford-proof. It is also golf-proof; laying out a golf-course anywhere on Port-Cros would cost enough to pay the national debt. As far as we can see, it is tourist-proof in the sense herein aforesaid, and for reasons heretofore and herein set forth and made manifest. Unhappily, unless by some undiscovered benediction of nature, it is not radio-proof; but there was no radio on the island when we were there, and nobody who had ever heard one, so for some little time perhaps it may escape this scourge. Newspapers do not appear there; one shares with the inhabitants the inestimable blessings that a joyous illiteracy confers. For all these things may the Lord's holy Name be praised, and His infinite mercy be forever glorified. Amen and Amen.

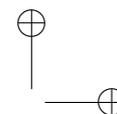
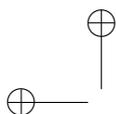




One thing that tends to discourage the undesirable visitor to Port-Cros, and that would especially discourage the undesirable American visitor, is the means of getting there; it is tedious, very slow, and can be uncomfortable on occasion. To reach Port-Cros, you go from Hyères about three miles to the great salt-lagoons, where thousands of tons of salt are annually evaporated from Mediterranean sea-water. During the “season,” that is to say, all winter, the railway runs a daily bus down there, but discontinues it, French-fashion, at the precise time when the islands are at their best and one most wants to go. Perhaps the best thing at any time is to be lordly and hire a motor-car; it costs little. At the salt-works you find what seems to be a reconditioned trawler, called the *Rose-Adrien*; it is of the pumpkin-seed type, somewhat like a canal-boat sawed in half; it is propelled by gasoline. Theoretically and officially it covers the distance to Port-Cros in an hour and thirty minutes; actually it does so in a little less than twice that. We speak with some assurance about this, because on the day we went the boat was doing its best with everything in its favour; the sea was dead calm, and the breeze was with us, and we made Port-Cros in a trifle under three hours. French transportation-schedules are like the schedules of cabin-prices on steamships; it is always the “and up” that counts. These schedules seem to be produced chiefly as a literary effort; they are worthless for any other purpose.

The *Rose-Adrien*, despite its humble station in maritime life, is very clean; its capacity is eighty passengers, so one has room to move about. It has a small, uninviting cabin in the rear, below-deck, with a sinister legend



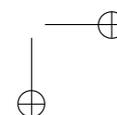
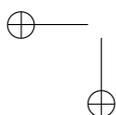


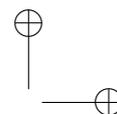
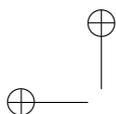
posted in it to the effect that seasick passengers should keep as far astern as possible. It is well to find out the state of the sea before embarking on this journey; it can be bad, and a boat built like the *Rose-Adrien* may be relied on to wallow and flounder like a walnut-shell, with very little provocation.

Coming into Port-Cros, one passes the island of Bagaud, close by; one could almost throw a stone across to Bagaud from the west end of Port-Cros. In contrast to its neighbour's exuberant vegetation, Bagaud seems to be only a bare reddish rock; it has a forbidding appearance, and we were told that it is utterly deserted. As the boat passes by the end of Bagaud, one sees a huge pile of oddly laminated rock at its foot, sparkling with mica, looking like an enormous heap of metallic junk that had been tossed off the island into the ocean. From the other end of Port-Cros one sees Levant, the largest of the group except Porquerolles, something less than a mile away. Levant is completely abandoned; in 1876 it had a population of eighty-one, of twenty in 1913, and of fourteen in 1928. The present population consists of the functionaries who keep the lighthouse that is situated on the north-east end.*

In former days Levant was the most prosperous of the group. Besides the monastic establishment we have referred to, the Benedictines in the fifteenth century, and in the seventeenth century the Brothers of the Cross, set up shop there and did a comfortable business in their

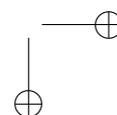
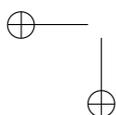
*True when written. There are now a couple of summer cottages on Bagaud, and a small naturist colony has settled on the western end of Levant. Port-Cros and Porquerolles remain as we describe them.

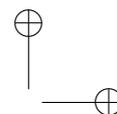
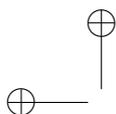




several lines of trade, whatever those were. In the last century a reformatory was established on the island; but after a few years the inmates revolted and scattered, taking up a Robin Hood existence, and living mostly as they could. This caused the project to be abandoned; the ruins of its extensive property are still standing. One sees other modern ruins in Levant, among them those of a fairly pretentious château. Once some enterprising brother set up a pipe-factory, but this also came to nothing and lies in ruins. The Navy Department used the island a while for gunnery-practice and maintained a sort of station, of which the remains are visible, as are also those of Napoleon's fortifications. M. Richet says justly that "France has done everything it could do to make one of its loveliest regions hideous, fortunately without success."

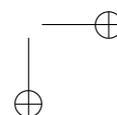
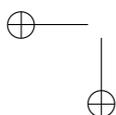
Indeed, some guardian spirit seems to have the fate of these islands in hand, to visit every effort of this kind with failure and death. Rabelais was always on the side of Nature, and here Nature seems to be invincibly on his side, in keeping these islands loyally worthy of his affection; he might still call them "my islands of Hyères." Romance has tried without success to identify them with the Happy Islands of the ancients, and an English geographer had the interesting fancy that one of them was the island tenanted by Calypso, but this is almost certainly devoid of foundation. The tutelary genius of the region is not Homeric, not epic; it is of the Renaissance, it is the genius of Rabelais, profound, fecund, exuberant, joyous, kindly, unconquerable; it triumphs effortlessly over every attempt at degradation and defilement. One becomes thoughtful about one's sense of values, when

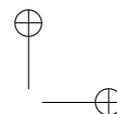
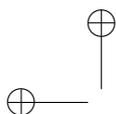




one is visiting these islands. What an unconscionable deal of legalism, priestcraft, tyranny, industrialism, imperialism, gain-grabbing, they have seen in twenty-five hundred years! All these have tried their hand against the genius of the region, and where are they now? Where is Picrochole, Gripe-men-all, Dingdong, Homenas? *Si quaeris monumentum, circumspice* – go to Levant and take a look around! But the islands are still here in their untroubled beauty; their genius still presides over them, serene, immortal, indefeasible, implacable; Rabelais is still the calloïer of the Isles d’Hyères,

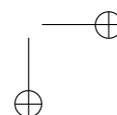
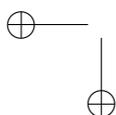
Porquerolles, the largest of the group, has a village of about four hundred inhabitants, and one or two good hotels, not so modernist as the one at Port-Cros, but modern enough for anybody. Porquerolles is easy of access from Hyères. A bus runs down the peninsula of Giens to the Tour-Fondue, where one finds a motor-boat that is supposed to make the crossing in half an hour, and we are told that it has sometimes done so. The collection of Roman remains and of other antiquities found on the islands is at Porquerolles, which indeed furnished most of them. Curiously, no actual traces of Roman civilization on Levant have survived, unless the foundations of a watch-tower on the south shore are Roman, as they may be; and not many such remains have been found on Port-Cros. One need have no fear of finding Porquerolles over-civilized or overrun. The village, all there is of it, is strung along the bay which forms an excellent natural harbour on the north shore; the inhabitants stick to it pretty closely, and a few minutes’ walk beyond it gives one the entrée to five miles of elbow-room, which is enough.

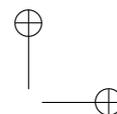
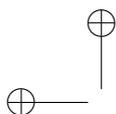




The early history of Porquerolles is one of successive occupation by the several peoples who overspread the soil of southern France; its first known inhabitants were Celts. These were driven out by the Ligurians, and these in turn by Phocaeans, who came there from Marseilles about 400 B.C. All vestiges of the older civilizations have disappeared. The Romans left traces of their presence, in the shape of pottery, mosaic, some trifles of jewellery, a couple of skeletons, an inscription marking the tomb of a freedwoman, and the specimens of coinage already mentioned. Its later history is parallel with that of Levant. One sees the usual crumbling castle and abandoned forts. An enterprise in heavy chemicals, employing about a hundred and fifty hands, was started in the last century on the extreme west end of the island; it came to nothing. There exists a curious reminder of its collapse, a deserted settlement where the workmen lived; the houses are there with not a soul in them or near them. Other commercial undertakings have been tried, and have failed; one of the most recent was in the sugar and molasses way. The government at one time built a military sanitarium or lazaretto near the village; it ran for a while and then petered out and was converted into a semi-private health-resort for the treatment of shackling youngsters. Some vine-culture goes on, and to the west of the village there is a modest production of fruits, vegetables and flowers. Fate seems to have its face set against the success of any form of industry here but these.

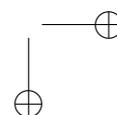
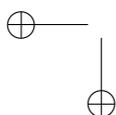
Literature has done something with these islands. Besides the novels we mentioned, a chapter of Paul Bourget's *Voyageuses*, and Claude Balyne's *l'Île Fée*, deal with them; so do travel-sketches by the marquis Costa

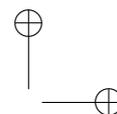
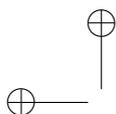




de Beauregard, Varlet and Joseph Pradelle. Conrad made use of them in *The Rover*. Poets of various denominations have looked at them; one or two started the pumps going, but could not raise much more than a trickle. Whether it be that they are too cerebral to get the proper inspiration, or whether the language is not manageable enough, French poets – that is, those whom we have read – do not spread themselves on that sort of subject. A good Wordsworthian, now, could visit the islands and really get results; there is plenty of history here to keep his philosophical sense going and balance his sentiment, but not enough to scare off his muse. He could do a string of sonnets with the full poetic accent of *How clear, how keen, how wonderfully bright*, and also with plenty of thought-substance. We wish we knew a good Wordsworthian who was looking around for something to do, so that we could send him down here and set him going.

Looking over what we have written, we see that we have said most about Port-Cros, as perhaps we should, for if there can be degrees in perfection, it is the most charming and satisfying of the group. We could say more about it, much more, but we deliberately refrain. One can easily become emotional over these islands, and the loveliness of Port-Cros reduces one to tears and incoherence, neither of which is valuable to an inquiring reader; so we forbear. We notice, however, that our restraint may have given the impression of a monotony in loveliness, and of a certain tepidity of existence amidst it. The exact opposite is true; the islands offer no temptation to a *dolce far niente*. On the contrary, the air and sun seem to us the most invigorating that we have ever





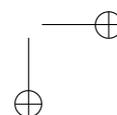
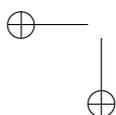
felt. Physically, too, the two sides of the islands are in absolute contrast, so that the gradations between them enable one to satisfy any mood. The south sides are precipitous, storm-beaten, formidable; one may not skirt their edge, for accident is more than probable, it is certain. M. Richet says:

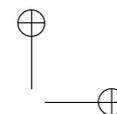
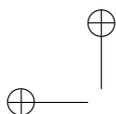
One may not think that this pacific Mediterranean remains always a lake of unwrinkled azure. The Islands of Hyères sometimes know all the fury of an unbridled gale and a raging ocean. On the south side of Port-Cros, Porquerolles and even of Grand-Ribaud, facing the sea, arise precipitous and savage cliffs, lashed by wind and surf; bare and jagged rocks, on which, here and there, are misshapen pines, astonished at their own power to survive among arid stones and to breathe the salt-laden air. Gulls come here to nest; but no other wayfarer dare risk a passage on these solitary steeps.

On the north side, facing the mainland, the slopes are gentle, flowered, fragrant, cheerful, with picturesque bays, unlooked-for inlets, basins of limpid water where formerly Homer's nymphs may have disported themselves in voluptuous frolic. Thus one may take one's choice, according to the mood of the moment, between landscapes lovely or sublime, smiling or grandiose, radiant or desolate. By merely turning to the south or to the north, one may find one's play of sentiment faithfully reflected in the one type or in the other.

It was with great sadness that we took our departure from "my islands of Hyères," from M. Richet's "dear islands"; but we went our way with a compensating consciousness of deepened intimacy with the great spirit that loved them, and a clearer understanding of one side or aspect of that many-sided ideal, the humane life.

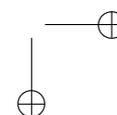
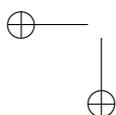
Our way now lies northward; we are going to Lyon, to much the same purpose that took us to Fontenay-le-Comte, to see a place where things used to be. Lyon

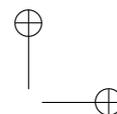
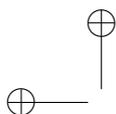




was the cultural centre of France in the early sixteenth century, but it is such no longer; it has been supplanted by Paris, which was not so strong for culture in those days. It is now almost purely an industrial town; its inhabitants take a deal of civic pride in it and keep up all its physical properties in tip-top style, and according to Gunter. Probably we shall not find a great deal doing in our line, but it is proper for us to wait and see. There is unanimous testimony, however, that "one eats well at Lyon," and that is encouraging. We heard this from a Frenchman twenty-two years ago, and we have been hearing it from Frenchmen ever since. It is the first thing we hear from them whenever the name of Lyon is mentioned.

The commercial character of Lyon is nothing new; the town was always primarily a trading-post, on account of its situation; it was the centre handiest to both Italy and the Germanics, and it stood at the confluence of two large commercial waterways, the Saône and the Rhône. In 1462 Louis XI, never known to miss a trick, established a great free-trade fair there; it was held four times a year; merchants from other countries could bring their goods in, exhibit them and sell them, free of charge. Thus Lyon was the intake through which an enormous volume of commodities passed into France from the Low Countries, the Germanics, Switzerland, Italy, even Spain, and it was also the outgo for French raw products, and for such manufactured or processed commodities as Louis's infant industries were able to export. Lyon also became the French bourse; the foreign merchants brought in all kinds of money, and the French exporters needed all kinds of money to convoy their goods, which caused Italian and

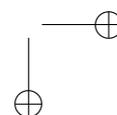
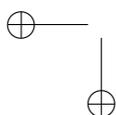


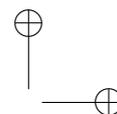
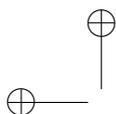


German bankers to flock in and set up an exchange-market. They had the trade in money practically all to themselves, as France was comparatively innocent of banking practices at the time, these being something that Louis XI did not go out of his way to encourage.

From this beginning, largely, these German and Italian brethren – may the devil bless them! – sunk their proboscides into the kingdom of France and bled it dry through their financing of the Valois sovereigns' extravagances. One of their advance-guard, whose name was Tommaso Guadagni, Frenchified into Thomas Gadagne, settled in Lyon and built a magnificent mansion with the increment of his squeezings and shavings. It still stands, as a municipal museum housing an interesting collection. At the end of the Prologue to the Fourth Book, Rabelais makes a punning allusion to the *scudi di Guadagno*; no doubt the term had passed into a popular saying.

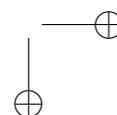
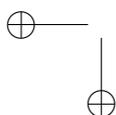
Whether one may like to admit it or not, however, the culture of Lyon was bottomed on industry, for the centre of the printing and publishing business was there, and also the headquarters of the book-trade; and this brought in authors and scholars, and these brought in culture. The relations of scholars and publishers were very close, and there were many publishers. The publishers' "quarter" (for businesses tended to segregation in districts, then as now) was on the right bank of the Rhône, about three blocks north of the hospital. A poet, apostrophizing this district in 1557 said that here "inside a thousand houses a big million of black teeth, yes, a million of black teeth, keep working away, whether the fair is going on or not." There is something in his tone which suggests that he found the spectacle of these black

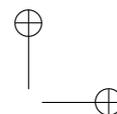
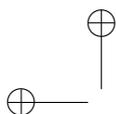




teeth chewing up paper at that rate a bit uncanny, albeit he was a booster; these lines are from an *Ode on the Antiquity and Excellence of the City of Lyon*, good Rotarian stuff – probably the Chamber of Commerce had thousands of copies printed for general distribution. Even a publicity-man may have his moments, however, and one suspects he had one when he wrote this verse. After all, were people actually any happier in the midst of all this clutter and jangle of mass-production, were they any wiser or any better than they were in the old days – such a little while ago, one remembers them perfectly – when books were written out by hand with loving craftsmanship, and were something one could be really proud of, something fit to be the property of the elect? Perhaps this wholesale vulgarization of culture may go too far; perhaps there can be too much of a good thing. Such may have been his inmost thought; but if so, he probably suppressed it satisfactorily before the next Chamber of Commerce luncheon-date came round.

The Lyonnais school of poetry has considerable importance as a landmark in French literature; it was a transition-school, in the good tradition of that earlier son of Lyon, Sidonius Apollinaris. M. Brunetière says he hardly sees how the transition from the poetic practice of Marot to that of Ronsard and the Pleiad could have been effected without the intervention of this school. Aside from their historical character, however, we find the poets of Lyon rather delightful on their own account, and like to read them; they are not among the great of the earth, no doubt, but we take leave to think they were pretty good practitioners. The ladies of Lyon went in for culture; apparently they did not put on any airs

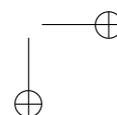
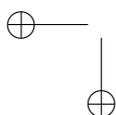


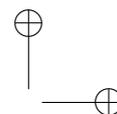
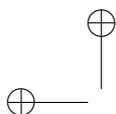


about it or “take it up in a serious way” as a mere ornamental pretense, but in all sincerity and humbleness of spirit began at the foot of Parnassus and resolutely toiled upwards, larding their path with bitter sweat.

One likes these plucky gals, and all the more as one knows them better. They must have been good little civilizers, active bits of yeast in the rather stodgy dough of a commercially-minded city. We have already spoken of one of them, Louise Labé. Another was Pernette du Guillet, who died at twenty-five without having accomplished much, naturally, but who contrived to make the modern reader wish he could have known her. Rabelais saw her grow up; she was twelve years old when he first went to Lyon, and he could have kept an eye on her at intervals until she was past nineteen. Perhaps, the last time he saw her, he may have noticed that she was looking a little peaked, patted her on the back, and told her to go slow on poetry for a while and keep out in the open air and sunshine.

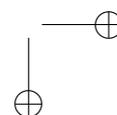
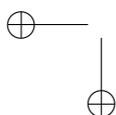
The two sisters of the gifted poet and musician Maurice Scève, or they may have been his cousins – it is not quite certain – seem also to have left a delicate and seductive fragrance in literary history. Rabelais may have known Sibylle and Claudine Scève; they were well-to-do, and of the bourgeois upper-crust, and Lyon was not large enough but that a person of Rabelais’s gregarious turn would soon know everybody in town. Culture in Lyon was bottomed on trade in another sense than the one we mentioned. Besides benefiting by the presence of ancillary industries, it had ready money behind it; almost all its practitioners seem to have been comfortably off, or better, thus meeting the two external conditions indis-

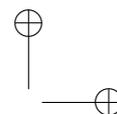
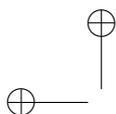




pensable to the progress of culture, which are abundance and leisure.

Lyon went to Rabelais's head, after his long novitiate in a society which was good, educative, many-sided, but nevertheless provincial or at most, as at Fontenay and at Montpellier, national. At Lyon his acquaintance became international; he met the scholarship and humanism of Italy, the Germanics and the Low Countries, and heard what they had to say for themselves. It is just barely possible that here he met for the first time the true European, citizen of the world and native of all countries, the incomparable Erasmus of Rotterdam. Every day or so, moreover, he had the chance to renew some former acquaintance among the French humanists, and consolidate it on a new basis; hardly a day would go by without some of the boys dropping in from somewhere to see how things were getting on – Boyssonné or de Pins from Toulouse, d'Armagnac from Rodez, perhaps his old preceptor Schyron from Montpellier, Antoine du Saix from Bourg, who was "too good a friend of mine" to be confused with the "master-beggar of the friars of St. Anthony" mentioned in the seventeenth chapter of the First Book. These reunions were the occasion of cordial and high-minded sociability. In some Latin hexameters, the Lyonnais publisher Dolet gives the list of guests at a dinner-party of humanists at Paris in 1537, from which one may get some idea of what they were like. The great Budé was there, Bérault, Danès, Voulté, Clément Marot, Salmon Macrin, Toussaint, Nicolas Bourbon de Vandoeuvre, Dampierre, and "Francis Rabelais, the acknowledged honour and pride of the medicinal art, who is able to



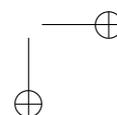
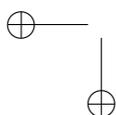


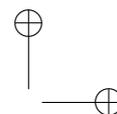
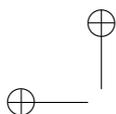
recall the moribund from Pluto's very threshold, and restore them to the light of day."

As we said, this sense of being at the centre of things, the drive of commerce, the sympathetic intimacy with a great new industry or group of industries – printing, publishing, bookselling – the contact and association with foreign humanists, association with the local progress in culture, all went to Rabelais's head and stimulated his genius to its best speed. He connected himself with the publishing-house of Gryphe, read manuscripts and proofs, and set out on a furious debauch of authorship. He arrived in Lyon in the spring of 1532, and by the end of summer he had published three learned treatises. Meanwhile he had seen a book of popular fables called the *Gargantuan Chronicle* which had just been brought out and had become a best-seller; and thinking he would try his hand at something of the same kind, he published in October, barely a month after his last scientific work was off the press, *The Horrible and Dreadful Feats and Prowesses of Pantagruel*, otherwise known as the Second Book;* and four days before it was put on the market, he was appointed physician to the hospital of the Pont-du-Rhone.

This is the oldest hospital in France. A legend attributes its foundation to Childebert, king of the Franks, in the sixth century. This is not quite exact; the sixth-century hospital was in another part of town, and the

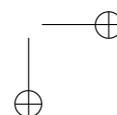
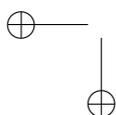
*Rabelais composed his great work piecemeal. The First Book deals with Gargantua, the father of Pantagruel, and accordingly precedes the Second Book in all editions, though the Second Book was written and published before it. The First Book was published in 1534.

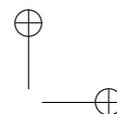
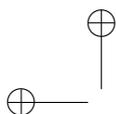




hospital of the Pont-du-Rhône became its successor. In Rabelais's time it was an aristocrat among hospitals, and wealthy, though it paid its physician poorly enough, forty livres a year. Like a great many other rich and distinguished institutions since its day, it capitalized its prestige at the expense of its servants in a niggardly fashion. We went to see the present hospital out of a sense of duty, for there is nothing left of the sixteenth-century institution but its site; possibly portions of an old doorway, but not probably, and perhaps a few unidentified structural odds-and-ends – nothing that an archaeologist would swear to. We accepted the doorway hypothetically, feeling that we should have something tangible to rest our faith on, and the doorway seemed the likeliest object.

Rabelais had from a hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty patients to look after. Apparently he did well by them, for there is record that he cut down the death-rate by about three per cent, which was a good deal, “considering”; for instance, one circumstance that might nowadays be regarded as unfavourable was that his patients lay two and three to a bed. Another factor in the situation was the impossibility of maintaining ventilation and an even temperature; the only heat the hospital had was furnished by a large open fireplace, so probably the air was a little stuffy most of the winter. Rabelais made the round of his patients once a day, accompanied by a barber-surgeon and an apothecary, as one sees it in the *Dumb Wife*; these functionaries took his orders for operations (which he supervised, as master Simon Colline does on the stage) and for prescriptions. He also made a daily inspection of his staff, which was

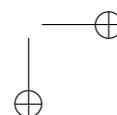
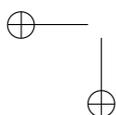


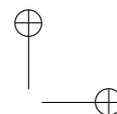
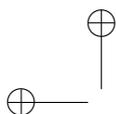


large; he had eighteen nurses, eight orderlies, a porter and a chaplain.

This seems a good deal to do for forty livres a year. Some authorities say that the livre came to about a dollar at that time; others put it somewhat higher. A dollar would buy more then than it will now, no doubt; still, one would not get purse-proud on the difference. We have always been gratified clear down to the soles of our feet, by evidence that Rabelais somehow managed to beat that hospital out of five dollars. No one knows how he did it; the record says only that after a leave of absence in 1534 he drew five dollars more in salary than was rightfully coming to him. The auditor of the hospital is very sad about this; he expresses himself mournfully in a note on the margin of the record. The hospital more than recouped itself, however, out of Rabelais's successor, master Pierre du Castel; he got only thirty dollars a year salary. This is indirect testimony to Rabelais's professional eminence, no doubt, but is also very direct and eloquent testimony to the character of the hospital's trustees.

Rabelais does not make many local allusions to Lyon; he mentions a couple of ecclesiastical celebrities, but quite casually – the preaching friar, Jean Bourgeois, or Burgess, in the seventh chapter of the Third Book and again in the eighth chapter of the Fourth Book; also the left-wing Franciscan Rocquetaillade, in the sixth chapter of the First Book. He remarks that Gargantua's pence was as big and as long as one of the great pillars in the church of St. Martin of Ainay. There are four of these, supporting the dome; they are supposed to be of Egyptian origin, and we found them interesting. He

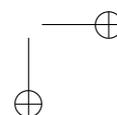
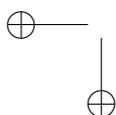


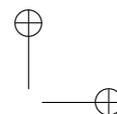
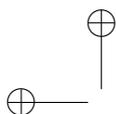


also speaks of the boat-women who ferried passengers across the Saone. These were a picturesque feature of Lyon until quite recent times, when the extension of the bridge-system put them out of business.

We parted from Lyon in a friendly spirit, but with no deeper stirrings of heart than one has in parting from Providence, R. I., whereof Lyon essentially reminds us, except that “one eats well at Lyon,” extremely well – we can testify to that – which one does not do at Providence, as far as our experience goes. It is something to have seen Lyon, of course, for auld lang syne. By kerosening one’s imagination and applying a match, one may still repopulate its rivers and thoroughfares after a fashion, but not an especially satisfying fashion; the Elk-Rotarian hundred-per-center of the sixteenth century seems to have been about the same sort as his spiritual progeny of to-day. We shall not return to Lyon; when the mood that would take us there recurs, we shall go to Providence. Providence has much finer domestic architecture than Lyon, and more of it, and business is about as brisk in one place as the other, so one might as well save money, and all the more because mere change of scene in travel is no treat to us – far from it.

On leaving Lyon, we decided to go up through Burgundy and pass out of France by way of Metz, this being the last place on our official itinerary. Rabelais lived there for about a year, towards the end of his life, in a kind of voluntary exile, making his headquarters in a friend’s house; things were going pretty badly for French humanism just then. While there he picked up the most remunerative job, in actual wages, that he ever had; he was either city physician or city clerk – probably the

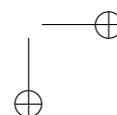
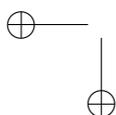


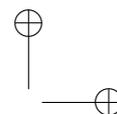
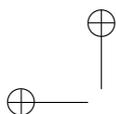


latter, as the evidence now stands – at a hundred and twenty dollars a year. There is no actual trace of him in Metz, except on the town records. A legend has attached itself to a certain house there as being the one he occupied, but no credence can be given it.

Nor are there any traces of him in Paris, where he died. It is supposed that his last three years were spent there, but no one knows. The only official mention of his death is made in an epitaph-book of the eighteenth century, in the transcript of an older record. According to this transcript, he died on the ninth of April, 1553, in a house on the rue des Jardins, and was buried in the churchyard of St.-Paul. The rue des Jardins is a short street on the right bank, easily found, running down from St.-Paul's church to the river, through a broken-down neighbourhood; the street itself is wretched and repulsive. The house where he died has not been identified; it might be any of those now standing, as far as apparent age goes. In the last century one house was often pointed out as his, and perhaps sometimes still is, but only on the strength of common rumour. Nevertheless Charles Nodier took off his hat "on spec." whenever he passed it. A better way is to keep one's hat off through the entire street; this is a matter of only four or five minutes, and one is sure of being on the safe side.

No one knows even where he was buried, whether in the churchyard or in the church itself. The epitaph-book is corroborated by a word-of-mouth tradition "which the sieur Patin, learned physician of Paris, had from the late M. d'Espesse, State councillor and ambassador to Holland, who had it from the late M. le président d'Espesse, his father." This tradition says Rabelais

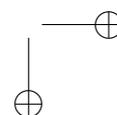
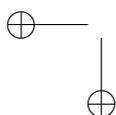


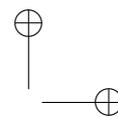
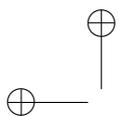


was buried in the churchyard, “at the foot of a tree which may be seen there today” – today being about a century after the burial. On the other hand, one of Rabelais’s most inveterate enemies, Père Garasse, speaking of the burial of Theophile de Viau in the church of St. Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, says that the parish priest consoled himself with the fact “that Rabelais, who was hardly any better man than Théophile, was buried in the nave of St.-Paul’s.”

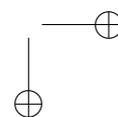
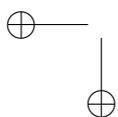
It seems certain that Rabelais cared little for Paris, and that he never spent any more time there than he had to. If anything could enhance our admiration for him, it would be this trait. When he speaks of Paris, it is invariably with gentle derision of the city’s pretentiousness. Thus in the story of Seyny John, he has “the gaping hoydens of the sottish Parisians” pushing in to see the quarrel. Again, when Pantagruel entered Paris, “every one came out to see him (as you know well enough, that the people of Paris are sots by nature, by b-flat and b-sharp) and beheld him with great astonishment, mixed with no less fear.” Gargantua also was annoyed by inquisitive urban crowds, “for the people of Paris are such fools, such puppies and naturals, that a juggler, a carrier of indulgences, a sumpter-horse, a mule with his bells, a blind fiddler in the middle of a cross-lane, shall draw a greater confluence of people together than an evangelical preacher.” We do not at the moment recall a single mention of Paris that does not lead to a playful little excursus of this kind.

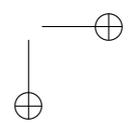
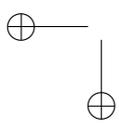
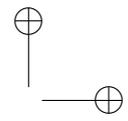
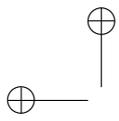
Thus he took Paris in the right spirit, as Socrates took Athens, as a modern Goethe might take Berlin, as Henry Adams might take New York; and here, as always,

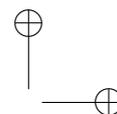
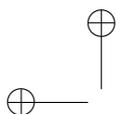




one finds him sanative, calming, invigorating. The great doctrine of Pantagruelism contemplates Paris as a rather diverting spectacle, abounding in human oddities as comical in their affectations as master Janotus and his grotesque retinue, but offering very little that a good Pantagruelist can use; one looks at it, gives it a word or two of Socratic drollery, and passes it by.



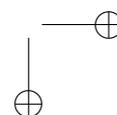
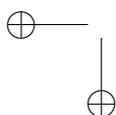


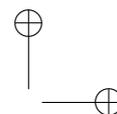
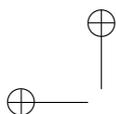


CHAPTER XI

Stopping off at the old town of Dijon, mostly for a few days' rest from the fatigue of railroading, we encountered several curious matters. One was a wedding; a son of our hotel-proprietor was being married. Another was a touring-party of about forty mayors of American cities; they stayed twenty-four hours in Dijon, and were feted in the usual way. The inhabitants looked at them with reverent amazement, and indeed they must needs have been seen to be believed, for they were extraordinary beyond imagination.

We were reminded that we once saw our country represented by a delegation of this kind in a really creditable way – a delegation of hotel-men who came to Brussels a few years ago. They and their womenkind had been through a three-days' gruelling razzia in Paris, and stopped off for a day and night in Brussels on their way to Amsterdam; and they were exhausted to the verge of death. Brussels did its best by them through a full day of functions and sightseeing, winding up with a gala performance of *la Traviata* at the Monnaie. We got in on this last on the strength of a “pull,” it being strictly an

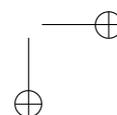
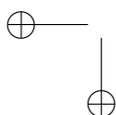


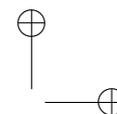
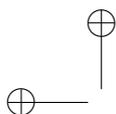


invitation-affair, for we wished to look the guests over in a general way, and also to see how many of them would die of fatigue before the show was over. We were proud of them as ever we could be, and proud of our country. It was a wonderful pleasure to see their complete and perfect understanding of their role of guests, their accurate measure of the occasion, their courteous dignity, their easy punctiliousness and their heroic fortitude – for, dear Lord, how tired they all were! We were especially proud, too, to observe that in these merits the women were fully a match for the men.

This pleasant experience suggested to us that if our government is ever to have a creditable representation abroad, it should fill up the diplomatic and consular services with hotel-men. Hotel-men know how to meet properly every sort of human being that walks the earth. They have an experienced breadth of view on all human affairs. They understand the amenities of almost any kind of situation, and as a rule they are kindly and tolerant. At the same time, they are acute men of the world with very few petty vanities to be played on; they are hard to fool. We are all for having America's international affairs conducted by hotel-men rather than by jack-leg lawyers and glorified ward-heelers; we would like to see America's policy towards the next set of peace-treaties, for instance, shaped by something more respectable than megalomania and ineptitude.

We saw the strange menagerie of mayors depart from Dijon, and spent a couple of hours over the lunch-table in vain but earnest search for plausible reasons why they should be away from home. What moved them to come here, and what did they get out of it? These questions





beset one with increasing insistence when one has lived some time in Europe and observed party after party of jaded wayfarers moving about from place to place. Here is a leaf from a notebook of six years ago; the entry was made in Brussels:

I have just had a curious experience. Down near Ste.-Catherine's Market I saw coming towards me a short man with a derby hat pulled down so far on his head that it bent the tips of his ears. Behind him came two young women, well-dressed; if they had not been ravaged by weariness they might have had good looks of a commonplace kind. All three were walking slowly, with a delicate step, as though they were picking their way over hot ploughshares. I saw what the trouble was; their feet hurt. As the man met me, he raised his head; no one could describe the abject melancholy in his eyes and voice as he asked –

“Kin you speak English?”

I said I could, after a fashion; what did he want? His expression did not change; he did not show the faintest sign of animation.

“Kin you tell me where the North Station is?”

“Yes; turn the next corner to the left and you will see it straight ahead.”

“How far is it?”

“Six minutes' walk from where we are now.”

“How do I git to it?”

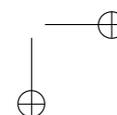
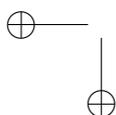
I went to the corner with him, and pointed out the station. During the colloquy neither of the young women had raised her head to give me so much as a glance; both pairs of eyes were fixed, immovable, on the ground before them. The man spoke again:

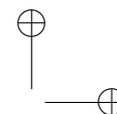
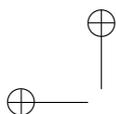
“Kin I git a taxi?”

“Not necessary; I'll put you on a street-car.”

“Kin I git a taxi?”

I gave up, and called a taxicab. They painfully climbed in, without a word of thanks or of farewell; poor souls, they were too far gone for that. I told the driver to take them to the North Station; he looked surprised and incredulous – it was in plain sight, a fairly long pistol-shot away. I hope he got them there

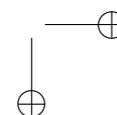
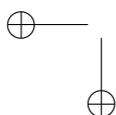


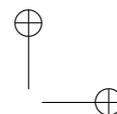
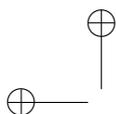


alive. I strolled homeward, once more pondering the apparently insoluble problem of motive behind "European travel."

The full-length, full-dress, "bang-up" French wedding, with all its formidable trimmings, has been described by many writers, so we may be excused from trying our hand on the one we encountered in our hotel at Dijon, except to say that it seemed in all respects to conform to the regulations in such case made and provided; we could not see that a single maddening harassment had been omitted. The festivities lasted from noon to midnight; the bride came through them fresh as a daisy. She was a vigorous, black-browed young person, with a determined expression, easily capable of becoming sinister. Her husband was rather spindling, and showed wear and tear as the exercises proceeded; we thought his future looked dubious. We also decided, on the evidence offered, that matrimony in France is not worth the price of admission; we would never venture into it.

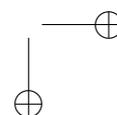
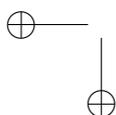
Dijon spoiled a good generalization for us, one that we were proud of, and were on the point of sending off to America for the home market. After many months in France, we were about to write a literary acquaintance in New York that there was not a single pretty woman in the whole country, and that he might publish the information as widely as he pleased, on our authority. We put off doing this until we reached Dijon, however, and there we saw several who were very pretty. One of them broke another record for us, too. We noticed her getting off a train as we were waiting for ours; she was really a lovely-looking youngster of twenty or so, charmingly got up, a fair flower of the bourgeois, and

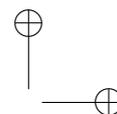
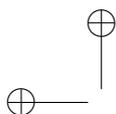




she had a heavy suit-case. A middle-aged man on the platform, who bore all the marks of an American tourist, lifted down her suit-case, gave her a hand down the car-steps, and she thanked him with as unaffected and pleasant a smile as one would wish to see. We were dumb with amazement at this, for the few Frenchwomen whom we have seen receiving such attentions – they are usually permitted to shift for themselves – acknowledged them with a mien about as agreeable as a hyena's.

Judging by the dinner-parties we see at restaurants, there must be more women than men in Burgundian society, for every man has at least two, usually more. One man at the next table to us last evening had four young girls from the college, evidently Daughter and her pals, for they gave him scant attention, after the manner of their kind in the latter-day United States. Lily May at college in France makes much the same impression on us as she does in America, as not being worth the freight-charges on soap-grease from here to Marseilles. We have noticed regularly that a boy, say, from twelve to twenty, may be and often is a pretty interesting individual, when you get at him, while a girl of the same age is almost invariably dull music. We are speaking now of the American variety. We do not know any French girls, so we cannot answer for them; we are similarly short on our acquaintance with the German *Backfisch*. We know several young Belgian girls, and have found them surprisingly mature, intelligent, interesting; likewise Danes and Norwegians, and some few from the Danube States. In any but a strictly biological view, an American woman's best attractions, such as they are,

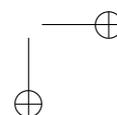
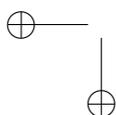


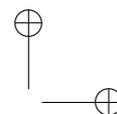
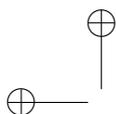


run from twenty-five on, minimum; our own personal observation would lead us to put it at thirty, average.

Still, one can never tell what an unpromising exterior may conceal. For instance, each time we have come into this restaurant we have seen a mild-mannered, quiet, gentle-spoken man of a rather meditative turn, apparently; he seemed to be in the Stammgast or star-boarder class, notably unpretentious and pacific. Last night he came in to dinner rigged out in sumptuous military dress, with enough medals and decorations hung on him to stock a pawnbroker's window. He was the Gin'ral of th' Arr'my, no less – the government has a military establishment of the first importance at Dijon – and all the time that we had been taking him for a kindly and humane private citizen, his inner being was no doubt ablaze with hankerings for slaughter and devastation.

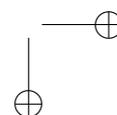
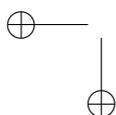
Looking about the town, we were particularly interested in the clock of the church of Notre-Dame. Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy, saw it at Courtrai when he was on one of his freebooting forays, cabbaged it and brought it here in 1383. Two Flemish peasant-figures, a man and a woman, strike the hours; one should be on hand some time to see them do it. This church is also ornamented with a large number of most extraordinary grotesques; nowhere that we know of is there such an assortment of them clustered together so conveniently for study. It would pay the traveller to carry a good strong field-glass with him, in order to bring these objects close to his eye. In fact, a glass is one of the most useful things a traveller can carry; it enables him to get a sense of architectural detail that increases his interest and knowledge fourfold. Really to appreciate the city-

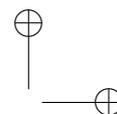
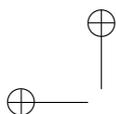




hall square in Brussels, for example, one should spend a whole Saturday morning on it with a field-glass; the sidewalk-cafes make this easy and pleasurable, and we specify Saturday because that is the day when the square is animated by a bird-market, and by a little something extra in the flowermarket which is always there.

We notice that certain trains here in the east of France are advertised to carry *ni bagages ni chiens*. This surprised us, for we thought that everywhere a Frenchman went his dog was sure to go. Dogs go to church regularly, and to school, to hotels, restaurants, cafes; we should think this bureaucratic ukase from a mere railway-company would start a revolution. We fear the Burgundians are losing their grip. They are not what they used to be in Philip's day. They have forgotten the infamy of the man of July, the crime of 15 September, the treason of 3 March, the affair of January, the overthrow of the man of April, and all the rest of the interminable curious docket that a French spellbinder has to know and remember to his soul's health. We thought of haranguing the people outside the railway-station, to see if we could get them interested in dynamiting the roundhouse, perhaps, or lynching the *chef de gare*, over this matter of dogs; but we had to give up the idea. We could manage the conventional rhetoric fairly well, but we did not remember enough dates. The French demagogue has to have a memory for numbers like a telephone-girl. It is frightfully bad form for him to refer to a historical incident otherwise than by its date, and to mention the name of a historical personage is as egregious an enormity as it is for a member of the British House of Commons to name a fellow-member.

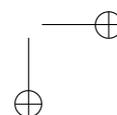
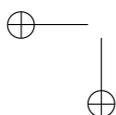


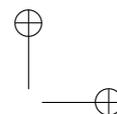
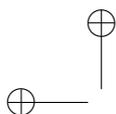


The French seem invariably kind and good to dogs; a fine trait. They seem to think almost as much of their dogs as the Bruxellois do of their cats, and this amounts to idolatry. The French also seem invariably good to children, in their own way, which is a way that the brats appear to understand surprisingly well. Parents are fidgety with their cubs; they putter and fuss over them unnecessarily, and the mothers scream at them and yank them around a good deal, but the children seem aware of the good-will behind these abruptnesses, and take them as they come.

Metz had nothing for us. One hopes for Rabelais's sake that it was more cheerful in his day than it is now. When the Germans had it, it was a neat Lothringer town; since the French took it over, it has become grubby and down at the heel. We got out promptly, headed for Trier. We decided not to go by way of Luxembourg, but on the other road that runs down the right bank of the Mosel from Thionville. Buying tickets that way was an experience; the clerk at Metz had to write them out by hand. We tried to think up some way to photograph those tickets, as a souvenir of French method. We have one such souvenir already, a receipt for two trunks which we shipped to Brussels from Lyon by slow freight, as a measure of economy. We got to Trier on the strength of those tickets, and we also found the trunks at Brussels on the strength of that weird receipt. Somehow French method usually works, as in these instances, but one can ascribe it only to the uncovenanted mercies of Providence.

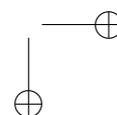
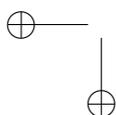
Were we to change trains at Thionville? We were interested in this because we were carrying a fairish weight of hand-luggage, and would fain dispose it for a

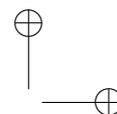
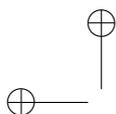




quick exit if necessary. The time-table said no; so did the ticket-agent; so did the station-master; so did the guard on the train. The luggage-porter alone said yes, and he alone was right. Fortunately we had taken his word for it and arranged accordingly; for we learned long ago that the only person around a French railway-station who knows anything about the habits and peculiarities of trains – or, indeed, who knows anything about anything – is the luggage-porter. How this humble functionary comes by his knowledge is not for us to say, but he has it, and as a rule it can be relied on with confidence. If French intelligence were what it is cracked up to be, the railways would fill up the whole passenger-traffic staff with luggage-porters.

We are over the German border at last, and through the customs. Our spirits rose with an almost shocking suddenness, for the weight that was on them had accumulated so gradually that we did not realize how heavy it was until it dropped off. What a blessed relief it is to see some cheerful, kindly-looking people, people capable of giving a pair of wandering strangers a jovial smile and a hearty good-day! What a delight it is once more to see some children with souls as youthful as their bodies; to see clean and well-kept premises, clean clothes, clean persons, everywhere; everywhere flowers galore; everywhere myriads of birds; to hear the robust ringing laughter of girls, and bits of song on the streets. During all the time we were in France, we never once heard laughter; a smile was so rare that when we saw one we instinctively felt that the Ministry of Fine Arts ought to confiscate it for preservation as a “historical monument.” Twice only did we hear spontaneous music on the quay at Chinon one

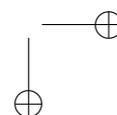
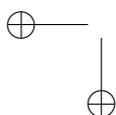


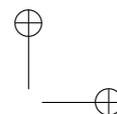
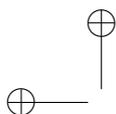


moonlit night, two young girls strolled by us arm-in-arm humming the air of an old pastourelle, and once at Port-Cros we heard a couple of Italians whistling some tune that we did not recognize.

How do birds know where the German border is? Apparently they do; at least, they stay within it. We never saw any birds on the French or Belgian side – we do not know about the Dutch side, for we were never in the east of Holland, save to pass through on trains – but the moment we have crossed into Germany, we found the air full of their chatter. Another thing: how do the Germans come to an understanding with the birds in the matter of cherries? The trees here bear no end of cherries, and the birds do not eat them, though they are apparently quite unprotected. We have remarked this phenomenon often on previous visits, and no German has ever accounted to us for it. When the next one we ask confesses his ignorance, we shall frown on him magisterially and tell him we are amazed; we shall tell him that he is not a good German, for such matters are *wissenschaftlich*, and the true German knows them, and all the world comes to him to be instructed about them. That will fetch him. In twenty-four hours he will have that information all screened out and documented clear back to the original pair that Noah took into the Ark.

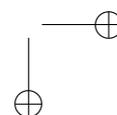
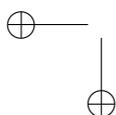
Trier is the oldest city in Germany. One of its ancient houses bears the Latin inscription, *Trier was standing thirteen hundred years before Rome*. We had some thought of sending a postcard of this down to Mussolini, and asking him “how come.” The guide-book says it refers to the mediaeval derivation of the name of the city from Trebeta, stepson of the Assyrian queen Semiramis;

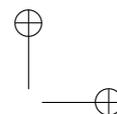
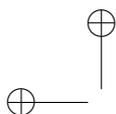




but what he would be doing so far over this way is not clear. The city was in fact built by Augustus, and named for the Gallic tribe of Treviri, which Julius Caesar conquered in the course of his imperialistic buccaneering. In the middle of the first century it had a few hundred more population than it has now, and it possesses the finest lay-out of Roman remains to be found outside Italy. One sees again the familiar brick of the Province. The Germans take good care of the old structures, as much of those that are in ruins as of those in use, such as the cathedral. The remains of the two great Roman baths are kept neat as wax, free of rubbish, and the overgrowth judiciously tended.

We have visited Trier several times before. What brought us here now was our long-cherished desire to go down the Mosel by boat; when we have been this way heretofore, the water was always too low for navigation, and we had to take our views of the river off-shore, which is less satisfactory. Our interest in the Mosel got its start in our days at college, from reading the poem of Ausonius, which is still no bad guide-book to follow. After thirty years of literary life as a professor in the University of Bordeaux, Ausonius was appointed tutor to the future emperor Gratian, and accompanied his pupil on the expedition of Valentinian I against the Germans. He crossed the Nahe at Bingen, proceeded west along the southern edge of the Hunsrück and encountered the Mosel at Neumagen. The sight of it so affected him that he broke out into poetry on the spot, and his five hundred hexameters in praise of the river may perhaps be rated as technically his best work. He saw a good deal of Trier at one time or another, and liked it immensely;

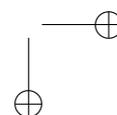
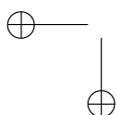


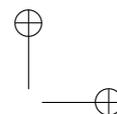
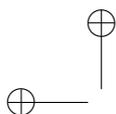


here and there in his poems he makes cordial comments on its life. When Gratian became emperor, Ausonius became the “scholar in politics”; his record disappoints the cynical, for he did first-rate work in every job he held – first as quaestor, then in the magnificent post of prefect of the Gauls, and finally in the highest position the Empire could offer, the consulship. He remained consul for a year, and at the end of 379 A.D., he retired to his estate at Bordeaux, where he pottered about in pleasant literary leisure until he died at eighty-one.

We were always glad we fell in with Ausonius at an early age, for he has remained with us ever since as very much our notion of what a cultivated man ought to be. Not a man of genius, certainly, or even of first-rate talent, but sensitive, able, highly educated, experienced, humorous, gravitating naturally towards the best things that the life around him had to offer. In our youth, we remember, we said to ourselves that if the Mosel could make such a whaling impression on a man like Ausonius, by jingo, we were going to see that river some day or die a-trying. That was far back in the bad old times when boys at college indulged such fancies and derived them from such sources; we hear it is not done any more, as it unfits a person for getting on in the world, which is no doubt true. There is high water in the Mosel now, the little wasp-shaped steamers are running, and we are on one of them, discharging the debt to ourselves that we incurred in our youth.

We are getting pawnbroker’s interest on it, too. The Rhine is a noble river, but its age-long political character enhances its attractions upon the German spirit, and visitors usually share this exaggerated sentiment to some

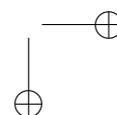
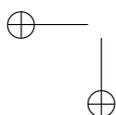


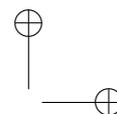
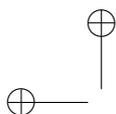


degree. Most Germans will admit this, with a little pressure. We remember hinting as civilly as possible to a German friend who is as *echt*-German nationalist as Bismarck was, that we thought the Mosel by far more beautiful than the Rhine, and he replied with emphasis, “*Of course* it is.”

From Trier to Coblenz is sixty miles, air-line, and the Mosel’s course is exactly twice that. It worms its way in and out among its vine-clad hills of slate, in abrupt bends that are sometimes no more than a quarter of a mile long. This is all to the sightseer’s good, but it makes navigation difficult, especially when the current is strong. At one or two points, at Traben and Zell, for instance, the river doubles back on itself, so that when you are at the bottom of the loop, you are behind the point you started from. A map of the Mosel looks like a diagram of cholera morbus. There is a pleasant legend that in the early days of the wine-industry, before the Romans came, there was a bad year. The wine was poor, but abundant, as sometimes happens, and there was no market for it. The producers finally threw the whole crop in the river, and this put such a crimp in the Mosel that it has never been able to straighten itself out. Those who have tarried long at the low-grade Mosel-wine will have no trouble about understanding how this could be; and while the high-grade Mosel-wine is in our judgment by far the best white wine in the world, the neophyte does well to be a little circumspect towards it to start with, and keep a few drops of Squibb’s mixture handy.

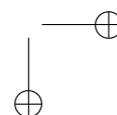
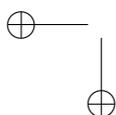
The extent of the wine-growing industry in this valley is shown by the spread of the vineyards over whole hill-sides, and by huge wineries – storehouses – that appear

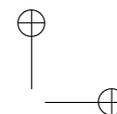
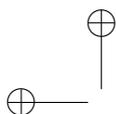




at intervals along the riverbank. These buildings are handsome and artistically placed, so as to ornament the landscape; they are built, as everything here is built, of long thin slabs of very dark gray slate, so dark as to be almost black. We like the general effect of this material, though it is undeniably sombre. At Traben, where we stayed a month, we never wearied of looking at the setting of the village of Trarbach, across the river, and remarking how well the picture was filled out by the dark feudal aspect of Keyser's winery. The village is in a narrow winding valley between two high hills; the hill to the left is topped by a ruined castle, the Gräfinburg, and at the foot of the opposite hill is the winery, resembling a mediaeval fortress, with a tower at each end. Half-way up the hill behind the winery is a pretentious mansion, set in spacious and handsome grounds, and the whole surrounded by vineyards. Our fancy was fired; we instantly knew this must be Keyser's house; we could not admit any other possibility, and therefore we refrained from inquiring about it.

Germany is the native land of romance and sentiment, so we felt free to let our imagination have full play on all the materials of potential drama supplied by the picture which each morning's sun spread before us. Surveying it as we ate our breakfast on the terrace, we imagined Keyser as a throwback to his ancestor, the fierce and terrible robber-baron Windbeutel XVI, who lived in the Gräfinburg opposite. We pictured him as staving down the hill into the winery and storming around, spreading terror among the help, even as his ancestor did among the peasantry at the foot of the castle. Once or twice we saw a trim female figure fussing about among the flowers





on Keyser's lawn; this would inevitably be his plump and adorable daughter Crete, the apple of Keyser's eye, the dear reminder of her whom he had long since raged and sworn and fumed and bedevilled into a land that is fairer than this. Crete of the flaxen hair, the peachblow cheek, the ardent and trustful spirit – yes, it must be she. Such she was to us, at any rate; such was Keyser, her father; and such they will ever be; no odious twentieth-century realism shall lay its defiling hand upon them.

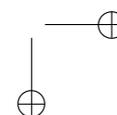
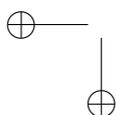
We even went so far as to project the libretto for an opera in traditional German form, to be called the *Moselmädchen*, and we might have written it out in full but that the weather was pleasant and we did not feel like working. All we did was to put down a rough preliminary sketch of its plot, as follows:

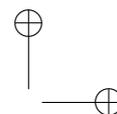
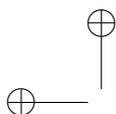
CAST

HEINRICH, head cooper at the winery *lyric tenor*
OTTO WEBER, wealthy vineyardist and competitor of Keyser
..... *baritone*
THE HERR MINISTERIALRAT PROFESSOR DOKTOR MAX VON SAUFEN-
SCHWILLEN, wine-chemist at the Imperial Institute
..... *tenor robusto*
KEYSER *bass*
CRETE, Keyser's daughter *lyric soprano*
BERTHE, nurse and duenna *contralto*

Chorus of employées, grape-pickers, etc.

It is noon-hour at the winery; the chorus sings *Mosellieder* and does joyous peasant dances. Heinrich stands aloof, pensive, foreboding; he sings a song of impending trouble; the girls twit him. Next scene: Otto Weber is pressing his suit on Keyser for Crete's hand; what he really wants is to combine the businesses.





Keyser is reluctant; he does not wish to part with his daughter, and moreover smells a rat. Otto withdraws, plotting dark schemes.

Mid-afternoon. Keyser bursts into the winery, livid with rage; customers have been writing in for rebates on account of leakage. He drives Heinrich off the premises with blows and hideous oaths. Chorus sad and sympathetic. Heinrich wanders alone in the vineyard, a prey to bitter thoughts. Passing near Keyser's house, he looks up and for the first time sees Crete. Heavenly vision! – she is sifting bug-powder over the nasturtiums. She sees him and drops the powdergun. He puts his hand to his forehead and staggers backward; she clasps both hands over her heart and closes her eyes.

Evening. Crete, wandering in the moonlight, hears Heinrich singing a serenade, accompanying himself on a concertina. They meet surreptitiously; their troth is plighted.

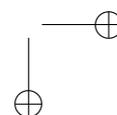
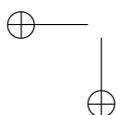
Evening, two weeks later. After a stormy interview with Otto Weber, Keyser misses Crete, goes forth on the warpath, finds her philandering, drags her to the winery by her lovely hair, and locks her in the south tower. Weber has witnessed this savage act; he laughs sardonically, for he sees his chance. He cultivates Heinrich.

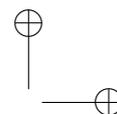
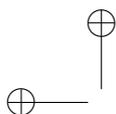
(Usual business of melancholy serenades under the tower and messages to the imprisoned maiden *via* Berthe. Heinrich suddenly disappears.)

A year passes. Crete has been removed to her home and keeps her bed. From a hundred and forty pounds, she is now so wasted that the doctors say her bones must soon be articulated with rope-yarn to hold them together. Her only undepreciated asset is her faith in Heinrich; it is still at par, but being heavily raided in a bear market. Heinrich secretly returns to Trarbach and prowls about the winery, avoiding observation.

Otto Weber, closeted with Keyser in the latter's office, threatens him with bankruptcy and ruin. He has a secret formula for making a synthetic Mosel-wine that can not be told from the best genuine and can be produced one-fourth cheaper. If Keyser does not yield, he will flood the market and bring desolation on the whole Mosel Valley.

Keyser, frantic with fear and anger, is on the point of consenting when Heinrich appears. "Ha, scoundrel, you again?"





roars Keyser, reaching for a bungstarter. “Hold!” cries Heinrich. “Heartless and desperate old man, listen! I alone can save you. I have the true formula. This villain’s formula is false; I gave it to him. He tempted me, and financed my research, to use me in furthering his own base designs. But he is foiled; I knew his infamy, his formula is bogus, and he never shall have Crete. I care naught for your pelf, old man. Keep it – keep it all – but give me Crete, and the true formula shall be yours to suppress and bury in oblivion.”

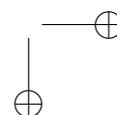
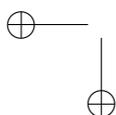
“But who tells me this?” cries Keyser, in wild despair. “Who tells me that your formula –”

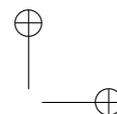
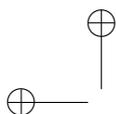
“I,” a commanding voice resounds from the doorway, as the gigantic figure of the Herr Ministerialrat appears, his spectacles flashing and coruscating, “I, von Saufenschwillen, I tell you so. This brilliant and noble-spirited young man carried out his epoch-making research in my laboratory. His formula is registered in the Patent-office, its secret is safe with the government – ha, ha, ha! His product defies detection, it defies analysis. It is not an imitation Mosel-wine, it *is* Mosel-wine. Two common and cheap ingredients, mixed in proper proportion on an acetic-acid base, set up a molecular reintegration and bring about a paramyxomycetic acritude that in turn –”

“Enough, for God’s sake,” says Keyser, rising. “I can’t stand any more of that. I consent. Crete is yours, young man; you will find what is left of her up at the house. Can’t congratulate you on what you’re getting – always liked ’em a little better upholstered, myself. Still, maybe she will pick up; and now suppose we adjourn – we’ll talk business later.”

The chorus, attracted by the ruction, has assembled from all parts of the winery, and sings a palinode, or something of the kind. The villainous Weber swears he will have Heinrich jailed for misappropriating funds. The Herr Ministerialrat reminds him that he is liable for blackmail, whereof he, the great von Saufenschwillen, stands witness. The wretch rushes out, and a crash is heard; blinded by fury, he has stumbled against a carboy of vinegar, and fallen down the hoistway to a broken neck. The chorus sings another palinode.

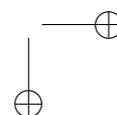
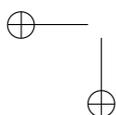
Keyser’s house and grounds; a festive scene. Crete is borne downstairs on a stretcher. Heinrich kneels beside her, she gives him a wan smile and becomes immobile. Tableau – slow music,

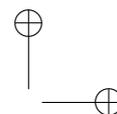
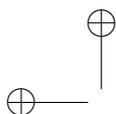




then a chorale. Crete is lugged aloft again, and merriment is resumed. Keyser taps seven barrels of his best assorted, and distributes largesse to the chorus. Dancing. The men applaud Heinrich, and he kisses the girls all round. The Herr Ministerialrat dances with Berthe. Keyser is a figure of dignity, posing as the bereaved father; in reality, he is counting up the overhead on all this, and is thoughtful. Final chorus and tableau. Curtain.

The wine business here is of great and ancient repute, and we notice that its representatives bear themselves accordingly. It was a thriving trade long before the Romans came. The dignity that now pervades it makes the pretentiousness of mushroom American industry look cheap. Delegations of wine-experts come up the river with their ladies occasionally during the summer and visit various wineries in all the ceremonial pomp of a royal procession. One came to Traben while we were there. Our maître-d'hotel told us that evening that he had a big dinner scheduled for twenty-five people at seven o'clock, but they were late, because they were over on the other side of the river "seeing Keyser." Presently we saw Charon ferrying them across – Charon, who poles a flat-bottomed ferryboat of Roman build between Traben and Trarbach. Seeing Keyser is clearly a serious business. One frock-coated dignitary was standing in the bow, in an attitude only to be approached for sublimity by the historical figure of Washington crossing the Delaware, and his gauge registered probably about eighteen inches of Mosel-wine, for the group had "done" several wineries already during the day, and Keyser's was the last on their list. We dallied over our dinner until the majestic caravan filed in; it was one of the finest sights we ever saw.

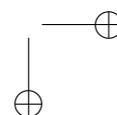
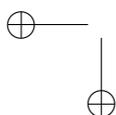


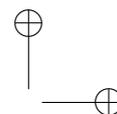
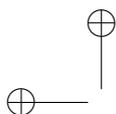


The small cargo-boats or barges, like Charon's, are still built very close to the Roman pattern. In the museum at Trier there is an excellent Roman sculpture of an ancient wine-boat, and the general resemblance is striking. The river carries practically no power-traffic except the daily steamer each way. Twice while we were at Traben we saw a tug moving some wine-barges of the canal-boat type, but that was all. Thus the river is free for swimmers, canoeists, oarsmen, and for camping-parties – myriads of them – who pass up and down, pitching their tents wherever nightfall finds them. A summer spent in this way must be thoroughly delightful.

We think that once in his life Rabelais may have missed something. When he was at Metz he wrote a very importunate letter, reminding Cardinal du Bellay that there were subsidies due him from the du Bellay family, and if the cardinal did not remit pretty promptly, he would be obliged to join the household of one of the German princes. This might not have been so bad. Probably he would have settled down with the archbishop of Trier, and then all this marvellous region would be open to him. We have spent many months seeing what Rabelais had; now we are seeing what he might have had as easily as not, if the cardinal had happened to be a little negligent at the moment. He was near the end of his days when he was at Metz, but where could one end one's days more happily than here? The Mosel at Metz is unpromising enough, but he had the testimony of his fellow-countryman Ausonius to its later loveliness.

We explored the Mosel up and down from Trier to Cochem; from Cochem to Coblenz the country flattens out and is uninteresting. We saw Berncastel, Alf,

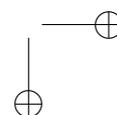
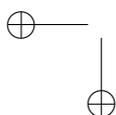


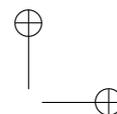
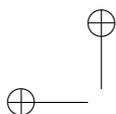


Bertrich, Neumagen, and a score of other places; we have seen endless vestiges of ancient days – the Mosel has as many and as picturesque castles as the Rhine, if not a few more. We have driven over the Hundsrück, and been captivated by its beauty; and finally we settled down for a month of delightful quiet at Traben. What we can not get through our heads is why these regions, by far the most exquisitely satisfactory and rewarding of any we have found in Germany (we have not seen all of Germany, by any means, but a good deal of it) are apparently unknown to our countrymen. We almost doubt there being any one in the Mosel Valley who ever heard a word of English in his life, outside of school. This seems the more remarkable because living here is comparatively inexpensive, and the hotels are excellent. Our hotel at Traben is the most pleasant, comfortable and inviting of all the German hotels we have ever sampled; a charming, ivy-covered building, in the regional style, with a high terrace overlooking the river. It has a pointed tower at the south end, bearing beneath the second-storey window the quaint sculpture of a teetotaler's face looking out from between the prison-bars of his prejudices. A satyr and a naked temptress are tantalizing him, offering him wine-goblets with ribald and derisive gestures, and beneath them is this legend –

O Abstinente! armer Wurm
Zum Spott gemeizelt in den Turm,
Weil du verspottest Gottesgaben
Woran sich brave Menschen laben.

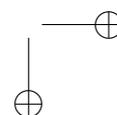
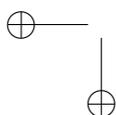
We learned from the proprietor that when this sculpture was put up, a few years ago – the hotel was lately

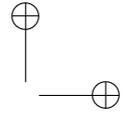
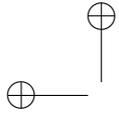




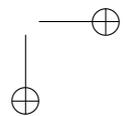
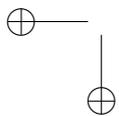
rebuilt and modernized, and is virtually new – it gave great offense to the reforming element throughout Germany, and the German equivalent of the Anti-Saloon League wrote a strong letter about it, broadly hinting at a boycott. However, the sculpture is still there. We did not know that these pestilent gentry infested Germany, but it appears that they do, though we think to no great extent. We are told that Germany has about three million teetotalers, but that not many of them professionalize their preferences or crusade for them.

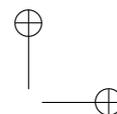
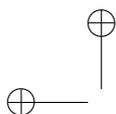
We are very happy here, but soon must leave. The days are shortening – a warning that we must be on our way back to our permanent headquarters, so long deserted, at Brussels. We have, in truth, begun to be a little wishful for a sight of the Flemish legend on the stained-glass window of our parlour, *Oost, west, t'huis best*. It will be good to indulge the proprietary sense again, to feel that we are where we belong, to hear opera at the Monnaie, to dine at the *Écrevisse*. As we go, we shall complete our view of these regions by driving up through the Eifel to Aachen, and taking the train there. We have the sentimental notion of stopping at Gerolstein, in loving memory of Offenbach's operetta, *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein*, but perhaps we shall pass it by, for it is a bit out of our way. Besides, no doubt sentiment can be overdone – probably Offenbach took the first euphonious name that came into his head. Yet he made up a charming operetta around it, and even though he did it quite a while ago, its joyous sprightliness is worth remembering. One can not live happily or even decently without the romance and poetry of existence, and since the present world affords so little practicable





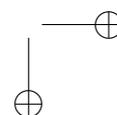
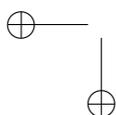
material for them, one must draw upon the resources that one has laid up in the past.

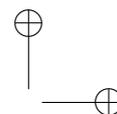
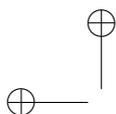




A CASSANDRE

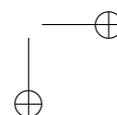
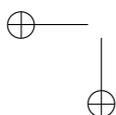
Lorsque vous étiez enfant, la réflexion, la réticence et le sérieux de votre caractère étaient vos traits dominants; et, l'âge aidant, vous fîtes preuve d'une puissance d'observation extraordinaire et d'un esprit exquis, qui contrastaient tous les deux d'une façon amusante avec la réserve extrême de votre manière. Vous étiez généralement silencieuse; et quand vous parliez, c'était d'une voix grêle qui n'était guère plus qu'un murmure, et le visage en quelque sorte détourné de la personne à qui vous vous adressiez. Dans mes souvenirs les plus beaux de l'époque où vous étiez encore jeune fille je vous revois assise, immobile, semblable à une petite statue, le corps penché dans une attitude indolente, mais avec les yeux et les oreilles extrêmement attentifs à tout ce qui se passait autour de vous; et dans cette attitude vous faisiez tout à coup une remarque si fine, si sage et si enjouée, que nous en étions tous réduits au silence, et vous regardions avec étonnement. A la fin de vos études, vous aviez déjà appris à contempler toutes les choses humaines avec une mûre tolérance, et à les discuter avec une ironie facile et délicate qui ne portait aucune trace de cynisme. Dans vos

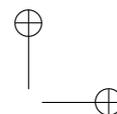
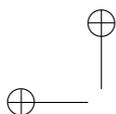




relations, vous étiez toujours d'humeur agréable et douce, magnanime et désintéressée, et vous évitiez instinctivement tout ce qui aurait pu ressembler à de l'intimité. En un mot, un caractère parfait, formé par la nature dans l'un de ses plus rares élans de générosité, et qu'une haute culture et une grande expérience ont amené aux meilleures fins.

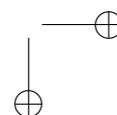
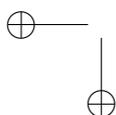
C'est pourquoi, chère et belle Cassandre, quoique vous fussiez très jeune lorsque vous fûtes mise en présence de la doctrine du pantagruélisme – trop jeune, pourrait-on dire, pour la comprendre – vous la saisîtes immédiatement, et fûtes complètement pénétrée de l'esprit du génie puissant qui la formula et la donna au monde; ce qui est, depuis le début du seizième siècle, le signe distinctif d'une élite extrêmement petite. Le "secret" tant recherché de Rabelais a toujours été l'apanage des natures comme la vôtre, et elles sont bien rares. Il ne se révèle pas de lui-même aux personnes studieuses, ou même aux savants. La vraie compréhension du pantagruélisme ne s'obtient pas à l'aide de lexiques ou de méditations sur des critiques; c'est une affaire de l'esprit – spiritualiter examinatur, comme dit l'Apôtre. Que de fois, en effet, doit-on sourire lorsque l'on examine les conjectures ingénieuses et les théories raffinées, imaginées par une science purement séculaire qui depuis quatre cents ans est occupée à ses "interprétations" d'une phrase, ou d'un épisode de "l'histoire horricque de mon maistre et seigneur Pantagruel"! Mais il y a eu, dans chaque génération, des esprits comme le vôtre qui ont toujours pénétré facilement jusqu'à l'essence du pantagruélisme, se la sont généreusement appropriée, et l'ont dignement vénérée.

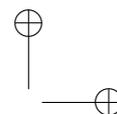
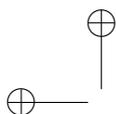




La clé du “secret de Rabelais” fut donnée, sans qu’il le sût, par un autre grand français, le Chrysostome gaulois, dont la pensée était si profonde et le style littéraire si pur, que chaque phrase qu’il écrivit semble tissée d’or fin. Vous vous rappelez peut-être le passage où Ernest Renan remarque que les différences de doctrine entre le catholicisme et “les religions positives” sont essentiellement des différences scientifiques, et non des différences religieuses – grande vérité que des siècles de dogmatisme se sont efforcé d’obscurcir. Il continue alors en disant que “nous n’avons qu’un seul ennemi, qui est aussi le leur; je veux dire le matérialisme vulgaire, la bassesse de l’homme intéressé.” Là, en effet, se trouve le seul ennemi de la religion, de la culture, de toutes les plus hautes aspirations de l’humanité. Le vrai pantagruéliste a une grande et aimable patience, une grande tolérance amusée de toutes les imperfections et faiblesses humaines. Il n’y a qu’une chose pour laquelle il n’a pas de tolérance, que ce soit sur le trône royal ou papal, au tribunal, dans les églises, universités, monastères, le commerce et les professions libérales, les institutions politiques et sociales; c’est la bassesse de l’homme intéressé.

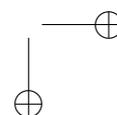
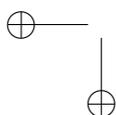
A la lumière de cette observation remarquable et profonde, on aperçoit clairement les rapports de Rabelais avec chaque circonstance de son temps, et aussi sa ligne de communication avec un avenir indéfini. Aucun de nos historiens professionnels n’a, je pense, remarqué l’extraordinaire parenté spirituelle entre le début du seizième siècle et celui du vingtième; et cependant il y a plus de ressemblance entre eux qu’entre deux autres périodes quelconques de l’histoire. Comme vous-même, Rabelais naquit dans un monde qu’il vit passer rapidement sous la

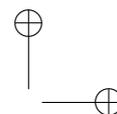
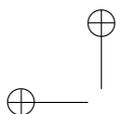




domination barbare de la bassesse de l'homme intéressé. Aucun esprit civilisé ne pourrait supporter son air suffoquant. C'était un monde entièrement adonné à une passion, l'avarice sans scrupules; un monde de chicaneurs, politiciens, hommes de loi, banquiers, agioteurs, escrocs, aussi corrompu et faux que le monde du vingtième siècle. C'est dans cette atmosphère méphitique que se créa la doctrine du pantagruélisme; et dans une atmosphère semblable elle survit aujourd'hui pour soutenir et consoler des esprits comme le vôtre.

C'est pourquoi je pense qu'un modeste et humble ouvrage, surtout à une époque aussi triste et fade que celle-ci, qui vous rappellera le grand génie à qui nous devons cette doctrine, vous fera plaisir; et c'est surtout pour cette raison que je me hasarde à vous offrir ce petit livre. Vous le trouverez, j'en suis certain, très trivial, mais je suis sûr aussi que votre générosité et votre bienveillance viendront à son aide. Une autre raison qui vous décidera peut-être à l'accepter, c'est que chaque endroit qu'il décrit vous est bien plus familier qu'à moi. Il n'y a pas un coin, je crois, de tous ceux où Rabelais s'est arrêté, que vous ne connaissiez intimement. En Touraine vous êtes chez vous, vous avez erré au clair de la lune sous les platanes qui bordent la Vienne à Chinon. Vous avez exploré la Devinière, et flâne dans la "saulsaie" où naquit Gargantua. Vous connaissez Ligugé, Fontenay, Maillezais, les grottes de Passelourdin, et vous avez bu à la source de Croûtelle. En outre, vous connaissez "mes isles Hieres," les vrais domaines des dieux, et vous avez été sensible à toute la magie de leur caresse. Vous avez gravi la Vigie, respiré le doux parfum des pins, de la lavande et de la bruyère; et du sommet du Mont Vinai-





gre vous avez admiré Bagaud, Porquerolles, les Rochers des Mèdes, baignés par les derniers rayons d'un soleil mourant. De même qu'une des naïades d'Homère, vous avez nagé dans les eaux de la Faussemonnaie; et la nuit vous avez écouté les cris lugubres des goélands dans la petite baie de Port-Cros. Point n'est besoin, je pense, d'en dire davantage pour que je sois sûr que les souvenirs de tous ces heureux instants vous décideront à accepter ce témoignage d'admiration et de respect – et ne puis-je pas dire aussi, d'affection? – de votre ami très-dévoué,

*A.J.N.
Bruxelles,
9-septembre, 1933.*

