

**ГЕНРИ
ДЖЕЙМС**

A LITTLE TOUR
IN FRANCE

Генри Джеймс

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Henry James

A Little Tour in France

We good Americans – I say it without presumption – are too apt to think that France is Paris, just as we are accused of being too apt to think that Paris is the celestial city. This is by no means the case, fortunately for those persons who take an interest in modern Gaul, and yet are still left vaguely unsatisfied by that epitome of civilization which stretches from the Arc de Triomphe to the Gymnase theatre. It had already been intimated to the author of these light pages that there are many good things in the *doux pays de France* of which you get no hint in a walk between those ornaments of the capital; but the truth had been revealed only in quick-flashing glimpses, and he was conscious of a desire to look it well in the face. To this end he started, one rainy morning in mid-September, for the charming little city of Tours, from which point it seemed possible to make a variety of fruitful excursions. His excursions resolved themselves ultimately into a journey through several provinces, – a journey which had its dull moments (as one may defy any journey not to have), but which enabled him to feel that his proposition was demonstrated. France may be Paris, but Paris is not France; that was perfectly evident on the return to the capital.

I must not speak, however, as if I had discovered the provinces. They were discovered, or at least revealed by Balzac, if by any one, and are now easily accessible to visitors. It is true, I met no visitors, or only one or two, whom it was pleasant to meet. Throughout my little tour I was almost the only tourist. That is perhaps one reason why it was so successful.

I

I am ashamed to begin with saying that Touraine is the garden of France; that remark has long ago lost its bloom. The town of Tours, however, has some thing sweet and bright, which suggests that it is surrounded by a land of fruits. It is a very agreeable little city; few towns of its size are more ripe, more complete, or, I should suppose, in better humor with themselves and less disposed to envy the responsibilities of bigger places. It is truly the capital of its smiling province; a region of easy abundance, of good living, of genial, comfortable, optimistic, rather indolent opinions. Balzac says in one of his tales that the real Tourangeau will not make an effort, or displace himself even, to go in search of a pleasure; and it is not difficult to understand the sources of this amiable cynicism. He must have a vague conviction that he can only lose by almost any change. Fortune has been kind to him: he lives in a temperate, reasonable, sociable climate, on the banks, of a river which, it is true, sometimes floods the country around it, but of which the ravages appear to be so easily repaired that its aggressions may perhaps be regarded (in a region where so many good things are certain) merely as an occasion for healthy suspense. He is surrounded by fine old traditions, religious, social, architectural, culinary; and he may have the satisfaction of feeling that he is French to the core. No part of his admirable country is more characteristically national. Normandy is Normandy, Burgundy is Burgundy, Provence is Provence; but Touraine is essentially France. It is the land of Rabelais, of Descartes, of Balzac, of good books and good company, as well as good dinners and good houses. George Sand has somewhere a charming passage about the mildness, the convenient quality, of the physical conditions of central France, – "son climat souple et chaud, ses pluies abondantes et courtes." In the autumn of 1882 the rains perhaps were less short than abundant; but when the days were fine it was impossible that anything in the way of weather could be more charming. The vineyards and orchards looked rich in the fresh, gay light; cultivation was everywhere, but everywhere it seemed to be easy. There was no visible poverty; thrift and success presented themselves as matters of good taste. The white caps of the women glittered in the sunshine, and their well-made sabots clicked cheerfully on the hard, clean roads. Touraine is a land of old chateaux, – a gallery of architectural specimens and of large hereditary properties. The peasantry have less of the luxury of ownership than in most other parts of France; though they have enough of it to give them quite their share of that shrewdly conservative look which, in the little, chaffering, *place* of the market-town, the stranger observes so often in the wrinkled brown masks that surmount the agricultural blouse. This is, moreover, the heart of the old French monarchy; and as that monarchy was splendid and picturesque, a reflection of the splendor still glitters in the current of the Loire. Some of the most striking events of French history have occurred on the banks of that river, and the soil it waters bloomed for a while with the flowering of the Renaissance. The Loire gives a great "style" to a landscape of which the features are not, as the phrase is, prominent, and carries the eye to distances even more poetic than the green horizons of Touraine. It is a very fitting stream, and is sometimes observed to run thin and expose all the crudities of its channel, – a great defect certainly in a river which is so much depended upon to give an air to the places it waters. But I speak of it as I saw it last; full, tranquil, powerful, bending in large slow curves, and sending back half the light of the sky. Nothing can be finer than the view of its course which you get from the battlements and terraces of Amboise. As I looked down on it from that elevation one lovely Sunday morning, through a mild glitter of autumn sunshine, it seemed the very model of a generous, beneficent stream. The most charming part of Tours is naturally the shaded quay that overlooks it, and looks across too at the friendly faubourg of Saint Symphorien and at the terraced heights which rise above this. Indeed, throughout Touraine, it is half the charm of the Loire that you can travel beside it. The great dike which protects it, or, protects the country from it, from Blois to Angers, is an admirable road; and on the other side, as

well, the highway constantly keeps it company. A wide river, as you follow a wide road, is excellent company; it heightens and shortens the way.

The inns at Tours are in another quarter, and one of them, which is midway between the town and the station, is very good. It is worth mentioning for the fact that every one belonging to it is extraordinarily polite, – so unnaturally polite as at first to excite your suspicion that the hotel has some hidden vice, so that the waiters and chambermaids are trying to pacify you in advance. There was one waiter in especial who was the most accomplished social being I have ever encountered; from morning till night he kept up an inarticulate murmur of urbanity, like the hum of a spinning-top. I may add that I discovered no dark secrets at the Hotel de l'Univers; for it is not a secret to any traveller to-day that the obligation to partake of a lukewarm dinner in an overheated room is as imperative as it is detestable. For the rest, at Tours, there is a certain Rue Royale which has pretensions to the monumental; it was constructed a hundred years ago, and the houses, all alike, have on a moderate scale a pompous eighteenth-century look. It connects the Palais de Justice, the most important secular building in the town, with the long bridge which spans the Loire, – the spacious, solid bridge pronounced by Balzac, in "Le Cure de Tours," "one of the finest monuments of French architecture." The Palais de Justice was the seat of the Government of Leon Gambetta in the autumn of 1870, after the dictator had been obliged to retire in his balloon from Paris, and before the Assembly was constituted at Bordeaux. The Germans occupied Tours during that terrible winter; it is astonishing, the number of places the Germans occupied. It is hardly too much to say that wherever one goes in, certain parts of France, one encounters two great historic facts: one is the Revolution; the other is the German invasion. The traces of the Revolution remain in a hundred scars and bruises and mutilations, but the visible marks of the war of 1870 have passed away. The country is so rich, so living, that she has been able to dress her wounds, to hold up her head, to smile again; so that the shadow of that darkness has ceased to rest upon her. But what you do not see you still may hear; and one remembers with a certain shudder that only a few short years ago this province, so intimately French, was under the heel of a foreign foe. To be intimately French was apparently not a safeguard; for so successful an invader it could only be a challenge. Peace and plenty, however, have succeeded that episode; and among the gardens and vineyards of Touraine it seems, only a legend the more in a country of legends.

It was not, all the same, for the sake of this checked story that I mentioned the Palais de Justice and the Rue Royale. The most interesting fact, to my mind, about the high-street of Tours was that as you walked toward the bridge on the right-hand *trottoir* you can look up at the house, on the other side of the way, in which Honore de Balzac first saw the light. That violent and complicated genius was a child of the good-humored and succulent Touraine. There is something anomalous in the fact, though, if one thinks about it a little, one may discover certain correspondences between his character and that of his native province. Strenuous, laborious, constantly in felicitous in spite of his great successes, he suggests at times a very different set of influences. But he had his jovial, full-feeding side, – the side that comes out in the "Contes Drolatiques," which are the romantic and epicurean chronicle of the old manors and abbeys of this region. And he was, moreover, the product of a soil into which a great deal of history had been trodden. Balzac was genuinely as well as affectedly monarchical, and he was saturated with, a sense of the past. Number 39 Rue Royale – of which the basement, like all the basements in the Rue Royale, is occupied by a shop – is not shown to the public; and I know not whether tradition designates the chamber in which the author of "Le Lys dans la Vallee" opened his eyes into a world in which he was to see and to imagine such extraordinary things. If this were the case, I would willingly have crossed its threshold; not for the sake of any relic of the great novelist which it may possibly contain, nor even for that of any mystic virtue which may be supposed to reside within its walls, but simply because to look at those four modest walls can hardly fail to give one a strong impression of the force of human endeavour. Balzac, in the maturity of his vision, took in more of human life than any one, since Shakspeare, who has attempted to tell us stories about it; and the very small scene on which his consciousness dawned is one end of the

immense scale that he traversed. I confess it shocked me a little to find that he was born in a house "in a row," – a house, moreover, which at the date of his birth must have been only about twenty years old. All that is contradictory. If the tenement selected for this honour could not be ancient and embrowned, it should at least have been detached.

There is a charming description, in his little tale of "La Grenadiere," of the view of the opposite side of the Loire as you have it from the square at the end of the Rue Royale, – a square that has some pretensions to grandeur, overlooked as it is by the Hotel de Ville and the Musee, a pair of edifices which directly contemplate the river, and ornamented with marble images of Francois Rabelais and Rene Descartes. The former, erected a few years since, is a very honorable production; the pedestal of the latter could, as a matter of course, only be inscribed with the *Cogito ergo Sum*. The two statues mark the two opposite poles to which the brilliant French mind has travelled; and if there were an effigy of Balzac at Tours, it ought to stand midway between them. Not that he, by any means always struck the happy mean between the sensible and the metaphysical; but one may say of him that half of his genius looks in one direction and half in the other. The side that turns toward Francois Rabelais would be, on the whole, the side that takes the sun. But there is no statue of Balzac at Tours; there is only, in one of the chambers of the melancholy museum, a rather clever, coarse bust. The description in "La Grenadiere," of which I just spoke, is too long to quote; neither have I space for any one of the brilliant attempts at landscape painting which are woven into the shimmering texture of "Le Lys dans la Vallee." The little manor of Cloche-gourde, the residence of Madame de Mortsauf, the heroine of that extraordinary work, was within a moderate walk of Tours, and the picture in the novel is presumably a copy from an original which it would be possible to-day to discover. I did not, however, even make the attempt. There are so many chateaux in Touraine commemorated in history, that it would take one too far to look up those which have been commemorated in fiction. The most I did was to endeavor to identify the former residence of Mademoiselle Gamard, the sinister old maid of "Le Cure de Tours." This terrible woman occupied a small house in the rear of the cathedral, where I spent a whole morning in wondering rather stupidly which house it could be. To reach the cathedral from the little *place* where we stopped just now to look across at the Grenadiere, without, it must be confessed, very vividly seeing it, you follow the quay to the right, and pass out of sight of the charming *coteau* which, from beyond the river, faces the town, – a soft agglomeration of gardens, vineyards, scattered villas, gables and turrets of slate-roofed chateaux, terraces with gray balustrades, moss-grown walls draped in scarlet Virginia-creeper. You turn into the town again beside a great military barrack which is ornamented with a rugged mediaeval tower, a relic of the ancient fortifications, known to the Tourangeaux of to-day as the Tour de Guise. The young Prince of Joinville, son of that Duke of Guise who was murdered by the order of Henry II. at Blois, was, after the death of his father, confined here for more than two years, but made his escape one summer evening in 1591, under the nose of his keepers, with a gallant audacity which has attached the memory of the exploit to his sullen-looking prison. Tours has a garrison of five regiments, and the little red-legged soldiers light up the town. You see them stroll upon the clean, uncommercial quay, where there are no signs of navigation, not even by oar, no barrels nor bales, no loading nor unloading, no masts against the sky nor booming of steam in the air. The most active business that goes on there is that patient and fruitless angling in, which the French, as the votaries of art for art, excel all other people. The little soldiers, weighed down by the contents of their enormous pockets, pass with respect from one of these masters of the rod to the other, as he sits soaking an indefinite bait in the large, indifferent stream. After you turn your back to the quay you have only to go a little way before you reach the cathedral.

II

It is a very beautiful church of the second order of importance, with a charming mouse-colored complexion and a pair of fantastic towers. There is a commodious little square in front of it, from which you may look up at its very ornamental face; but for purposes of frank admiration the sides and the rear are perhaps not sufficiently detached. The cathedral of Tours, which is dedicated to Saint Gatianus, took a long time to build. Begun in 1170, it was finished only in the first half of the sixteenth century; but the ages and the weather have interfused so well the tone of the different parts, that it presents, at first at least, no striking incongruities, and looks even exceptionally harmonious and complete. There are many grander cathedrals, but there are probably few more pleasing; and this effect of delicacy and grace is at its best toward the close of a quiet afternoon, when the densely decorated towers, rising above the little Place de l'Archeveche, lift their curious lanterns into the slanting light, and offer a multitudinous perch to troops of circling pigeons. The whole front, at such a time, has an appearance of great richness, although the niches which surround the three high doors (with recesses deep enough for several circles of sculpture) and indent the four great buttresses that ascend beside the huge rose-window, carry no figures beneath their little chiselled canopies. The blast of the great Revolution blew down most of the statues in France, and the wind has never set very strongly toward putting them up again. The embossed and crocketed cupolas which crown the towers of Saint Gatien are not very pure in taste; but, like a good many impurities, they have a certain character. The interior has a stately slimness with which no fault is to be found, and which in the choir, rich in early glass and surrounded by a broad passage, becomes very bold and noble. Its principal treasure, perhaps, is the charming little tomb of the two children (who died young) of Charles VIII. and Anne of Brittany, in white marble, embossed with symbolic dolphins and exquisite arabesques. The little boy and girl lie side by side on a slab of black marble, and a pair of small kneeling angels, both at their head and at their feet, watch over them. Nothing could be more perfect than this monument, which is the work of Michel Colomb, one of the earlier glories of the French Renaissance; it is really a lesson in good taste. Originally placed in the great abbey-church of Saint Martin, which was for so many ages the holy place of Tours, it happily survived the devastation to which that edifice, already sadly shattered by the wars of religion and successive profanations, finally succumbed in 1797. In 1815 the tomb found an asylum in a quiet corner of the cathedral.

I ought, perhaps, to be ashamed to acknowledge, that I found the profane name of Balzac capable of adding an interest even to this venerable sanctuary. Those who have read the terrible little story of "Le Cure de Tours" will perhaps remember that, as I have already mentioned, the simple and childlike old Abbe Birotteau, victim of the infernal machinations of the Abbe Troubert and Mademoiselle Gamard, had his quarters in the house of that lady (she had a speciality of letting lodgings to priests), which stood on the north side of the cathedral, so close under its walls that the supporting pillar of one of the great flying buttresses was planted in the spinster's garden. If you wander round behind the church, in search of this more than historic habitation, you will have occasion to see that the side and rear of Saint Gatien make a delectable and curious figure. A narrow lane passes beside the high wall which conceals from sight the palace of the archbishop, and beneath the flying buttresses, the far-projecting gargoyles, and the fine south porch of the church. It terminates in a little, dead, grass-grown square entitled the Place Gregoire de Tours. All this part of the exterior of the cathedral is very brown, ancient, Gothic, grotesque; Balzac calls the whole place "a desert of stone." A battered and gabled wing, or out-house (as it appears to be) of the hidden palace, with a queer old stone pulpit jutting out from it, looks down on this melancholy spot, on the other side of which is a seminary for young priests, one of whom issues from a door in a quiet corner, and, holding it open a moment behind him, shows a glimpse of a sunny garden, where you may fancy other black young figures strolling up and down. Mademoiselle Gamard's house, where she took her two

abbes to board, and basely conspired with one against the other, is still further round the cathedral. You cannot quite put your hand upon it to-day, for the dwelling which you say to yourself that it *must* have been Mademoiselle Gamard's does not fulfil all the conditions mentioned in Balzac's description. The edifice in question, however, fulfils conditions enough; in particular, its little court offers hospitality to the big buttress of the church. Another buttress, corresponding with this (the two, between them, sustain the gable of the north transept), is planted in the small cloister, of which the door on the further side of the little soundless Rue de la Psalette, where nothing seems ever to pass, opens opposite to that of Mademoiselle Gamard. There is a very genial old sacristan, who introduced me to this cloister from the church. It is very small and solitary, and much mutilated; but it nestles with a kind of wasted friendliness beneath the big walls of the cathedral. Its lower arcades have been closed, and it has a small plot of garden in the middle, with fruit-trees which I should imagine to be too much overshadowed. In one corner is a remarkably picturesque turret, the cage of a winding staircase which ascends (no great distance) to an upper gallery, where an old priest, the *chanoine-gardien* of the church, was walking to and fro with his breviary. The turret, the gallery, and even the *chanoine-gardien*, belonged, that sweet September morning, to the class of objects that are dear to painters in water-colors.

III

I have mentioned the church of Saint Martin, which was for many years the sacred spot, the shrine of pilgrimage, of Tours. Originally the simple burial- place of the great apostle who in the fourth century Christianized Gaul, and who, in his day a brilliant missionary and worker of miracles, is chiefly known to modern fame as the worthy that cut his cloak in two at the gate of Amiens to share it with a beggar (tradition fails to say, I believe, what he did with the other half), the abbey of Saint Martin, through the Middle Ages, waxed rich and powerful, till it was known at last as one of the most luxurious religious houses in Christendom, with kings for its titular ab- bots (who, like Francis I., sometimes turned and despoiled it) and a great treasure of precious things. It passed, however, through many vicissitudes. Pillaged by the Normans in the ninth century and by the Huguenots in the sixteenth, it received its death-blow from the Revolution, which must have brought to bear upon it an energy of destruction proportionate to its mighty bulk. At the end of the last century a huge group of ruins alone remained, and what we see to-day may be called the ruin of a ruin. It is difficult to understand how so vast an edifice can have been so completely obliterated. Its site is given up to several ugly streets, and a pair of tall towers, separated by a space which speaks volumes as to the size of the church, and looking across the close-pressed roofs to the happier spires of the cathedral, preserved for the modern world the memory of a great fortune, a great abuse, perhaps, and at all events a great pen- alty. One may believe that to this day a consider- able part of the foundations of the great abbey is buried in the soil of Tours. The two surviving towers, which are dissimilar in shape, are enormous; with those of the cathedral they form the great landmarks of the town. One of them bears the name of the Tour de l'Horloge; the other, the so-called Tour Charle- magne, was erected (two centuries after her death) over the tomb of Luitgarde, wife of the great Em- peror, who died at Tours in 800. I do not pretend to understand in what relation these very mighty and effectually detached masses of masonry stood to each other, but in their gray elevation and loneliness they are striking and suggestive to-day; holding their hoary heads far above the modern life of the town, and looking sad and conscious, as they had outlived all uses. I know not what is supposed to have become of the bones of the blessed saint during the various scenes of confusion in which they may have got mis- laid; but a mystic connection with his wonder-working relics may be perceived in a strange little sanctuary on the left of the street, which opens in front of the Tour Charlemagne, – the rugged base of which, by the way, inhabited like a cave, with a diminutive doorway, in which, as I passed, an old woman stood cleaning a pot, and a little dark window decorated with homely flowers, would be appreciated by a painter in search of "bits." The present shrine of Saint Martin is enclosed (provisionally, I suppose) in a very modern structure of timber, where in a dusky cellar, to which you descend by a wooden staircase adorned with votive tablets and paper roses, is placed a tabernacle surrounded by twinkling tapers and pros- trate worshippers. Even this crepuscular vault, how- ever, fails, I think, to attain solemnity; for the whole place is strangely vulgar and garish. The Catholic church, as churches go to-day, is certainly the most spectacular; but it must feel that it has a great fund of impressiveness to draw upon when it opens such sordid little shops of sanctity as this. It is impos- sible not to be struck with the grotesqueness of such an establishment, as the last link in the chain of a great ecclesiastical tradition.

In the same street, on the other side, a little below, is something better worth your visit than the shrine of Saint Martin. Knock at a high door in a white wall (there is a cross above it), and a fresh-faced sister of the convent of the Petit Saint Martin will let you into the charming little cloister, or rather fragment of a cloister. Only one side of this exqui- site structure remains, but the whole place is effective. In front of the beautiful arcade, which is terribly bruised and obliterated, is one of those walks of inter- laced *tilleuls* which are so frequent in Touraine, and into which the green light filters so softly through a lattice of clipped twigs. Beyond this is a garden, and beyond the garden are

the other buildings of the Convent, – where the placid sisters keep a school, – a test, doubtless, of placidity. The imperfect arcade, which dates from the beginning of the sixteenth century (I know nothing of it but what is related in Mrs. Pattison's "Renaissance in France") is a truly enchanting piece of work; the cornice and the angles of the arches, being covered with the daintiest sculpture of arabesques, flowers, fruit, medallions, cherubs, griffins, all in the finest and most attenuated relief. It is like the chasing of a bracelet in stone. The taste, the fancy, the elegance, the refinement, are of those things which revive our standard of the exquisite. Such a piece of work is the purest flower of the French Renaissance; there is nothing more delicate in all Touraine.

There is another fine thing at Tours which is not particularly delicate, but which makes a great impression, – the very interesting old church of Saint Julian, lurking in a crooked corner at the right of the Rue Royale, near the point at which this indifferent thoroughfare emerges, with its little cry of admiration, on the bank of the Loire. Saint Julian stands to-day in a kind of neglected hollow, where it is much shut in by houses; but in the year 1225, when the edifice was begun, the site was doubtless, as the architects say, more eligible. At present, indeed, when once you have caught a glimpse of the stout, serious Romanesque tower, – which is not high, but strong, – you feel that the building has something to say, and that you must stop to listen to it. Within, it has a vast and splendid nave, of immense height, – the nave of a cathedral, – with a shallow choir and transepts, and some admirable old glass. I spent half an hour there one morning, listening to what the church had to say, in perfect solitude. Not a worshipper entered, – not even an old man with a broom. I have always thought there is a sex in fine buildings; and Saint Julian, with its noble nave, is of the gender of the name of its patron.

It was that same morning, I think, that I went in search of the old houses of Tours; for the town contains several goodly specimens of the domestic architecture of the past. The dwelling to which the average Anglo-Saxon will most promptly direct his steps, and the only one I have space to mention, is the so-called Maison de Tristan l'Hermitte, – a gentleman whom the readers of "Quentin Durward" will not have forgotten, – the hangman-in-ordinary to the great King Louis XI. Unfortunately the house of Tristan is not the house of Tristan at all; this illusion has been cruelly dispelled. There are no illusions left, at all, in the good city of Tours, with regard to Louis XI. His terrible castle of Plessis, the picture of which sends a shiver through the youthful reader of Scott, has been reduced to suburban insignificance; and the residence of his *triste compere*, on the front of which a festooned rope figures as a motive for decoration, is observed to have been erected in the succeeding century. The Maison de Tristan may be visited for itself, however, if not for Walter Scott; it is an exceedingly picturesque old facade, to which you pick your way through a narrow and tortuous street, – a street terminating, a little beyond it, in the walk beside the river. An elegant Gothic doorway is let into the rusty-red brick-work, and strange little beasts crouch at the angles of the windows, which are surmounted by a tall graduated gable, pierced with a small orifice, where the large surface of brick, lifted out of the shadow of the street, looks yellow and faded. The whole thing is disfigured and decayed; but it is a capital subject for a sketch in colors. Only I must wish the sketcher better luck – or a better temper – than my own. If he ring the bell to be admitted to see the court, which I believe is more sketchable still, let him have patience to wait till the bell is answered. He can do the outside while they are coming.

The Maison de Tristan, I say, may be visited for itself; but I hardly know what the remnants of Plessis-les-Tours may be visited for. To reach them you wander through crooked suburban lanes, down the course of the Loire, to a rough, undesirable, incongruous spot, where a small, crude building of red brick is pointed out to you by your cabman (if you happen to drive) as the romantic abode of a superstitious king, and where a strong odor of pigsties and other unclean things so prostrates you for the moment that you have no energy to protest against the obvious fiction. You enter a yard encumbered with rubbish and a defiant dog, and an old woman emerges from a shabby lodge and assures you that you are indeed in an historic place. The red brick building, which looks like a small factory, rises on the ruins of the favorite residence of the dreadful Louis. It is now occupied by a company of night-scavengers, whose huge carts are drawn up in a row before it. I know not

whether this be what is called the irony of fate; at any rate, the effect of it is to accentuate strongly the fact (and through the most susceptible of our senses) that there is no honor for the authors of great wrongs. The dreadful Louis is reduced simply to an offence to the nostrils. The old woman shows you a few fragments, – several dark, damp, much-encumbered vaults, denominated dungeons, and an old tower staircase, in good condition. There are the outlines of the old moat; there is also the outline of the old guard-room, which is now a stable; and there are other vague outlines and inconsequent lumps, which I have forgotten. You need all your imagination, and even then you cannot make out that Plessis was a castle of large extent, though the old woman, as your eye wanders over the neighboring *potagers*, talks a good deal about the gardens and the park. The place looks mean and flat; and as you drive away you scarcely know whether to be glad or sorry that all those bristling horrors have been reduced to the commonplace.

A certain flatness of impression awaits you also, I think, at Marmoutier, which is the other indisensable excursion in the near neighborhood of Tours. The remains of this famous abbey lie on the other bank of the stream, about a mile and a half from the town. You follow the edge of the big brown river; of a fine afternoon you will be glad to go further still. The abbey has gone the way of most abbeys; but the place is a restoration as well as a ruin, inasmuch as the sisters of the Sacred Heart have erected a terribly modern convent here. A large Gothic doorway, in a high fragment of ancient wall, admits you to a garden-like enclosure, of great extent, from which you are further introduced into an extraordinarily tidy little parlor, where two good nuns sit at work. One of these came out with me, and showed me over the place, – a very definite little woman, with pointed features, an intensely distinct enunciation, and those pretty manners which (for whatever other teachings it may be responsible) the Catholic church so often instils into its functionaries. I have never seen a woman who had got her lesson better than this little trotting, murmuring, edifying nun. The interest, of Marmoutier to-day is not so much an interest of vision, so to speak, as an interest of reflection, – that is, if you choose to reflect (for instance) upon the wondrous legend of the seven sleepers (you may see where they lie in a row), who lived together – they were brothers and cousins – in primitive piety, in the sanctuary constructed by the blessed Saint Martin (emulous of his precursor, Saint Gatianus), in the face of the hillside that overhung the Loire, and who, twenty-five years after his death, yielded up their seven souls at the same moment, and enjoyed the curious privilege of retaining in their faces, in spite of this process, the rosy tints of life. The abbey of Marmoutier, which sprung from the grottos in the cliff to which Saint Gatianus and Saint Martin retired to pray, was therefore the creation of the latter worthy, as the other great abbey, in the town proper, was the monument of his repose. The cliff is still there; and a winding staircase, in the latest taste, enables you conveniently to explore its recesses. These sacred niches are scooped out of the rock, and will give you an impression if you cannot do without one. You will feel them to be sufficiently venerable when you learn that the particular pigeon-hole of Saint Gatianus, the first Christian missionary to Gaul, dates from the third century. They have been dealt with as the Catholic church deals with most of such places to-day; polished and furnished up; labelled and ticketed, – *edited*, with notes, in short, like an old book. The process is a mistake, – the early editions had more sanctity. The modern buildings (of the Sacred Heart), on which you look down from these points of vantage, are in the vulgar taste which seems doomed to stamp itself on all new Catholic work; but there was nevertheless a great sweetness in the scene. The afternoon was lovely, and it was flushing to a close. The large garden stretched beneath us, blooming with fruit and wine and succulent vegetables, and beyond it flowed the shining river. The air was still, the shadows were long, and the place, after all, was full of memories, most of which might pass for virtuous. It certainly was better than Plessis-les-Tours.

IV

Your business at Tours is to make excursions; and if you make them all, you will be very well occupied. Touraine is rich in antiquities; and an hour's drive from the town in almost any direction will bring you to the knowledge of some curious fragment of domestic or ecclesiastical architecture, some turreted manor, some lonely tower, some gabled village, or historic site. Even, however, if you do everything, – which was not my case, – you cannot hope to relate everything, and, fortunately for you, the excursions divide themselves into the greater and the less. You may achieve most of the greater in a week or two; but a summer in Touraine (which, by the way must be a charming thing) would contain none too many days for the others. If you come down to Tours from Paris, your best economy is to spend a few days at Blois, where a clumsy, but rather attractive little inn, on the edge of the river, will offer you a certain amount of that familiar and intermittent hospitality which a few weeks spent in the French provinces teaches you to regard as the highest attainable form of accommodation. Such an economy I was unable to practise. I could only go to Blois (from Tours) to spend the day; but this feat I accomplished twice over. It is a very sympathetic little town, as we say nowadays, and one might easily resign one's self to a week there. Seated on the north bank of the Loire, it presents a bright, clean face to the sun, and has that aspect of cheerful leisure which belongs to all white towns that reflect, themselves in shining waters. It is the water-front only of Blois, however, that exhibits, this fresh complexion; the interior is of a proper brownness, as befits a signally historic city. The only disappointment I had there was the discovery that the castle, which is the special object of one's pilgrimage, does not overhang the river, as I had always allowed myself to understand. It overhangs the town, but it is scarcely visible from the stream. That peculiar good fortune is reserved for Amboise and Chaurmont.

The Chateau de Blois is one of the most beautiful and elaborate of all the old royal residences of this part of France, and I suppose it should have all the honors of my description. As you cross its threshold, you step straight into the brilliant movement of the French Renaissance. But it is too rich to describe, – I can only touch it here and there. It must be premised that in speaking of it as one sees it to-day, one speaks of a monument unsparingly restored. The work of restoration has been as ingenious as it is profuse, but it rather chills the imagination. This is perhaps almost the first thing you feel as you approach the castle from the streets of the town. These little streets, as they, leave the river, have pretensions to romantic steepness; one of them, indeed, which resolves itself into a high staircase with divergent wings (the *escalier monumental*), achieved this result so successfully as to remind me vaguely – I hardly know why – of the great slope of the Capitol, beside the Ara Coeli, at Rome. The view of that part of the castle which figures to-day as the back (it is the only aspect I had seen reproduced) exhibits the marks of restoration with the greatest assurance. The long facade, consisting only of balconied windows deeply recessed, erects itself on the summit of a considerable hill, which gives a fine, plunging movement to its foundations. The deep niches of the windows are all aglow with color. They have been repainted with red and blue, relieved with gold figures; and each of them looks more like the royal box at a theatre than like the aperture of a palace dark with memories. For all this, however, and in spite of the fact that, as in some others of the chateaux of Touraine, (always excepting the colossal Chambord, which is not in Touraine!) there is less vastness than one had expected, the least hospitable aspect of Blois is abundantly impressive. Here, as elsewhere, lightness and grace are the keynote; and the recesses of the windows, with their happy proportions, their sculpture, and their color, are the empty frames of brilliant pictures. They need the figure of a Francis I. to complete them, or of a Diane de Poitiers, or even of a Henry III. The base of this exquisite structure emerges from a bed of light verdure, which has been allowed to mass itself there, and which contributes to the springing look of the walls; while on the right it joins the most modern portion of the castle, – the building erected, on foundations of enormous height

and solidity, in 1635, by Gaston d'Orleans. This fine, frigid mansion – the proper view of it is from the court within – is one of the masterpieces of Francois Mansard, whom. a kind providence did not allow to make over the whole palace in the superior manner of his superior age. This had been a part of Gaston's plan, – he was a blunderer born, and this precious project was worthy of him. This execution of it would surely have been one of the great misdeeds of history. Partially performed, the misdeed is not altogether to be regretted; for as one stands in the court of the castle, and lets one's eye wander from the splendid wing of Francis I. – which is the last work of free and joyous invention – to the ruled lines and blank spaces of the ponderous pavilion of Mansard, one makes one's reflections upon the advantage, in even the least personal of the arts, of having something to say, and upon the stupidity of a taste which had ended by becoming an aggregation of negatives. Gaston's wing, taken by itself, has much of the *bel air* which was to belong to the architecture of Louis XIV.; but, taken in contrast to its flowering, laughing, living neighbor, it marks the difference between inspiration and calculation. We scarcely grudge it its place, however, for it adds a price to the rest of the chateau.

We have entered the court, by the way, by jumping over the walls. The more orthodox method is to follow a modern, terrace, which leads to the left, from the side of the chateau that I began by speaking of, and passes round, ascending, to a little square on a considerably higher level, which is not, like a very modern square on which the back (as I have called it) looks out, a thoroughfare. This small, empty *place*, oblong in form, at once bright and quiet, with a certain grass-grown look, offers an excellent setting to the entrance-front of the palace, – the wing of Louis XII. The restoration here has been lavish; but it was perhaps but an inevitable reaction against the injuries, still more lavish, by which the unfortunate building had long been overwhelmed. It had fallen into a state of ruinous neglect, relieved only by the misuse proceeding from successive generations of soldiers, for whom its charming chambers served as barrack-room. Whitewashed, mutilated, dishonored, the castle of Blois may be said to have escaped simply with its life. This is the history of Amboise as well, and is to a certain extent the history of Chambord. Delightful, at any rate, was the refreshed facade of Louis XII. as I stood and looked at it one bright September morning. In that soft, clear, merry light of Touraine, everything shows, everything speaks. Charming are the taste, the happy proportions, the color of this beautiful front, to which the new feeling for a purely domestic architecture – an architecture of security and tranquillity, in which art could indulge itself – gave an air of youth and gladness. It is true that for a long time to come the castle of Blois was neither very safe nor very quiet; but its dangers came from within, from the evil passions of its inhabitants, and not from siege or invasion. The front of Louis XII. is of red brick, crossed here and there with purple; and the purple slate of the high roof, relieved with chimneys beautifully treated, and with the embroidered caps of pinnacles and arches, with the porcupine of Louis, the ermine and the festooned rope which formed the devices of Anne of Brittany, – the tone of this rich-looking roof carries out the mild glow of the wall. The wide, fair windows look as if they had expanded to let in the rosy dawn of the Renaissance. Charming, for that matter, are the windows of all the chateaux of Touraine, with their squareness corrected (as it is not in the Tudor architecture) by the curve of the upper corners, which makes this line look – above the expressive aperture – like a pencilled eyebrow. The low door of this front is crowned by a high, deep niche, in which, under a splendid canopy, stiffly astride of a stiffly draped charger, sits in profile an image of the good King Louis. Good as he had been, – the father of his people, as he was called (I believe he remitted various taxes), – he was not good enough to pass muster at the Revolution; and the effigy I have just described is no more than a reproduction of the primitive statue demolished at that period.

Pass beneath it into the court, and the sixteenth century closes round you. It is a pardonable flight of fancy to say that the expressive faces of an age in which human passions lay very near the surface seem to look out at you from the windows, from the balconies, from the thick foliage of the sculpture. The portion of the wing of Louis XII. that looks toward the court is supported on a deep arcade. On your right is the wing erected by Francis I., the reverse of the mass of building

which you see on approaching the castle. This exquisite, this extravagant, this transcendent piece of architecture is the most joyous utterance of the French Renaissance. It is covered with an embroidery of sculpture, in which every detail is worthy of the hand of a goldsmith. In the middle of it, or rather a little to the left, rises the famous winding staircase (plausibly, but I believe not religiously, restored), which even the ages which most misused it must vaguely have admired. It forms a kind of chiselled cylinder, with wide interstices, so that the stairs are open to the air. Every inch of this structure, of its balconies, its pillars, its great central columns, is wrought over with lovely images, strange and ingenious devices, prime among which is the great heraldic salamander of Francis I. The salamander is everywhere at Blois, – over the chimneys, over the doors, on the walls. This whole quarter, of the castle bears the stamp of that eminently pictorial prince. The running cornice along the top of the front is like all unfolded, an elongated, bracelet. The windows of the attic are like shrines for saints. The gargoyles, the medallions, the statuettes, the festoons, are like the elaboration of some precious cabinet rather than the details of a building exposed to the weather and to the ages. In the interior there is a profusion of restoration, and it is all restoration in color. This has been, evidently, a work of great energy and cost, but it will easily strike you as overdone. The universal freshness is a discord, a false note; it seems to light up the dusky past with an unnatural glare. Begun in the reign of Louis Philippe, this terrible process – the more terrible always the more you admit that it has been necessary – has been carried so far that there is now scarcely a square inch of the interior that has the color of the past upon it. It is true that the place had been so coated over with modern abuse that something was needed to keep it alive; it is only, perhaps, a pity that the restorers, not content with saving its life, should have undertaken to restore its youth. The love of consistency, in such a business, is a dangerous lure. All the old apartments have been rechristened, as it were; the geography of the castle has been re-established. The guardrooms, the bedrooms, the closets, the oratories, have recovered their identity. Every spot connected with the murder of the Duke of Guise is pointed out by a small, shrill boy, who takes you from room to room, and who has learned his lesson in perfection. The place is full of Catherine de' Medici, of Henry III., of memories, of ghosts, of echoes, of possible evocations and revivals. It is covered with crimson and gold. The fireplaces and the ceilings are magnificent; they look like expensive "sets" at the grand opera.

I should have mentioned that below, in the court, the front of the wing of Gaston d'Orleans faces you as you enter, so that the place is a course of French history. Inferior in beauty and grace to the other portions of the castle, the wing is yet a nobler monument than the memory of Gaston deserves. The second of the sons of Henry IV., – who was no more fortunate as a father than as a husband, – younger brother of Louis XIII., and father of the great Mademoiselle, the most celebrated, most ambitious, most self-complacent, and most unsuccessful *fille a marier* in French history, passed in enforced retirement at the castle of Blois the close of a life of clumsy intrigues against Cardinal Richelieu, in which his rashness was only equalled by his pusillanimity and his ill-luck by his inaccessibility to correction, and which, after so many follies and shames, was properly summed up in the project – begun, but not completed – of demolishing the beautiful habitation of his exile in order to erect a better one. With Gaston d'Orleans, however, who lived there without dignity, the history of the Chateau de Blois declines. Its interesting period is that of the wars of religion. It was the chief residence of Henry III., and the scene of the principal events of his depraved and dramatic reign. It has been restored more than enough, as I have said, by architects and decorators; the visitor, as he moves through its empty rooms, which are at once brilliant and ill-lighted (they have not been re-furnished), undertakes a little restoration of his own. His imagination helps itself from the things that remain; he tries to see the life of the sixteenth century in its form and dress, – its turbulence, its passions, its loves and hates, its treacheries, falsities, touches of faith, its latitude of personal development, its presentation of the whole nature, its nobleness of costume, charm of speech, splendor of taste, unequalled picturesqueness. The picture is full of movement, of contrasted light and darkness, full altogether of abominations. Mixed up with them all is the great

name of religion, so that the drama wants nothing to make it complete. What episode was ever more perfect – looked at as a dramatic occurrence – than the murder of the Duke of Guise? The insolent prosperity of the victim; the weakness, the vices, the terrors, of the author of the deed; the perfect execution of the plot; the accumulation of horror in what followed it, – give it, as a crime, a kind of immortal solidity.

But we must not take the Chateau de Blois too hard: I went there, after all, by way of entertainment. If among these sinister memories your visit should threaten to prove a tragedy, there is an excellent way of removing the impression. You may treat yourself at Blois to a very cheerful afterpiece. There is a charming industry practised there, and practised in charming conditions. Follow the bright little quay down the river till you get quite out of the town, and reach the point where the road beside the Loire becomes sinuous and attractive, turns the corner of diminutive headlands, and makes you wonder what is beyond. Let not your curiosity induce you, however, to pass by a modest white villa which overlooks the stream, enclosed in a fresh little court; for here dwells an artist, – an artist in faience. There is no sort of sign, and the place looks peculiarly private. But if you ring at the gate, you will not be turned away. You will, on the contrary, be ushered upstairs into a parlour – there is nothing resembling a shop-encumbered with specimens – of remarkably handsome pottery. The work is of the best, – a careful reproduction of old forms, colors, devices; and the master of the establishment is one of those completely artistic types that are often found in France. His reception is as friendly as his work is ingenious; and I think it is not too much to say that you like the work the better because he has produced it. His vases, cups and jars, lamps, platters, *plaques*, with their brilliant glaze, their innumerable figures, their family likeness, and wide variations, are scattered, through his occupied rooms; they serve at once as his stock-in-trade and as household ornament. As we all know, this is an age of prose, of machinery, of wholesale production, of coarse and hasty processes. But one brings away from the establishment of the very intelligent M. Ulysse the sense of a less eager activity and a greater search for perfection. He has but a few workmen, and he gives them plenty of time. The place makes a little vignette, leaves an impression, – the quiet white house in its garden on the road by the wide, clear river, without the smoke, the bustle, the ugliness, of so much of our modern industry. It ought to gratify Mr. Ruskin.

V

The second time I went to Blois I took a carriage for Chambord, and came back by the Chateau de Cheverny and the forest of Russy, – a charming little expedition, to which the beauty of the afternoon (the finest in a rainy season that was spotted with bright days) contributed not a little. To go to Chambord, you cross the Loire, leave it on one side, and strike away through a country in which salient features become less and less numerous, and which at last has no other quality than a look of intense, and peculiar rurality, – the characteristic, even when it is not the charm, of so much of the landscape of France. This is not the appearance of wildness, for it goes with great cultivation; it is simply the presence of the delving, drudging, economizing peasant. But it is a deep, unrelieved rusticity. It is a peasant's landscape; not, as in England, a landlord's. On the way to Chambord you enter the flat and sandy Sologne. The wide horizon opens out like a great *potager*, without interruptions, without an eminence, with here and there a long, low stretch of wood. There is an absence of hedges, fences, signs of property; everything is absorbed in the general flatness, – the patches of vineyard, the scattered cottages, the villages, the children (planted and staring and almost always pretty), the women in the fields, the white caps, the faded blouses, the big sabots. At the end of an hour's drive (they assure you at Blois that even with two horses you will spend double that time), I passed through a sort of gap in a wall, which does duty as the gateway of the domain of an exiled pretender. I drove along a straight avenue, through a disfeatured park, – the park of Chambord has twenty-one miles of circumference, – a very sandy, scrubby, melancholy plantation, in which the timber must have been cut many times over and is to-day a mere tangle of brushwood. Here, as in so many spots in France, the traveller perceives that he is in a land of *revolutoins*. Nevertheless, its great extent and the long perspective of its avenues give this desolate boskage a certain majesty; just as its shabbiness places it in agreement with one of the strongest impressions of the chateau. You follow one of these long perspectives a proportionate time, and at last you see the chimneys and pinnacles of Chambord rise apparently out of the ground. The filling-in of the wide moats that formerly surrounded it has, in vulgar parlance, let it down, but given it an appearance of top-heaviness that is at the same time a magnificent Orientalism. The towers, the turrets, the cupolas, the gables, the lanterns, the chimneys, look more like the spires of a city than the salient points of a single building. You emerge from the avenue and find yourself at the foot of an enormous fantastic mass. Chambord has a strange mixture of society and solitude. A little village clusters within view of its stately windows, and a couple of inns near by offer entertainment to pilgrims. These things, of course, are incidents of the political proscription which hangs its thick veil over the place. Chambord is truly royal, – royal in its great scale, its grand air, its indifference to common considerations. If a cat may look at a king, a palace may look at a tavern. I enjoyed my visit to this extraordinary structure as much as if I had been a legitimist; and indeed there is something interesting in any monument of a great system, any bold presentation of a tradition.

You leave your vehicle at one of the inns, which are very decent and tidy, and in which every one is very civil, as if in this latter respect the influence of the old regime pervaded the neighborhood, and you walk across the grass and the gravel to a small door, – a door infinitely subordinate and conferring no title of any kind on those who enter it. Here you ring a bell, which a highly respectable person answers (a person perceptibly affiliated, again, to the old regime), after which she ushers you across a vestibule into an inner court. Perhaps the strongest impression I got at Chambord came to me as I stood in this court. The woman who admitted me did not come with me; I was to find my guide somewhere else. The specialty of Chambord is its prodigious round towers. There are, I believe, no less than eight of them, placed at each angle of the inner and outer square of buildings; for the castle is in the form of a larger structure which encloses a smaller one. One of these towers stood before me in the court; it seemed to fling its shadow over the place; while above, as I looked up, the

pinnacles and gables, the enormous chimneys, soared into the bright blue air. The place was empty and silent; shadows of gargoyles, of extra-ordinary projections, were thrown across the clear gray surfaces. One felt that the whole thing was monstrous. A cicerone appeared, a languid young man in a rather shabby livery, and led me about with a mixture of the impatient and the desultory, of condescension and humility. I do not profess to understand the plan of Chambord, and I may add that I do not even desire to do so; for it is much more entertaining to think of it, as you can so easily, as an irresponsible, insoluble labyrinth. Within, it is a wilderness of empty chambers, a royal and romantic barrack. The exiled prince to whom it gives its title has not the means to keep up four hundred rooms; he contents himself with preserving the huge outside. The repairs of the prodigious roof alone must absorb a large part of his revenue. The great feature of the interior is the celebrated double staircase, rising straight through the building, with two courses of steps, so that people may ascend and descend without meeting. This staircase is a truly majestic piece of humor; it gives you the note, as it were, of Chambord. It opens on each landing to a vast guard-room, in four arms, radiations of the winding shaft. My guide made me climb to the great open-work lantern which, springing from the roof at the termination of the rotund staircase (surmounted here by a smaller one), forms the pinnacle of the bristling crown of Chambord. This lantern is tipped with a huge *fleur-de-lis* in stone, – the only one, I believe, that the Revolution did not succeed in pulling down. Here, from narrow windows, you look over the wide, flat country and the tangled, melancholy park, with the rotation of its straight avenues. Then you walk about the roof, in a complication of galleries, terraces, balconies, through the multitude of chimneys and gables. This roof, which is in itself a sort of castle in the air, has an extravagant, fabulous quality, and with its profuse ornamentation, – the salamander of Francis I. is a constant motive, – its lonely pavements, its sunny niches, the balcony that looks down over the closed and grass-grown main entrance, a strange, half-sad, half-brilliant charm. The stone-work is covered with fine mould. There are places that reminded me of some of those quiet, mildewed corners of courts and terraces, into which the traveller who wanders through the Vatican looks down from neglected windows. They show you two or three furnished rooms, with Bourbon portraits, hideous tapestries from the ladies of France, a collection of the toys of the *enfant du miracle*, all military and of the finest make. "Tout cela fonctionne," the guide said of these miniature weapons; and I wondered, if he should take it into his head to fire off his little canon, how much harm the Comte de Chambord would do.

From below, the castle would look crushed by the redundancy of its upper protuberances if it were not for the enormous girth of its round towers, which appear to give it a robust lateral development. These towers, however, fine as they are in their way, struck me as a little stupid; they are the exaggeration of an exaggeration. In a building erected after the days of defence, and proclaiming its peaceful character from its hundred embroideries and cupolas, they seem to indicate a want of invention. I shall risk the accusation of bad taste if I say that, impressive as it is, the Chateau de Chambord seemed to me to have altogether a little of that quality of stupidity. The trouble is that it represents nothing very particular; it has not happened, in spite of sundry vicissitudes, to have a very interesting history. Compared with that of Blois and Amboise, its past is rather vacant; and one feels to a certain extent the contrast between its pompous appearance and its spacious but somewhat colorless annals. It had indeed the good fortune to be erected by Francis I., whose name by itself expresses a good deal of history. Why he should have built a palace in those sandy plains will ever remain an unanswered question, for kings have never been obliged to give reasons. In addition to the fact that the country was rich in game and that Francis was a passionate hunter, it is suggested by M. de la Saussaye, the author of the very complete little history of Chambord which you may buy at the bookseller's at Blois, that he was governed in his choice of the site by the accident of a charming woman having formerly lived there. The Comtesse de Thoury had a manor in the neighborhood, and the Comtesse de Thoury had been the object of a youthful passion on the part of the most susceptible of princes before his accession to the throne. This great pile was reared, therefore, according to M.

de la Saussaye, as a *souvenir de premieres amours!* It is certainly a very massive memento; and if these tender passages were proportionate to the building that commemorates them, they were tender indeed. There has been much discussion as to the architect employed by Francis I., and the honor of having designed this splendid residence has been claimed for several of the Italian artists who early in the sixteenth century came to seek patronage in France. It seems well established to-day, however, that Chambord was the work neither of Primaticcio, of Vignola, nor of Il Rosso, all of whom have left some trace of their sojourn in France; but of an obscure yet very complete genius, Pierre Nepveu, known as Pierre Trinqureau, who is designated in the papers which preserve in some degree the history of the origin of the edifice, as the *maistre de l'oeuvre de maconnerie*. Behind this modest title, apparently, we must recognize one of the most original talents of the French Renaissance; and it is a proof of the vigor of the artistic life of that period that, brilliant production being everywhere abundant, an artist of so high a value should not have been treated by his contemporaries as a celebrity. We manage things very differently to-day.

The immediate successors of Francis I. continued to visit, Chambord; but it was neglected by Henry IV., and was never afterwards a favorite residence of any French king. Louis XIV. appeared there on several occasions, and the apparition was characteristically brilliant; but Chambord could not long detain a monarch who had gone to the expense of creating a Versailles ten miles from Paris. With Versailles, Fontainebleau, Saint-Germain, and Saint-Cloud within easy reach of their capital, the later French sovereigns had little reason to take the air in the dreariest province of their kingdom. Chambord therefore suffered from royal indifference, though in the last century a use was found for its deserted halls. In 1725 it was occupied by the luckless Stanislaus Leszczynski, who spent the greater part of his life in being elected King of Poland and being ousted from his throne, and who, at this time a refugee in France, had found a compensation for some of his misfortunes in marrying his daughter to Louis XV. He lived eight years at Chambord, and filled up the moats of the castle. In 1748 it found an illustrious tenant in the person of Maurice de Saxe, the victor of Fontenoy, who, however, two years after he had taken possession of it, terminated a life which would have been longer had he been less determined to make it agreeable. The Revolution, of course, was not kind to Chambord. It despoiled it in so far as possible of every vestige of its royal origin, and swept like a whirlwind through apartments to which upwards of two centuries had contributed a treasure of decoration and furniture. In that wild blast these precious things were destroyed or forever scattered. In 1791 an odd proposal was made to the French Government by a company of English Quakers who had conceived the bold idea of establishing in the palace a manufacture of some peaceful commodity not to-day recorded. Napoleon allotted Chambord, as a "dotation," to one of his marshals, Berthier, for whose benefit it was converted, in Napoleonic fashion, into the so-called principality of Wagram. By the Princess of Wagram, the marshal's widow, it was, after the Restoration, sold to the trustees of a national subscription which had been established for the purpose of presenting it to the infant Duke of Bordeaux, then prospective King of France. The presentation was duly made; but the Comte de Chambord, who had changed his title in recognition of the gift, was despoiled of his property by the Government of Louis Philippe. He appealed for redress to the tribunals of his country; and the consequence of his appeal was an interminable litigation, by which, however, finally, after the lapse of twenty-five years, he was established in his rights. In 1871 he paid his first visit to the domain which had been offered him half a century before, a term of which he had spent forty years in exile. It was from Chambord that he dated his famous letter of the 5th of July of that year, – the letter, directed to his so-called subjects, in which he waves aloft the white flag of the Bourbons. This amazing epistle, which is virtually an invitation to the French people to repudiate, as their national ensign, that immortal tricolor, the flag of the Revolution and the Empire, under which they have won the glory which of all glories has hitherto been dearest to them, and which is associated with the most romantic, the most heroic, the epic, the consolatory, period of their history, – this luckless

manifesto, I say, appears to give the measure of the political wisdom of the excellent Henry V. It is the most factitious proposal ever addressed to an eminently ironical nation.

On the whole, Chambord makes a great impression; and the hour I was, there, while the yellow afternoon light slanted upon the September woods, there was a dignity in its desolation. It spoke, with a muffled but audible voice, of the vanished monarchy, which had been so strong, so splendid, but to-day has become a sort of fantastic vision, like the cupolas and chimneys that rose before me. I thought, while I lingered there, of all the fine things it takes to make up such a monarchy; and how one of them is a superfluity of mouldering, empty, palaces. Chambord is touching, – that is the best word for it; and if the hopes of another restoration are in the follies of the Republic, a little reflection on that eloquence of ruin ought to put the Republic on its guard. A sentimental tourist may venture to remark that in the presence of several chateaux which appeal in this mystical manner to the retrospective imagination, it cannot afford to be foolish. I thought of all this as I drove back to Blois by the way of the Chateau de Cheverny. The road took us out of the park of Chambord, but through a region of flat woodland, where the trees were not mighty, and again into the prosy plain of the Sologne, – a thankless soil, all of it, I believe, but lately much amended by the magic of cheerful French industry and thrift. The light had already begun to fade, and my drive reminded me of a passage in some rural novel of Madame Sand. I passed a couple of timber and plaster churches, which looked very old, black, and crooked, and had lumpish wooden porches and galleries encircling the base. By the time I reached Cheverny, the clear twilight had approached. It was late to ask to be allowed to visit an inhabited house; but it was the hour at which I like best to visit almost anything. My coachman drew up before a gateway, in a high wall, which opened upon a short avenue, along which I took my way on foot; the coachmen in those parts being, for reasons best known to themselves, mortally averse to driving up to a house. I answered the challenge of a very tidy little portress, who sat, in company with a couple of children, enjoying the evening air in front of her lodge, and who told me to walk a little further and turn to the right. I obeyed her to the letter, and my turn brought me into sight of a house as charming as an old manor in a fairy tale. I had but a rapid and partial view of Cheverny; but that view was a glimpse of perfection. A light, sweet mansion stood looking over a wide green lawn, over banks of flowers and groups of trees. It had a striking character of elegance, produced partly by a series of Renaissance busts let into circular niches in the facade. The place looked so private, so reserved, that it seemed an act of violence to ring, a stranger and foreigner, at the graceful door. But if I had not rung I should be unable to express – as it is such a pleasure to do – my sense of the exceeding courtesy with which this admirable house is shown. It was near the dinner-hour, – the most sacred hour of the day; but I was freely conducted into the inhabited apartments. They are extremely beautiful. What I chiefly remember is the charming staircase of white embroidered stone, and the great *salle des gardes* and *chambre a coucher du roi* on the second floor. Cheverny, built in 1634, is of a much later date than the other royal residences of this part of France; it belongs to the end of the Renaissance, and has a touch of the rococo. The guard-room is a superb apartment; and as it contains little save its magnificent ceiling and fireplace and certain dim tapestries on its walls, you the more easily take the measure of its noble proportions. The servant opened the shutters of a single window, and the last rays of the twilight slanted into the rich brown gloom. It was in the same picturesque fashion that I saw the bedroom (adjoining) of Henry IV., where a legendary-looking bed, draped in folds long unaltered, defined itself in the haunted dusk. Cheverny remains to me a very charming, a partly mysterious vision. I drove back to Blois in the dark, some nine miles, through the forest of Russy, which belongs to the State, and which, though consisting apparently of small timber, looked under the stars sufficiently vast and primeval. There was a damp autumnal smell and the occasional sound of a stirring thing; and as I moved through the evening air I thought of Francis I. and Henry IV.

VI

You may go to Amboise either from Blois or from Tours; it is about half-way between these towns. The great point is to go, especially if you have put it off repeatedly; and to go, if possible, on a day when the great view of the Loire, which you enjoy from the battlements and terraces, presents itself under a friendly sky. Three persons, of whom the author of these lines was one, spent the greater part of a perfect Sunday morning in looking at it. It was astonishing, in the course of the rainiest season in the memory of the oldest Tourangeau, how many perfect days we found to our hand. The town of Amboise lies, like Tours, on the left bank of the river, a little white-faced town, staring across an admirable bridge, and leaning, behind, as it were, against the pedestal of rock on which the dark castle masses itself. The town is so small, the pedestal so big, and the castle so high and striking, that the clustered houses at the base of the rock are like the crumbs that have fallen from a well-laden table. You pass among them, however, to ascend by a circuit to the chateau, which you attack, obliquely, from behind. It is the property of the Comte de Paris, another pretender to the French throne; having come to him remotely, by inheritance, from his ancestor, the Duc de Penthièvre, who toward the close of the last century bought it from the crown, which had recovered it after a lapse. Like the castle of Blois it has been injured and defaced by base uses, but, unlike the castle of Blois, it has not been completely restored. "It is very, very dirty, but very curious," – it is in these terms that I heard it described by an English lady, who was generally to be found engaged upon a tattered Tauchnitz in the little *salon de lecture* of the hotel at Tours. The description is not inaccurate; but it should be said that if part of the dirtiness of Amboise is the result of its having served for years as a barrack and as a prison, part of it comes from the presence of restoring stone-masons, who have woven over a considerable portion of it a mask of scaffolding. There is a good deal of neatness as well, and the restoration of some of the parts seems finished. This process, at Amboise, consists for the most part of simply removing the vulgar excrescences of the last two centuries.

The interior is virtually a blank, the old apartments having been chopped up into small modern rooms; it will have to be completely reconstructed. A worthy woman, with a military profile and that sharp, positive manner which the goodwives who show you through the chateaux of Touraine are rather apt to have, and in whose high respectability, to say nothing of the frill of her cap and the cut of her thick brown dress, my companions and I thought we discovered the particular note, or *nuance*, of Orleanism, – a competent, appreciative, peremptory person, I say, – attended us through the particularly delightful hour we spent upon the ramparts of Amboise. Denuded and disfeatured within, and bristling without with bricklayers' ladders, the place was yet extraordinarily impressive and interesting. I should confess that we spent a great deal of time in looking at the view. Sweet was the view, and magnificent; we preferred it so much to certain portions of the interior, and to occasional effusions of historical information, that the old lady with the prove sometimes lost patience with us. We laid ourselves open to the charge of preferring it even to the little chapel of Saint Hubert, which stands on the edge of the great terrace, and has, over the portal, a wonderful sculpture of the miraculous hunt of that holy man. In the way of plastic art this elaborate scene is the gem of Amboise. It seemed to us that we had never been in a place where there are so many points of vantage to look down from. In the matter of position Amboise is certainly supreme among the old houses of the Loire; and I say this with a due recollection of the claims of Chamois and of Loches, – which latter, by the way (excuse the afterthought), is not on the Loire. The platforms, the bastions, the terraces, the high-perched windows and balconies, the hanging gardens and dizzy crenellations, of this complicated structure, keep you in perpetual intercourse with an immense horizon. The great feature of the place is the obligatory round tower which occupies the northern end of it, and which has now been, completely restored. It is of astounding size, a fortress in itself, and contains, instead of a staircase, a wonderful inclined plane, so wide and gradual that a coach and four may be driven

to the top. This colossal cylinder has to-day no visible use; but it corresponds, happily enough, with the great circle of the prospect. The gardens of Amboise, perched in the air, covering the irregular remnants of the platform on which the castle stands, and making up in picturesqueness what they lack in extent, constitute of course but a scanty domain. But bathed, as we found them, in the autumn sunshine, and doubly private from their aerial site, they offered irresistible opportunities for a stroll, interrupted, as one leaned against their low parapets, by long, contemplative pauses. I remember, in particular, a certain terrace, planted with clipped limes, upon which we looked down from the summit of the big tower. It seemed from that point to be absolutely necessary to one's happiness to go down and spend the rest of the morning there; it was an ideal place to walk to and fro and talk. Our venerable conductress, to whom our relation had gradually become more filial, permitted us to gratify this innocent wish, – to the extent, that is, of taking a turn or two under the mossy *tilleuls*. At the end of this terrace is the low door, in a wall, against the top of which, in 1498, Charles VIII., according to an accepted tradition, knocked his head to such good purpose that he died. It was within the walls of Amboise that his widow, Anne of Brittany, already in mourning for three children, two of whom we have seen commemorated in sepulchral marble at Tours, spent the first violence of that grief which was presently dispelled by a union with her husband's cousin and successor, Louis XII. Amboise was a frequent resort of the French Court during the sixteenth century; it was here that the young Mary Stuart spent sundry hours of her first marriage. The wars of religion have left here the ineffaceable stain which they left wherever they passed. An imaginative visitor at Amboise to-day may fancy that the traces of blood are mixed with the red rust on the crossed iron bars of the grim-looking balcony, to which the heads of the Huguenots executed on the discovery of the conspiracy of La Renaudie are rumored to have been suspended. There was room on the stout balustrade – an admirable piece of work – for a ghastly array. The same rumor represents Catherine de' Medici and the young queen as watching from this balcony the *noyades* of the captured Huguenots in the Loire. The facts of history are bad enough; the fictions are, if possible, worse; but there is little doubt that the future Queen of Scots learnt the first lessons of life at a horrible school. If in subsequent years she was a prodigy of innocence and virtue, it was not the fault of her whilom ??? mother-in-law, of her uncles of the house of Guise, or of the examples presented to her either at the windows of the castle of Amboise or in its more private recesses.

It was difficult to believe in these dark deeds, however, as we looked through the golden morning at the placidity of the far-shining Loire. The ultimate consequence of this spectacle was a desire to follow the river as far as the castle of Chaumont. It is true that the cruelties practised of old at Amboise might have seemed less phantasmal to persons destined to suffer from a modern form of inhumanity. The mistress of the little inn at the base of the castle-rock – it stands very pleasantly beside the river, and we had breakfasted there – declared to us that the Chateau de Chaumont, which is often during the autumn closed to visitors, was at that particular moment standing so wide open to receive us that it was our duty to hire one of her carriages and drive thither with speed. This assurance was so satisfactory that we presently found ourselves seated in this wily woman's most com- modious vehicle, and rolling, neither too fast nor too slow, along the margin of the Loire. The drive of about an hour, beneath constant clumps of chestnuts, was charming enough to have been taken for itself; and indeed, when we reached Chaumont, we saw that our reward was to be simply the usual reward of virtue, – the consciousness of having attempted the right. The Chateau de Chaumont was inexorably closed; so we learned from a talkative lodge-keeper, who gave what grace she could to her refusal. This good woman's dilemma was almost touching; she wished to reconcile two impossibles. The castle was not to be visited, for the family of its master was staying there; and yet she was loath to turn away a party of which she was good enough to say that it had a *grand genre*; for, as she also remarked, she had her living to earn. She tried to arrange a compromise, one of the elements of which was that we should descend from our carriage and trudge up a hill which would bring us to a designated point, where, over the paling of the garden, we might obtain an oblique and surreptitious view of a

small portion of the castle walls. This suggestion led us to inquire (of each other) to what degree of baseness it is allowed to an enlightened lover of the picturesque to resort, in order to catch a glimpse of a feudal chateau. One of our trio decided, characteristically, against any form of derogation; so she sat in the carriage and sketched some object that was public property, while her two companions, who were not so proud, trudged up a muddy ascent which formed a kind of back-stairs. It is perhaps no more than they deserved that they were disappointed. Chaumont is feudal, if you please; but the modern spirit is in possession. It forms a vast clean-scraped mass, with big round towers, ungarnished with a leaf of ivy or a patch of moss, surrounded by gardens of moderate extent (save where the muddy lane of which I speak passes near it), and looking rather like an enormously magnified villa. The great merit of Chaumont is its position, which almost exactly resembles that of Amboise; it sweeps the river up and down, and seems to look over half the province. This, however, was better appreciated as, after coming down the hill and re-entering the carriage, we drove across the long suspension-bridge which crosses the Loire just beyond the village, and over which we made our way to the small station of Onzain, at the farther end, to take the train back to Tours. Look back from the middle of this bridge; the whole picture composes, as the painters say. The towers, the pinnacles, the fair front of the chateau, perched above its fringe of garden and the rusty roofs of the village, and facing the afternoon sky, which is reflected also in the great stream that sweeps below, – all this makes a contribution to your happiest memories of Touraine.

VII

We never went to Chinon; it was a fatality. We planned it a dozen times; but the weather interfered, or the trains didn't suit, or one of the party was fatigued with the adventures of the day before. This excursion was so much postponed that it was finally postponed to everything. Besides, we had to go to Chenonceaux, to Azay-le-Rideau, to Langeais, to Loches. So I have not the memory of Chinon; I have only the regret. But regret, as well as memory, has its visions; especially when, like memory, it is assisted by photographs. The castle of Chinon in this form appears to me as an enormous ruin, a mediaeval fortress, of the extent almost of a city. It covers a hill above the Vienne, and after being impregnable in its time is indestructible to-day. (I risk this phrase in the face of the prosaic truth. Chinon, in the days when it was a prize, more than once suffered capture, and at present it is crumbling inch by inch. It is apparent, however, I believe, that these inches encroach little upon acres of masonry.) It was in the castle that Jeanne Darc ????? had her first interview with Charles VII., and it is in the town that Francois Rabelais is supposed to have been born. To the castle, moreover, the lover of the picturesque is earnestly recommended to direct his steps. But one cannot do everything, and I would rather have missed Chinon than Chenonceaux. Fortunately exceedingly were the few hours that we passed at this exquisite residence.

"In 1747," says Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his "Confessions," "we went to spend the autumn in Touraine, at the Chateau, of Chenonceaux, a royal residence upon the Cher, built by Henry II. for Diana of Poitiers, whose initials are still to be seen there, and now in possession of M. Dupin, the farmer-general. We amused ourselves greatly in this fine spot; the living was of the best, and I became as fat as a monk. We made a great deal of music, and acted comedies."

This is the only description that Rousseau gives of one of the most romantic houses in France, and of an episode that must have counted as one of the most agreeable in his uncomfortable career. The eighteenth century contented itself with general epithets; and when Jean-Jacques has said that Chenonceaux was a "beau lieu," he thinks himself absolved from further characterization. We later sons of time have, both for our pleasure and our pain, invented the fashion of special terms, and I am afraid that even common decency obliges me to pay some larger tribute than this to the architectural gem of Touraine. Fortunately I can discharge my debt with gratitude. In going from Tours you leave the valley of the Loire and enter that of the Cher, and at the end of about an hour you see the turrets of the castle on your right, among the trees, down in the meadows, beside the quiet little river. The station and the village are about ten minutes' walk from the chateau, and the village contains a very tidy inn, where, if you are not in too great a hurry to commune with the shades of the royal favorite and the jealous queen, you will perhaps stop and order a dinner to be ready for you in the evening. A straight, tall avenue leads to the grounds of the castle; what I owe to exactitude compels me to add that it is crossed by the railway-line. The place is so arranged, however, that the chateau need know nothing of passing trains, — which pass, indeed, though the grounds are not large, at a very sufficient distance. I may add that the trains throughout this part of France have a noiseless, desultory, dawdling, almost stationary quality, which makes them less of an offence than usual. It was a Sunday afternoon, and the light was yellow, save under the trees of the avenue, where, in spite of the waning of September, it was duskily green. Three or four peasants, in festal attire, were strolling about. On a bench at the beginning of the avenue, sat a man with two women. As I advanced with my companions he rose, after a sudden stare, and approached me with a smile, in which (to be Johnsonian for a moment) certitude was mitigated by modesty and eagerness was embellished with respect. He came toward me with a salutation that I had seen before, and I am happy to say that after an instant I ceased to be guilty of the brutality of not knowing where. There was only one place in the world where people smile like that, — only one place where the art of salutation has that perfect grace. This excellent creature used to crook his arm, in Venice, when I stepped into my gondola; and I now laid my hand on that

member with the familiarity of glad recognition; for it was only surprise that had kept me even for a moment from accepting the genial Francesco as an ornament of the landscape of Touraine. What on earth – the phrase is the right one – was a Venetian gondolier doing at Chenonceaux? He had been brought from Venice, gondola and all, by the mistress of the charming house, to paddle about on the Cher. Our meeting was affectionate, though there was a kind of violence in seeing him so far from home. He was too well dressed, too well fed; he had grown stout, and his nose had the tinge of good claret. He re-marked that the life of the household to which he had the honor to belong was that of a *casa regia*; which must have been a great change for poor Checco, whose habits in Venice were not regal. However, he was the sympathetic Checco still; and for five minutes after I left him I thought less about the little pleasure-house by the Cher than about the palaces of the Adriatic.

But attention was not long in coming round to the charming structure that presently rose before us. The pale yellow front of the chateau, the small scale of which is at first a surprise, rises beyond a considerable court, at the entrance of which a massive and detached round tower, with a turret on its brow (a relic of the building that preceded the actual villa), appears to keep guard. This court is not enclosed – or is enclosed, at least, only by the gardens, portions of which are at present in a state of violent reformation. Therefore, though Chenonceaux has no great height, its delicate facade stands up boldly enough. This facade, one of the most finished things in Touraine, consists of two stories, surmounted by an attic which, as so often in the buildings of the French Renaissance, is the richest part of the house. The high-pitched roof contains three windows of beautiful design, covered with embroidered caps and flowering into crocketed spires. The window above the door is deeply niched; it opens upon a balcony made in the form of a double pulpit, – one of the most charming features of the front. Chenonceaux is not large, as I say, but into its delicate compass is packed a great deal of history, – history which differs from that of Amboise and Blois in being of the private and sentimental kind. The echoes of the place, faint and far as they are to-day, are not political, but personal. Chenonceaux dates, as a residence, from the year 1515, when the shrewd Thomas Bohier, a public functionary who had grown rich in handling the finances of Normandy, and had acquired the estate from a family which, after giving it many feudal lords, had fallen into poverty, erected the present structure on the foundations of an old mill. The design is attributed, with I know not what justice, to Pierre Nepveu, *alias* Trinqueau, the audacious architect of Chambord. On the death of Bohier the house passed to his son, who, however, was forced, under cruel pressure, to surrender it to the crown, in compensation for a so-called deficit in the accounts of the late superintendent of the treasury. Francis I. held the place till his death; but Henry II., on ascending the throne, presented it out of hand to that mature charmer, the admired of two generations, Diana of Poitiers. Diana enjoyed it till the death of her protector; but when this event occurred, the widow of the monarch, who had been obliged to submit in silence, for years, to the ascendancy of a rival, took the most pardonable of all the revenges with which the name of Catherine de' Medici is associated, and turned her out-of-doors. Diana was not in want of refuges, and Catherine went through the form of giving her Chaumont in exchange; but there was only one Chenonceaux. Catherine devoted herself to making the place more completely unique. The feature that renders it sole of its kind is not appreciated till you wander round to either side of the house. If a certain springing lightness is the characteristic of Chenonceaux, if it bears in every line the aspect of a place of recreation, – a place intended for delicate, chosen pleasures, – nothing can confirm this expression better than the strange, unexpected movement with which, from behind, it carries itself across the river. The earlier building stands in the water; it had inherited the foundations of the mill destroyed by Thomas Bohier. The first step, therefore, had been taken upon solid piles of masonry; and the ingenious Catherine – she was a *raffinee* – simply proceeded to take the others. She continued the piles to the opposite bank of the Cher, and over them she threw a long, straight gallery of two stories. This part of the chateau, which looks simply like a house built upon a bridge and occupying its entire length, is of course the great curiosity of Chenonceaux. It forms on each floor a charming corridor, which, within, is illuminated from either side by the flickering river-light. The architecture

of these galleries, seen from without, is less elegant than that of the main building, but the aspect of the whole thing is delightful. I have spoken of Chenonceaux as a "villa," using the word advisedly, for the place is neither a castle nor a palace. It is a very exceptional villa, but it has the villa-quality, – the look of being intended for life in common. This look is not at all contradicted by the wing across the Cher, which only suggests intimate pleasures, as the French say, – walks in pairs, on rainy days; games and dances on autumn nights; together with as much as may be of moonlighted dialogue (or silence) in the course, of evenings more genial still, in the well-marked recesses of windows.

It is safe to say that such things took place there in the last century, during the kindly reign of Monsieur and Madame Dupin. This period presents itself as the happiest in the annals of Chenonceaux. I know not what festive train the great Diana may have led, and my imagination, I am afraid, is only feebly kindled by the records of the luxurious pastimes organized on the banks of the Cher by the terrible daughter of the Medici, whose appreciation of the good things of life was perfectly consistent with a failure to perceive why others should live to enjoy, them. The best society that ever assembled there was collected at Chenonceaux during the middle of the eighteenth century. This was surely, in France at least, the age of good society, the period when it was well for appreciative people to have been born. Such people should of course have belonged to the fortunate few, and not to the miserable many; for the prime condition of a society being good is that it be not too large. The sixty years that preceded the French Revolution were the golden age of fireside talk and of those pleasures which proceed from the presence of women in whom the social art is both instinctive and acquired. The women of that period were, above all, good company; the fact is attested by a thousand documents. Chenonceaux offered a perfect setting to free conversation; and infinite joyous discourse must have mingled with the liquid murmur of the Cher. Claude Dupin was not only a great man of business, but a man of honor and a patron of knowledge; and his wife was gracious, clever, and wise. They had acquired this property by purchase (from one of the Bourbons; for Chenonceaux, for two centuries after the death of Catherine de' Medici, remained constantly in princely hands), and it was transmitted to their son, Dupin de Francueil, grandfather of Madame George Sand. This lady, in her Correspondence, lately published, describes a visit that she paid, more than thirty years ago, to those members of her family who were still in possession. The owner of Chenonceaux to-day is the daughter of an Englishman naturalized in France. But I have wandered far from my story, which is simply a sketch of the surface of the place. Seen obliquely, from either side, in combination with its bridge and gallery, the chateau is singular and fantastic, a striking example of a wilful and capricious conception. Unfortunately, all caprices are not so graceful and successful, and I grudge the honor of this one to the false and blood-polluted Catherine. (To be exact, I believe the arches of the bridge were laid by the elderly Diana. It was Catherine, however, who completed the monument.) Within, the house has been, as usual, restored. The staircases and ceilings, in all the old royal residences of this part of France, are the parts that have suffered least; many of them have still much of the life of the old time about them. Some of the chambers of Chenonceaux, however, encumbered as they are with modern detail, derive a sufficiently haunted and suggestive look from the deep setting of their beautiful windows, which thickens the shadows and makes dark, corners. There is a charming little Gothic chapel, with its apse hanging over the water, fastened to the left flank of the house. Some of the upper balconies, which look along the outer face of the gallery, and either up or down the river, are delightful protected nooks. We walked through the lower gallery to the other bank of the Cher; this fine apartment appeared to be for the moment a purgatory of ancient furniture. It terminates rather abruptly; it simply stops, with a blank wall. There ought, of course, to have been a pavilion here, though I prefer very much the old defect to any modern remedy. The wall is not so blank, however, but that it contains a door which opens on a rusty drawbridge. This drawbridge traverses the small gap which divides the end of the gallery from the bank of the stream. The house, therefore, does not literally rest on opposite edges of the Cher, but rests on one and just fails to rest on the other. The pavilion would have made that up; but after a

moment we ceased to miss this imaginary feature. We passed the little drawbridge, and wandered awhile beside the river. From this opposite bank the mass of the chateau looked more charming than ever; and the little peaceful, lazy Cher, where two or three men were fishing in the eventide, flowed under the clear arches and between the solid pedestals of the part that spanned it, with the softest, vaguest light on its bosom. This was the right perspective; we were looking across the river of time. The whole scene was deliciously mild. The moon came up; we passed back through the gallery and strolled about a little longer in the gardens. It was very still. I met my old gondolier in the twilight. He showed me his gondola; but I hated, somehow, to see it there. I don't like, as the French say, to *meler les genres*. A gondola in a little flat French river? The image was not less irritating, if less injurious, than the spectacle of a steamer in the Grand Canal, which had driven me away from Venice a year and a half before. We took our way back to the Grand Monarque, and waited in the little inn-parlor for a late train to Tours. We were not impatient, for we had an excellent dinner to occupy us; and even after we had dined we were still content to sit awhile and exchange remarks upon, the superior civilization of France. Where else, at a village inn, should we have fared so well? Where else should we have sat down to our refreshment without condescension? There were two or three countries in which it would not have been happy for us to arrive hungry, on a Sunday evening, at so modest an hostelry. At the little inn at Chenonceaux the *cuisine* was not only excellent, but the service was graceful. We were waited on by mademoiselle and her mamma; it was so that mademoiselle alluded to the elder lady, as she uncorked for us a bottle of Vouvray mousseux. We were very comfortable, very genial; we even went so far as to say to each other that Vouvray mousseux was a delightful wine. From this opinion, indeed, one of our trio differed; but this member of the party had already exposed herself to the charge of being too fastidious, by declining to descend from the carriage at Chaumont and take that back-stairs view of the castle.

VIII

Without fastidiousness, it was fair to declare, on the other hand, that the little inn at Azay-le-Rideau was very bad. It was terribly dirty, and it was in charge of a fat *mege* whom the appearance of four trustful travellers – we were four, with an illustrious fourth, on that occasion – roused apparently to fury. I attached great importance to this incongruous hostess, for she uttered the only uncivil words I heard spoken (in connection with any business of my own) during a tour of some six weeks in France. Breakfast not at Azay-le-Rideau, therefore, too trustful traveller; or if you do so, be either very meek or very bold. Breakfast not, save under stress of circumstance; but let no circumstance whatever prevent you from going to see the admirable chateau, which is almost a rival of Chenonceaux. The village lies close to the gates, though after you pass these gates you leave it well behind. A little avenue, as at Chenonceaux, leads to the house, making a pretty vista as you approach the sculptured doorway. Azay is a most perfect and beautiful thing; I should place it third in any list of the great houses of this part of France in which these houses should be ranked according to charm. For beauty of detail it comes after Blois and Chenonceaux; but it comes before Amboise and Chambord. On the other hand, of course, it is inferior in majesty to either of these vast structures. Like Chenonceaux, it is a watery place, though it is more meagrely moated than the little chateau on the Cher. It consists of a large square *corps de logis*, with a round tower at each angle, rising out of a somewhat too slumberous pond. The water – the water of the Indre – surrounds it, but it is only on one side that it bathes its feet in the moat. On one of the others there is a little terrace, treated as a garden, and in front there is a wide court, formed by a wing which, on the right, comes forward. This front, covered with sculptures, is of the richest, stateliest effect. The court is approached by a bridge over the pond, and the house would reflect itself in this wealth of water if the water were a trifle less opaque. But there is a certain stagnation – it affects more senses than one – about the picturesque pools of Azay. On the hither side of the bridge is a garden, overshadowed by fine old sycamores, – a garden shut in by greenhouses and by a fine last-century gateway, flanked with twin lodges. Beyond the chateau and the standing waters behind it is a so-called *parc*

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