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Castles and Chateaux of Old Burgundy



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Francis Miltoun

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CHAPTER I

THE REALM OF THE BURGUNDIANS

“La plus belle Comté, c’est Flandre;
La plus belle duché, c’est Bourgogne,
Le plus beau royaume, c’est France.”

THIS statement is of undeniable merit, as some of us, who so love *la belle France*— even though we be strangers — well know.

The Burgundy of Charlemagne’s time was a much vaster extent of territory than that of the period when the province came to play its own kingly part. From the borders of Neustria to Lombardia and Provence it extended from the northwest to the southeast, and from Austrasia and Alamannia in the northeast to Aquitania and Septimania in the southwest. In other words, it embraced practically the entire watershed of the Rhône and even

included the upper reaches of the Yonne and Seine and a very large portion of the Loire; in short, all of the great central plain lying between the Alps and the Cevennes.

The old Burgundian province was closely allied topographically, climatically and by ties of family, with many of its neighbouring political divisions. Almost to the Ile de France this extended on the north; to the east, the Franche Comté was but a dismemberment; whilst the Nivernais and the Bourbonnais to the west, through the lands and influence of their seigneurs, encroached more or less on Burgundy or vice versa if one chooses to think of it in that way. To the southeast Dombes, Bresse and Bugey, all closely allied with one another, bridged the leagues which separated Burgundy from Savoy, and, still farther on, Dauphiny.

The influence of the Burgundian spirit was, however, over all. The neighbouring states, the nobility and the people alike, envied and emulated, as far as they were able, the luxurious life of the Burgundian seigneurs later. If at one time or another they were actually enemies, they sooner, in many instances at least, allied themselves as friends or partisans, and the manner of life of the Burgundians of the middle ages became their own.

Not in the royal domain of France itself, not in luxurious Touraine, was there more love of splendour and the gorgeous trappings of the ceremonial of the middle ages than in Burgundy. It has ever been a land of prosperity and plenty, to which, in these late days, must be added peace, for there is no region in all

France of to-day where there is more contentment and comfort than in the wealthy and opulent Departments of the Côte d'Or and the Saône and Loire which, since the Revolution, have been carved out of the very heart of old Burgundy.

The French themselves are not commonly thought to be great travellers, but they love "*le voyage*" nevertheless, and they are as justifiably proud of their antiquities and their historical monuments as any other race on earth. That they love their *patrie*, and all that pertains to it, with a devotion seemingly inexplicable to a people who go in only for "spreadeaglim," goes without saying.

"Qu'il est doux de courir le monde!

Ah! qu'il est doux de voyager!"

sang the author of the libretto of "Diamants de la Couronne," and he certainly expressed the sentiment well.

The Parisians themselves know and love Burgundy perhaps more than any other of the old mediæval provinces; that is, they seemingly love it for itself; such minor contempt as they have for a Provençal, a Norman or a Breton does not exist with regard to a Bourguignon.

Said Michelet: "Burgundy is a country where all are possessed of a pompous and solemn eloquence." This is a tribute to its men. And he continued: "It is a country of good livers and joyous seasons" – and this is an encomium of its bounty.

The men of the modern world who own to Burgundy as their *patrie* are almost too numerous to catalogue, but all will recall the names of Buffon, Guyton de Morveau, Monge and Carnot, Rude, Rameau, Sambin, Greuze and Prud'hon.

In the arts, too, Burgundy has played its own special part, and if the chateau-builder did not here run riot as luxuriously as in Touraine, he at least builded well and left innumerable examples behind which will please the lover of historic shrines no less than the more florid Renaissance of the Loire.

In the eighteenth century, the heart of Burgundy was traversed by the celebrated "*coches d'eau*" which, as a means of transportation for travellers, was considerably more of an approach to the ideal than the railway of to-day. These "*coches d'eau*" covered the distance from Chalon to Lyon via the Saône. One reads in the "Almanach de Lyon et des Provinces de Lyonnais, Forêz et Beaujolais, pour l'année bissextile 1760," that two of these "*coches*" each week left Lyon, on Mondays and Thursdays, making the journey to Chalon without interruption via Trévoux, Mâcon and Tournus. From Lyon to Chalon took the better part of two and a half days' time, but the descent was accomplished in less than two days. From Chalon, by "*guimbarde*," it was an affair of eight days to Paris via Arnay-le-Duc, Saulieu, Vermanton, Auxerre, Joigny and Sens. By diligence all the way, the journey from the capital to Lyon was made in five days in summer and six in winter. Says Mercier in his "Tableau de Paris": "When Sunday came on, the journey

mass was said at three o'clock in the morning at some tavern en route."

The ways and means of travel in Burgundy have considerably changed in the last two hundred years, but the old-time flavour of the road still hangs over all, and the traveller down through Burgundy to-day, especially if he goes by road, may experience not a little of the charm which has all but disappeared from modern France and its interminably straight, level, tree-lined highways. Often enough one may stop at some old posting inn famous in history and, as he wheels his way along, will see the same historic monuments, magnificent churches and chateaux as did that prolific letter writer, Madame de Sévigné.

Apropos of these mediæval and Renaissance chateaux scattered up and down France, the Sieur Colin, in 1654, produced a work entitled "Le Fidèle Conducteur pour les Voyages en France" in which he said that every hillside throughout the kingdom was dotted with a "*belle maison*" or a "*palais*." He, too, like some of us of a later day, believed France the land of *chateaux par excellence*.

Evelyn, the diarist (1641-1647), thought much the same thing and so recorded his opinion.

The Duchesse de Longueville, (1646-1647), on her journey from Paris called the first chateau passed on the way a "*palais des fées*," which it doubtless was in aspect, and Mlle. de Montpensier, in a lodging with which she was forced to put up at Saint Fargeau, named it "*plus beau d'un chateau*," – a true enough estimate of

many a *maison bourgeois* of the time. At Pougues-les-Eaux, in the Nivernais, just on the borders of Burgundy, whilst she was still travelling south, Mlle. de Montpensier put up at the chateau of a family friend and partook of an excellent dinner. This really speaks much for the appointments of the house in which she stopped, though one is forced to imagine the other attributes. She seemingly had arrived late, for she wrote: "I was indeed greatly surprised and pleased with my welcome; one could hardly have expected such attentions at so unseemly an hour."

La Fontaine was a most conscientious traveller and said some grand things of the Renaissance chateaux-builders of which literary history has neglected to make mention.

Lippomano, the Venetian Ambassador of the sixteenth century, professed to have met with a population uncivil and wanting in probity, but he exalted, nevertheless, to the highest the admirable chateaux of princes and seigneurs which he saw on the way through Burgundy. Zinzerling, a young German traveller, in the year 1616, remarked much the same thing, but regretted that a certain class of sight-seers was even then wont to scribble names in public places. We of to-day who love old monuments have, then, no more reason to complain than had this observant traveller of three hundred years ago.

Madame Laroche was an indefatigable traveller of a later day (1787), and her comments on the "*belles maisons de campagne*" in these parts (she was not a guest in royal chateaux, it seems) throw many interesting side lights on the people, the manners

and the customs of her time.

Bertin in his “Voyage de Bourgogne” recounts a noble welcome which he received at the chateau of a Burgundian seigneur – “Salvos of musketry, with the seigneur and the ladies of his household awaiting on the *perron*.” This would have made an ideal stage grouping.

Arthur Young, the English agriculturist, travelling in France just previous to the Revolution, had all manner of comment for the French dwelling of whatever rank, but his observations in general were more with reference to the *chaumières* of peasants than with the chateaux of seigneurs.

Time was when France was more thickly bestrewn with great monasteries and abbeys than now. They were in many ways the rivals of the palatial country houses of the seigneurs, and their princely *abbés* and priors and prelates frequently wielded a local power no less militant than that of their secular neighbours.

Great churches, abbeys, monasteries, fortresses, chateaux, donjons and barbican gates are hardly less frequently seen in France to-day than they were of old, although in many instances a ruin only exists to tell the tale of former splendour.

This is as true of Burgundy as it is of other parts of France; indeed, it is, perhaps, a more apt reference here than it would be with regard to Normandy or Picardy, where many a mediæval civic or religious shrine has been made into a warehouse or a beet-sugar factory. The closest comparison of this nature that one can make with respect to these parts is that some Cistercian

monastery has become a “wine-chateau” like the Clos Vougeot or Beaune’s Hospice or Hotel Dieu, which, in truth, at certain periods, is nothing more nor less than a great wholesale wine-shop.

Mediæval French towns, as well in Burgundy as elsewhere, were invariably built up on one of three plans. The first was an outgrowth of the remains and débris of a more ancient Gaulish or Roman civilization, and purely civic and secular. The second class of community came as a natural ally of some great abbey, seigneurial chateau, really a fortress or an episcopal foundation which demanded freedom from molestation as its undeniable right. It was in such latter places that the bishops and abbés held forth with a magnificence and splendour of surroundings scarcely less imposing than that of royalty itself, though their domains were naturally more restricted in area and the powers that the prelates wielded were often no less powerful than their militant neighbours. The third class of mediæval settlements were the *villes-neuves*, or the *villes-franches*, a class of communities usually exempt from the exactions of seigneurs and churchmen alike, a class of towns readily recognized by their nomenclature.

By the sixteenth century the soil of France was covered with a myriad of residential chateaux which were the admiration and envy of the lords of all nations. There had sprung up beside the old feudal fortresses a splendid galaxy of luxurious dwellings having more the air of domesticity than of warfare, which was the chief characteristics of their predecessors. It was then that

the word *chateau* came to supplant that of *chastel* in the old-time chronicles.

Richelieu and the Fronde destroyed many a mediæval fane whose ruins were afterwards rebuilt by some later seigneur into a Renaissance palace of great splendour. The Italian builder lent his aid and his imported profusion of detail until there grew up all over France a distinct variety of dwelling which quite outdistanced anything that had gone before. This was true in respect to its general plan as well as with regard to the luxury of its decorative embellishments. Fortresses were razed or remodelled, and the chateau – the French chateau as we know it to-day, distinct from the *chastel*– then first came into being.

Any review of the castle, chateau and palace architecture of France, and of the historic incident and the personages connected therewith, is bound to divide itself into a geographical or climatic category. To begin with the manner of building of the southland was only transplanted in northern soil experimentally, and it did not always take root so vigorously that it was able to live.

The Renaissance glories of Touraine and the valley of the Loire, though the outcome of various Italian pilgrimages, were of a more florid and whimsical fashioning than anything in Italy itself, either at the period of their inception or even later, and so they are to be considered as something distinctly French, – indeed, it was their very influence which was to radiate all over the chateau-building world of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

By contrast, the square and round donjon towers of the fortress-chateaux – like Arques, Falais and Coucy – were more or less an indigenous growth taking their plan from nothing alien. Midi and the centre of France, Provence, the Pyrenees and the valleys of the Rhône and Saône, gave birth, or development, to still another variety of mediæval architecture both military and domestic, whilst the Rhine provinces developed the species along still other constructional lines.

There was, to be sure, a certain reminiscence, or repetition of common details among all extensive works of mediæval building, but they existed only by sufferance and were seldom incorporated as constructive elements beyond the fact that towers were square or round, and that the most elaborately planned chateaux were built around an inner courtyard, or were surrounded by a *fosse*, or moat.

In Burgundy and the Bourbonnais, and to some extent in the Nivernais, there grew up a distinct method of castle-building which was only allied with the many other varieties scattered over France in the sense that the fabrics were intended to serve the same purposes as their contemporaries elsewhere. The solid square shafts flanking a barbican gate, – the same general effect observable of all fortified towns, – the profuse use of heavy Renaissance sculpture in town houses, the interpolated Flemish-Gothic (seen so admirably at Beaune and Dijon), and above all, the Burgundian school of sculptured figures and figurines were details which flowered hereabouts as they did nowhere else.

So far as the actual numbers of the edifices go it is evident that throughout Burgundy ecclesiastical architecture developed at the expense of the more luxuriously endowed civic and domestic varieties of Touraine, which, we can not deny, must ever be considered the real "chateaux country." In Touraine the splendour of ecclesiastical building took a second place to that of the domestic dwelling, or country or town house.

For the most part, the Romanesque domestic edifice has disappeared throughout Burgundy. Only at Cluny are there any very considerable remains of the domestic architecture of the Romans, and even here there is nothing very substantial, no tangible reminder of the palace of emperor or consul, only some fragments of more or less extensive edifices which were built by the art which the Romans brought with them from beyond the Alps when they overran Gaul. If one knows how to read the signs, there may still be seen at Cluny fragments of old Roman walls of stone, brick, and even of wood, and the fact that they have already stood for ten or a dozen centuries speaks much for the excellence of their building. It was undoubtedly something just a bit better than the modern way of doing things.

Of all the domestic edifices of Burgundy dating from the thirteenth century or earlier, that enclosing the "cuisines" (the only name by which this curious architectural detail is known) of the old palace of the dukes at Dijon is credited by all authorities as being quite the most remarkable, indeed, the most typical, of its environment. After this comes the Salle Synodale at Sens.

These two, showing the civic and domestic details of the purely Burgundian manner of building, represent their epoch at its very best.

In Dauphiny and Savoy, and to a certain extent the indeterminate ground of Bresse, Dombes and Bugey which linked Burgundy therewith, military and civic architecture in the middle ages took on slightly different forms. Nevertheless, the style was more nearly allied to that obtaining in mid-France than to that of the Midi, or to anything specifically Italian in motive, although Savoy was for ages connected by liens of blood with the holder of the Italian crown.

It was only in 1792 that Savoy became a French Département, with the rather unsatisfactory nomenclature of Mont Blanc. It is true, however, that by holding to the name of Mont Blanc the new department would at least have impressed itself upon the travelling public, as well as the fact that the peak is really French. As it is, it is commonly thought to be Swiss, though for a fact it is leagues from the Swiss frontier.

Before a score of years had passed Savoy again became subject to an Italian prince. Less than half a century later “La Savoie” became a pearl in the French diadem for all time, forming the Départements of Haute Savoie and Savoie of to-day.

The rectangular fortress-like chateau – indeed more a fortress than a chateau – was more often found in the plains than in the mountains. It is for this reason that the chateaux of the Alpine valleys and hillsides of Savoy and Dauphiny differ from those of

the Rhône or the Saône. The Rhine castle of our imaginations may well stand for one type; the other is best represented by the great parallelogram of Aigues-Mortes, or better yet by the walls and towers of the Cité at Carcassonne.

Feudal chateaux up to the thirteenth century were almost always constructed upon an eminence; it was only with the beginning of this epoch that the seigneurs dared to build a country house without the protection of natural bulwarks.

The two types are represented in this book, those of the plain and those of the mountain, though it is to be remembered that it is the specific castle-like edifice, and not the purely residential chateau that often exists in the mountainous regions to the exclusion of the other variety. After that comes the ornate country house, in many cases lacking utterly the defences which were the invariable attribute of the castle. Miolans and Montmelian in Savoy stand for examples of the first mentioned class; Chastellux, Ancy-le-Franc and Tanlay in Burgundy for the second.

Examples of the *hôtels privées*, the town houses of the seigneurs who for the most part spent their time in their *maisons de campagne* of the large towns and provincial cities are not to be neglected, nor have they been by the author and artist who have made this book. As examples may be cited the Maison des Dauphins at Tour-de-Pin, that elaborate edifice at Paray-le-Monail, various examples at Dijon and the svelt, though unpretending, Palais des Granvelle at Besançon in the Franche

Comté.

To sum up the chateau architecture, and, to be comprehensive, all mediæval and Renaissance architecture in France, we may say that it stands as something distinctly national, something that has absorbed much of the best of other lands but which has been fused with the ingenious daring of the Gaul into a style which later went abroad to all nations of the globe as something distinctly French. It matters little whether proof of this be sought in Touraine, Burgundy or Poitou, for while each may possess their eccentricities of style, and excellencies as varied as their climates, all are to-day distinctly French, and must be so considered from their inception.

Among these master works which go to give glory and renown to French architecture are not only the formidable castles and luxurious chateaux of kings and princes but also the great civic palaces and military works of contemporary epochs, for these, in many instances, combined the functions of a royal dwelling with their other condition.

CHAPTER II

IN THE VALLEY OF THE YONNE

THERE is no more charming river valley in all France than that of the Yonne, which wanders from mid-Burgundy down to join the Seine just above Fontainebleau and the artists' haunts of Moret and Montigny.

The present day Département of the Yonne was carved out of a part of the old Senonais and Auxerrois; the latter, a Burgundian fief, and the former, a tiny countship under the suzerainty of the Counts of Champagne. Manners and customs, and art and architecture, however, throughout the department favour Burgundy in the south rather than the northern influences which radiated from the Ile de France. This is true not only with respect to ecclesiastical, civic and military architecture, but doubly so with the domestic varieties ranging from the humble cottage to the more ambitious *manoirs* and *gentilshommeries*, and finally, to the still more magnificent seigneurial chateaux. Within the confines of this area are some of the most splendid examples extant of Burgundian domestic architecture of the Renaissance period.

The Yonne is singularly replete with feudal memories and monuments as well. One remarks this on all sides, whether one enters direct from Paris or from the east or west. From

the Morvan and the Gatinais down through the Auxerrois, the Tonnerrois and the Époisses is a definite sequence of architectural monuments which in a very remarkable way suggest that they were the outgrowth of a distinctly Burgundian manner of building, something quite different from anything to be seen elsewhere.

In the ninth century, when the feudality first began to recognize its full administrative powers, the local counts of the valley of the Yonne were deputies merely who put into motion the machinery designed by the nobler powers, the royal vassals of the powerful fiefs of Auxerre, Sens, Tonnerre and Avallon. The actual lease of life of these greater powers varied considerably according to the individual fortunes of their seigneurs, but those of Joigny and Tonnerre endured until 1789, and the latter is incorporated into a present day title which even red republicanism has not succeeded in wiping out.

The real gateway to the Yonne valley is properly enough Sens, but Sens itself is little or nothing Burgundian with respect to its architectural glories in general. Its Salle Synodale is the one example which is distinct from the northern born note which shows so plainly in the tower and façade of its great cathedral; mostly Sens is reminiscent of the sway and tastes of the royal Bourbons.

A few leagues south of Sens the aspect of all things changes precipitately. At Villeneuve-sur-Yonne one takes a gigantic step backward into the shadowy past. Whether or no he arrives by the

screeching railway or the scorching automobile of the twentieth century, from the moment he passes the feudal-built gateway which spans the main street – actually the great national highway which links Paris with the Swiss and Italian frontiers – and gazes up at its battlemented crest, he is transported into the realms of romance. Travellers there are, perhaps, who might prefer to arrive on foot, but there are not many such passionate pilgrims who would care to do this thing to-day. They had much better, however, adopt even this mode of travel should no other be available, for at Villeneuve there are many aids in conjuring up the genuine old-time spirit of things.

At the opposite end of this long main street is yet another great barbican gate, the twin of that at the northerly end. Together they form the sole remaining vestiges of the rampart which enclosed the old Villeneuve-le-Roi, the title borne by the town of old. Yet despite such notable landmarks, there are literally thousands of stranger tourists who rush by Villeneuve by road and rail in a season and give never so much as a thought or a glance of the eye to its wonderful scenic and romantic splendours!

Before 1163 Villeneuve was known as Villa-Longa, after its original Roman nomenclature, but a newer and grander city grew up on the old emplacement with fortification walls and towers and gates, built at the orders of Louis VII. It was then that it came to be known as the king's own city and was called Villeneuve-le-Roi. By a special charter granted at this time Villeneuve, like Lorris on the banks of the Loire, was given

unusual privileges which made it exempt from Crown taxes, and allowed the inhabitants to hunt and fish freely – feudal favours which were none too readily granted in those days. Louis himself gave the new city the name of Villa-Francia-Regia, but the name was soon corrupted to Villeneuve-le-Roi. For many years the city served as the chief Burgundian outpost in the north.

The great tower, or citadel, a part of the royal chateau where the king lodged on his brief visits to his pet city, was intended at once to serve as a fortress and a symbol of dignity, and it played the double part admirably. Attached to this tower on the north was the Royal Chateau de Salles, a favourite abode of the royalties of the thirteenth century. Little or nothing of this dwelling remains to-day save the walls of the chapel, and here and there an expanse of wall built up into some more humble edifice, but still recognizable as once having possessed a greater dignity. There are various fragmentary foundation walls of old towers and other dependencies of the chateau, and the old ramparts cropping out here and there, but there is no definitely formed building of a sufficiently commanding presence to warrant rank as a historical monument of the quality required by the governmental authorities in order to have its patronage and protection.

Philippe-Auguste, in 1204, assembled here a parliament where the celebrated ordonnance “Stabilementum Feudorum” was framed. This alone is enough to make Villeneuve stand out large in the annals of feudalism, if indeed no monuments

whatever existed to bring it to mind. It was the code by which the entire machinery of French feudalism was put into motion and kept in running order, and for this reason the Chateau de Salles, where the king was in residence when he gave his hand and seal to the document, should occupy a higher place than it usually does. The Chateau de Salles was called "royal" in distinction to the usual seigneurial chateau which was merely "noble." It was not so much a permanent residence of the French monarchs as a sort of a rest-house on the way down to their Burgundian possession after they had become masters of the duchy. The donjon tower that one sees to-day is the chief, indeed the only definitely defined, fragment of this once royal chateau which still exists, but it is sufficiently impressive and grand in its proportions to suggest the magnitude of the entire fabric as it must once have been, and for that reason is all-sufficient in its appeal to the romantic and historic sense.

Situated as it was on the main highway between Paris and Dijon, Villeneuve occupied a most important strategic position. It spanned this old Route Royale with its two city gates, and its ramparts stretched out on either side in a determinate fashion which allowed no one to enter or pass through it that might not be welcome. These graceful towered gateways which exist even to-day were the models from which many more of their kind were built in other parts of the royal domain, as at Magny-en-Vexin, at Moret-sur-Loing, and at Mâcon.

A dozen kilometres from Villeneuve-sur-Yonne is Joigny,

almost entirely surrounded by a beautiful wildwood, the Forêt National de Joigny. Joigny was one of the last of the local fiefs to give up its ancient rights and privileges. The fief took rank as a Vicomté. Jeanne de Valois founded a hospice here – the predecessor of the present Hotel Dieu – and the Cardinal de Gondi of unworthy fame built the local chateau in the early seventeenth century.

The Chateau de Joigny, as became its dignified state, was nobly endowed, having been built to the Cardinal's orders by the Italian Serlio in 1550-1613. To-day the structure serves the functions of a schoolhouse and is little to be remarked save that one hunts it out knowing its history.

There is this much to say for the schoolhouse-chateau at Joigny; it partakes of the constructive and decorative elements of the genuine local manner of building regardless of its Italian origin, and here, as at Villeneuve, there is a distinct element of novelty in all domestic architecture which is quite different from the varieties to be remarked a little further north. There, the town houses are manifestly town houses, but at Joigny, as often as not, when they advance beyond the rank of the most humble, they partake somewhat of the attributes of a castle and somewhat of those of a palace. This is probably because the conditions of life have become easier, or because, in general, wealth, even in mediæval times, was more evenly distributed. Certainly the noblesse here, as we know, was more numerous than in many other sections.

Any one of a score of Joigny's old Renaissance houses, which line its main street and the immediate neighbourhood of its market-place, is suggestive of the opulent life of the seigneurs of old to almost as great a degree as the Gondi chateau which has now become the École-Communal.

Of all Joigny's architectural beauties of the past none takes so high a rank as its magnificent Gothic church of Saint Jean, whose vaultings are of the most remarkable known. Since the ruling seigneur at the time the church was rebuilt was a churchman, this is perhaps readily enough accounted for. It demonstrates, too, the intimacy with which the affairs of church and state were bound together in those days. A luxurious local chateau of the purely residential order, not a fortress, demanded a worthy neighbouring church, and the seigneur, whether or not he himself was a churchman, often worked hand in hand with the local prelate to see that the same was supplied and embellished in a worthy manner. This is evident to the close observer wherever he may rest on his travels throughout the old French provinces, and here at Joigny it is notably to be remarked.

Saint Fargeau, in the Commune of Joigny, is unknown by name and situation to the majority, but for a chateau-town it may well be classed with many better, or at least more popularly, known. On the principal place, or square, rises a warm-coloured winsome fabric which is the very quintessence of mediævalism. It is a more or less battered relic of the tenth century, and is built in a rosy brick, a most unusual method of construction for its

time.

The history of the Chateau de Saint Fargeau has been most momentous, its former dwellers therein taking rank with the most noble and influential of the old régime. Jacques Coeur, the celebrated silversmith of Bourges and the intimate of Charles VII, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, and the leader of the Convention – Lepelletier de Saint Fargeau – all lived for a time within its walls, to mention only three who have made romantic history, though widely dissimilar were their stations.

An ornate park with various decorative dependencies surrounds the old chateau on three sides and the ensemble is as undeniably theatrical as one could hope to find in the real. In general the aspect is grandiose and it can readily enough be counted as one of the “show-chateaux” of France, and would be were it better known.

Mlle. de Montpensier – “la Grande Mademoiselle” – was chatelaine of Saint Fargeau in the mid-seventeenth century. Her comings and goings, to and from Paris, were ever written down at length in court chronicles and many were the “incidents” – to give them a mild definition – which happened here in the valley of the Yonne which made good reading. On one occasion when Mademoiselle quitted Paris for Saint Fargeau she came in a modest “*carosse sans armes.*” It was for a fact a sort of sub-rosa sortie, but the historian was discreet on this occasion. Travel in the old days had not a little of romanticism about it, but for a lady of quality to travel thus was, at the time, a thing unheard of.

This princess of blood royal thus, for once in her life, travelled like a plebeian.

Closely bound up with the Sennonais were the fiefs of Auxerre and Tonnerre, whose capitals are to-day of that class of important provincial cities of the third rank which play so great a part in the economic affairs of modern France. But their present commercial status should by no means discount their historic pasts, nor their charm for the lover of old monuments, since evidences remain at every street corner to remind one that their origin was in the days when knights were bold. The railway has since come, followed by electric lights and automobiles, all of which are once and again found in curious juxtaposition with a bit of mediæval or Renaissance architecture, in a manner that is surprising if not shocking. Regardless of the apparent modernity roundabout, however, there is still enough of the glamour of mediævalism left to subdue the garishness of twentieth century innovations. All this makes the charm of French travel, – this unlocked for combination of the new and the old that one so often meets. One can not find just this same sort of thing at Paris, nor on the Riviera, nor anywhere, in fact, except in these minor capitals of the old French provinces.

The Comté d'Auxerre was created in 1094 by the Roi Robert, who, after the reunion of the Burgundian kingdom with the French monarchy, gave it to Renaud, Comte de Nevers, as the dot of one, Adalais, who may have been his sister, or his cousin – history is not precise. The house of Nevers possessed the

countship until 1182, when it came to Archambaud, the ninth of the name, Sire de Bourbon. One of his heirs married a son of the Duc de Bourgogne and to him brought the county of Auxerre, which thus became Burgundian in fact. Later it took on a separate entity again, or rather, it allied itself with the Comtes de Tonnerre at a price paid in and out of hand, it must not be neglected to state, of 144,400 *livres Tournois*. The crown of France, through the Comtes d'Auxerre, came next into possession, but Charles VII, under the treaty of Arras, ceded the countship in turn to Philippe-le-Bon, Duc de Bourgogne. Definite alliance with the royal domain came under Louis XI, thus the province remained until the Revolution.

With such a history small wonder it is that Auxerre has preserved more than fleeting memories of its past. Of great civic and domestic establishments of mediævalism, Auxerre is poverty-stricken nevertheless. The Episcopal Palace, now the Préfecture, is the most imposing edifice of its class, and is indeed a worthy thing from every view-point. It has a covered *loggia*, or gallery running along its façade, making one think that it was built by, or for, an Italian, which is not improbable, since it was conceived under the ministership of Cardinal Mazarin who would, could he have had his way, have made all things French take on an Italian hue. From this *loggia* there is a wide-spread, distant view of the broad valley of the Yonne which here has widened out to considerable proportions. The history of this Préfectoral palace of to-day, save as it now serves its purpose

as a governmental administrative building, is wholly allied with that of Auxerre's magnificent cathedral and its battery of sister churches.

Within the edifice, filled with clerks and officials in every cranny, all busy writing out documents by hand and clogging the wheels of progress as much as inefficiency can, are still found certain of its ancient furnishings and fittings. The great Salle des Audiences is still intact and is a fine example of thirteenth century woodwork. The wainscoting of its walls and ceiling is remarkably worked with a finesse of detail that would be hard to duplicate to-day except at the expense of a lord of finance or a king of petrol. Not even government contractors, no matter what price they are paid, could presume to supply anything half so fine.

It was at Auxerre that the art and craft of building noble edifices developed so highly among churchmen. The builders of the twelfth century were not only often monks but churchmen of rank as well. They occupied themselves not only with ecclesiastical architecture, but with painting and sculpture. One of the first of these clerical master-builders was Geoffroy, Bishop of Auxerre, and three of his prebendarys were classed respectively as painters, glass-setters and metal-workers.

The towering structure on the Place du Marché is to-day Auxerre's nearest approach to a chateau of the romantic age, and this is only a mere tower to-day, a fragment left behind of a more extensive residential and fortified chateau which served its

double purpose well in its time. It is something more than a mere belfry, or clock tower, however. It is called the Tour Gaillarde, and flanked at one time the principal breach in the rampart wall which surrounded the city. It is one of the finest specimens of its class extant, and is more than the rival of the great Tour de l'Horloge at Rouen or the pair of towers over which conventional tourists rave, as they do over the bears in the bear-pit, at Berne in Switzerland.

The entire edifice, the tower and that portion which has disappeared, formed originally the residence of the governor of the place, the personal representative of the counts who themselves, in default of a special residence in their capital, were forced to lodge therein on their seemingly brief visits. The names of the counts of Tonnerre and Auxerre appear frequently in the historical chronicles of their time, but references to their doings lead one to think that they chiefly idled their time away at Paris. That this great tower made a part of some sort of a fortified dwelling there is no doubt, but that it was ever a part of a seigneurial chateau is not so certain.

With respect to the part Auxerre played in the military science of the middle ages it is interesting to recall that the drum, or *tambour*, is claimed as of local origin, or at least that it was here first known in France, in the fourteenth century. No precise date is given and one is inclined to think that its use with the army of Edward III at Calais on the 3rd August, 1347, was really its first appearance across the Channel after all.

Above Auxerre the Yonne divides, or rather takes to itself the Armançon and the Seruin to swell its bulk as it flows down through the Auxerrois. Above lies the Avallonnais, where another race of seigneurs contribute an altogether different series of episodes from that of their neighbours. It remains a patent fact, however, that the cities and towns of the valley of the Yonne give one ample proof of the close alliance in manners and customs of all mid-France of mediæval times.

The inhabitants of this region are not a race apart, but are traditionally a blend of the “natural” Champenois and the “frank and loyal” Burgundian, – “strictly keeping to their promises, and with a notable probity in business affairs,” says a proud local historian. Here in this delightful river valley were bred and nourished the celebrated painter, Jean-Cousin; the illustrious Vauban, the builder of fortresses; the enigmatical Chevaliere d’Eon; the artist Soufflot, architect of the Pantheon; Regnault de Saint-Jean d’Angely, Minister of Napoleon; Bourrienne, his secretary and afterwards Minister of State under the Bourbons.

Following the Yonne still upwards towards its source one comes ultimately to Clamecy. Between Auxerre and Clamecy the riverside is strewn thickly with the remains of many an ancient feudal fortress or later chateaux. At Mailly-le-Chateau are the very scanty fragments of a former edifice built by the Comtes d’Auxerre in the fifteenth century, and at Chatel-Censoir is another of the same class. At Coulanges-sur-Yonne is the débris, a tower merely, of what must one day have been a really

splendid edifice, though even locally one can get no specific information concerning its history.

From Clamecy the highroad crosses the Bazois to Chateau Chinon in the Nivernais. The name leads one to imagine much, but of chateaux it has none, though its nomenclature was derived from the emplacement of an ancient *oppidum gaulois*, a *castrum gallo-romain* and later a feudal chateau.

The road on to Burgundy lies to the southwest via the Avallonnais, or, leaving the watershed of the Yonne for that of the upper Seine, via Tonnerre and Châtillon-sur-Seine lying to the eastward of Auxerre.

CHAPTER III

AVALLON, VEZELAY AND CHASTELLUX

AVALLON owes its origin to the construction of a chateau-fort. It was built by Robert-le-Pieux, the son of Hugues Capet, in the tenth century. Little by little the fortress has crumbled and very nearly disappeared. All that remains are the foundation walls on what is locally called the Rocher d'Avallon, virtually the pedestal upon which sits the present city.

Avallon, like neighbouring Semur and Vezelay, sits snugly and proudly behind its rampart of nature's ravines and gorges, a series of military defences ready-made which on more than one occasion in mediæval times served their purpose well.

It was in the old Chateau d'Avallon that Jacques d'Epailly, called "Forte Épice," was giving a great ball when Philippe-le-Bon besieged the city. Jacques treated the inhabitants with the utmost disrespect, even the ladies, and secretly quitted the ball just before the city troops surrendered. History says that the weak-hearted gallant sold out to the enemy and saved himself by the back door, and in spite of no documentary evidence to this effect the long arm of coincidence points to the dastardly act in an almost unmistakable manner.

Near Avallon are still to be seen extensive Roman remains.

A Roman camp, the Camp des Alleux, celebrated in Gaulish and Roman history, was here, and the old Roman road between Lyons and Boulogne in Belgica Secundus passed near by.

It is not so much with reference to Avallon itself, quaint and picturesque as the city is, that one's interest lies hereabouts. More particularly it is in the neighbouring chateaux of Chastellux and Montréal.

The Seigneur de Chastellux was one of the most powerful vassals of the Duc de Bourgogne. By hereditary custom the eldest of each new generation presented himself before the Bishop of Auxerre clad in a surplice covering his military accoutrements, and wearing a falcon at his wrist. In this garb he swore to support Church and State, and for this devotion was vested in the title of Chanoin d'Auxerre, a title which supposedly served him in good stead in case of military disaster. It was thus that the Maréchal de Chastellux, a famous warrior, was, as late as 1792, also a canon of the cathedral at Auxerre. It was, too, in this grotesque costume that the Chanoin-Comte d'Chastellux welcomed Louis XIV on a certain visit to Auxerre. At Auxerre, in the cathedral, one sees a monument commemorative of the Sires de Chastellux. It was erected by César de Chastellux under the Restoration, to replace the tomb torn down by the Chapter in the fifteenth century. This desecration, by churchmen themselves, one must remember, took place in spite of the fact that a Chastellux was even then a dignitary of the church.

Chastellux, beyond its magnificent chateau, is an indefinable,

unconvincing little bourg, but from the very moment one sets foot within its quaintly named Hotel de Maréchal de Chastellux he, or she, is permeated with the very spirit of romance and mediævalism. The bridge which crosses the Cure in the middle of the village owns to the ripe old age of three hundred and fifty years, and is still rendering efficient service. This is something mature for a bridge, even in France, where many are doing their daily work as they have for centuries. Will the modern "suspension" affairs do as well? That's what nobody knows! The hotel, or *auberge* rather, can not be less aged than the bridge, though the manner in which it is conducted is not at all antiquated.

A rocky, jagged pedestal, of a height of perhaps a hundred and fifty feet, holds aloft the fine mass of the Chateau de Chastellux. For eight centuries this fine old pile was in the making and, though manifestly non-contemporary as to its details, it holds itself together in a remarkably consistent manner and presents an ensemble and silhouette far more satisfactory to view than many a more popular historic monument of its class. Its great round towers, their coiffes and the pignons and gables of the roof, give it all a *cachet* which is so striking that one forgives, or ignores the fact that it is after all a work of various epochs.

Visitors here are welcome. One may stroll the corridors and apartments, the vast halls and the courtyard as fancy wills, except that one is always discreetly ciceroned by a guardian who may be a man, a woman, or even a small child. There is none of

the espionage system about the surveillance, however, and one can but feel welcome. Blazons in stone and wood and tapestries are everywhere. They are the best, or the worst, of their kind; one really doesn't stop to think which; the effect is undeniably what one would wish, and surely no carping critic has any right to exercise his functions here. There is not the least cause to complain if the furnishings are of non-contemporary periods like the exterior adornments, because the certain stamp of sincerity and genuineness over all defies undue criticism.

The Chateau de Chastellux dates, primarily, from the thirteenth century, with many fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth century restorations or additions which are readily enough to be recognized. From its inception, the chateau has belonged to the family of Beauvoir-de-Chastellux, the cadet branch of Anseric-de-Montréal.

Practically triangular in form, as best served its original functions of a defensive habitation, this most theatrical of all Burgundian chateaux is flanked by four great attached towers. The Tour de l'Horloge is a massive rectangular pile of the fifteenth century; the Tour d'Amboise is a round tower dating from 1592; the Tour de l'Hermitage and the Tour des Archives, each of them, also round, are of the sixteenth century. In the disposition and massiveness of these towers alone the Chateau de Chastellux is unique. Another isolated tower, even more stupendous in its proportions, is known as the Tour Saint Jean, and is a donjon of the ideally acceptable variety, dating from

some period anterior to the chateau proper.

Moat-surrounded, the chateau is only to be entered by crossing an ornamental waterway. One arrives at the actual entrance by the usual all-eyed roadway ending at the *perron* of the chateau where a simple bell-pull silently announces the ways and means of gaining entrance. The domestic appears at once and without questioning your right proceeds to do the honours as if it were for yourself alone that the place were kept open.

The chief and most splendid apartment is the Salle des Gardes, to a great extent restored, but typical of the best of fifteenth century workmanship and appointments. Its chimney-piece, as splendid in general effect as any to be seen in the Loire chateaux, is but a re-made affair, but follows the best traditions and encloses moreover fragments of fifteenth century sculptures which are authentically of that period. The cornice of this majestic apartment bears the Chastellux arms and those of their allied families, interwoven with the oft repeated inscription, *Montréal à Sire de Chastellux*. In this same Salle des Gardes are hung a pair of ancient Gobelins, and set into the floor is a dainty morsel of an antique mosaic found nearby.

The modern billiard-room, also shown to the inquisitive, contains portraits of the Chancelier d'Aguesseau and his wife, and its fittings – aside from the green baize tables and their accessories – are well carried out after the style of Louis XIII. Good taste, or bad, one makes no comment, save to suggest that the billiard tables look out of place.

In what the present dweller calls the Salon Rouge are portraits and souvenirs of a military ancestor Comte César de Chastellux, who, judging from his dress and cast of countenance, must have been a warrior bold of the conventional type.

After the Salle des Gardes the Grand Salon is the most effective apartment. Its wall and ceiling decorations are the same that were completed in 1696, and incorporated therein are fourteen portraits of the Sires and Comtes who one day lived and loved within these castle walls. These portraits are reproductions of others which were destroyed by the unchained devils of the French Revolution who made way with so much valuable documentary evidence from which one might build up French mediæval history anew. The village church contains several tombal monuments of the Chastellux.

The Chateau de Montréal, or Mont-Royal, so closely allied with the fortunes of the Chastellux, between Avallon and Chastellux, is built high on a mamelon overlooking the Seruin, and is one of the most ancient and curious places in Burgundy. The little town, of but five hundred inhabitants, is built up mostly of the material which came from one of the most ancient of the feudal chateaux of mid-France. This chateau was originally a primitive fortress, once the residence of Queen Brunhaut, the wife of the Roi d'Austrasie in 566. It was from this hill-top residence that the name Montréal has been evolved.

The sparse population of the place were benefited by special privileges from the earliest times and the *cité movenageuse* itself

was endowed with many admirable examples of administrative and domestic architecture.

Of the Renaissance chateaux of the later seigneurs, here and there many portions remain built into other edifices, but there is no single example left which, as a whole, takes definite shape as a noble historical monument. There are a dozen old Renaissance house-fronts, with here and there a supporting tower or wall which is unquestionably of mediæval times and might tell thrilling stories could stones but speak.

In Renaissance annals Montréal was celebrated by the exploit of the Dame de Ragny (1590), who recaptured the place after it had been taken possession of by the Ligeurs during the absence of her husband, the governor.

At the entrance of the old bourg is a great gateway which originally led to the seigneurial enclosure. It is called the Port d'en Bas and has arches dating from the thirteenth century. Montréal and its Mediæval chateau was the cradle of the Anseric-de-Montréal family, who were dispossessed in 1255 to the profit of the Ducs de Bourgogne. It was to the cadet branch of this same family Chastellux once belonged.

To the west lies Vezelay, one of the most remarkable conglomerate piles of ancient masonry to be seen in France to-day. It was a most luxurious abode in mediæval times, and its great church, with its ornate portal and façade, ranks as one of the most celebrated in Europe.

Vezelay is on no well-worn tourist track; it is indeed chiefly

unknown except to those who know well their ecclesiastical history. It was within this famous church that Saint Bernard awakened the fervour of the Crusade in the breast of Louis-le-Jeune. The abbey church saw, too, Philippe-Auguste and Richard Cœur-de-Lion start for their Crusades, and even Saint Louis came here before setting out from Aigues Mortes for the land of the Turk. This illustrious church quite crushes anything else in Vezelay by its splendour, but nevertheless the history of its other monuments has been great, and the part played by the miniscule city itself has been no less important in more mundane matters. Its mediæval trading-fairs were famous throughout the provinces of all France, and even afar.

In the middle ages Vezelay had a population of ten thousand souls; to-day a bare eight hundred call it their home town.

The seigneurial chateau at Vezelay is hardly in keeping to-day with its former proud estate. One mounts from the lower town by a winding street lined on either side by admirably conserved Renaissance houses of an unpretentious class. The chateau, where lodged Louis-le-Jeune, has embedded in its façade two great shot launched from Huguenot cannon during the siege of 1559. Another seigneurial "*hôtel privé*" has over its portal this inscription:

“Comme Colombe humble et simple seray
Et à mon nom mes mœurs conformeray.”

Here in opulent Basse-Bourgogne, where the vassals of a seigneur were often as powerful as he, their dwellings were frequently quite as splendid as the official residence of the overlord. It is this genuinely unspoiled mediæval aspect of seemingly nearly all the houses of this curious old town of Vezelay which give the place its charm.

The Porte Neuve is a great dependent tower which formerly was attached to the residence of the governor – the chateau-fort in fact – and it still stands militant as of old, supported on either side by two enormous round towers and surmounted by a machicoulis and a serrated cornice which tells much of its efficiency as a mediæval defence. To the right are still very extensive remains of the fourteenth and fifteenth century ramparts.

Near Vezelay is the Chateau de Bazoche, which possesses a profound interest for the student of military architecture in France by reason of its having been the birthplace of Maréchal Vauban, who became so celebrated as a fortress-builder that he, as much as anybody, may be considered the real welder of modern France. Vauban's body is buried in the local churchyard, but his heart had the distinction of being torn from his body and given a glorious (?) burial along with countless other fragments of military heroes in the Hotel des Invalides at Paris.

Bazoche is not a name that is on the tip of the tongue of every mentor and guide to French history, though the appearance of its chateau is such that one wonders that it is not more often cited

by the guide-books which are supposed to point out the quaint and curious to vagabond travellers. There are many such who had rather worship at a shrine such as this than to spend their time loitering about the big hotels of the flash resorts with which the Europe of the average tourist is becoming overcrowded. Makers of guide-books and the managers of tourist agencies do not seem to know this.

Bazoches is a townlet of five hundred inhabitants, and not one of them cares whether you come or go. They do not even marvel that the chateau is the only thing in the place that ever brings a stranger there, – they ignore the fact that you are there, so by this reckoning one puts Bazoches, the town and the chateau, down as something quite unspoiled. Half the population lives in fine old Gothic and Renaissance houses which, to many of us, used to living under another species of rooftree, would seem a palace.

What the Chateau de Bazoches lacks in great renown it makes up for in imposing effect. Each angle meets in a svelt round tower of the typical picture-book and stage-carpenter fashion. Each tower is coiffed with a peaked candle-snuffer cap and a row of machicoulis which gives the whole edifice a warlike look which is unmistakable. The finest detail of all is “La Grande Tour” supporting one end of the principle mass of the chateau, and half built into the hillside which backs it up on the rear. Vauban bought an old feudal castle in 1663 and added to it after his own effective manner, thus making the chateau, as one sees it to-day, the powerful bulwark that it is.

The chateau belongs to-day to the Vibrave family, who keep open house for the visitor who would see within and without. The principle apartment is entirely furnished with the same belongings which served Vauban for his personal use.

Another neighbouring chateau, bearing also the name Chateau de Vauban, was also the property of the Maréchal. It dates from the sixteenth century, and though in no way historic, has many architectural details worthy of observation and remark.

CHAPTER IV

SEMUR-EN-AUXOIS, ÉPOISSES AND BOURBILLY

DUE east from Avallon some thirty odd kilometres is Semur-en-Auxois. It is well described as a feudal city without and a banal one within. Its mediæval walls and gates lead one to expect the same old-world atmosphere over all, but, aside from its churches and an occasional architectural display of a Renaissance house-front, its cast of countenance, when seen from its decidedly bourgeois point of view, is, if not modern, at least matter-of-fact and unsympathetic.

In spite of this its historical recollections are many and varied, and there are fragments galore of its once proud architectural glories which bespeak their prime importance, and also that the vandal hand of so-called progress and improvement has fallen heavily on all sides.

The site of Semur to a great extent gives it that far-away mediæval look; that, at least, could not be taken away from it. It possesses, moreover, one of the most astonishing silhouettes of any hill-top town in France. Like Constantine in North Africa it is walled and battlemented by a series of natural defences in the form of ravines or gorges so profound that certainly no ordinary invading force could have entered the city.

Semur was formerly the capital of the Auxois, and for some time held the same rank in the Burgundian Duchy.

The city from within suggests little of mediævalism. Prosperity and contentment do not make for a picturesque and romantic environment of the life of the twentieth century. It was different in the olden time. Semur, by and large, is of the age of mediævalism, however, though one has to delve below the surface to discover this after having passed the great walls and portals of its natural and artificial ramparts.

Semur's bourg, donjon and chateau, as the respective quarters of the town are known, tell the story of its past, but they tell it only by suggestion. The ancient fortifications, as entire works, have disappeared, and the chateau has become a barracks or a hospital. Only the chateau donjon and immediate dependencies, a group of towering walls, rise grim and silent as of old above the great arch of the bridge flung so daringly across the Armançon at the bottom of the gorge.

The last proprietor of Semur's chateau was the Marquis du Chatelet, the husband of the even more celebrated Madame du Chatelet, who held so great a place in the life of Voltaire. The philosopher, it seems, resided here for a time, and his room is still kept sacred and shown to visitors upon application.

Semur as much as anything is a reminder of the past rather than a living representation of what has gone before. Within the city walls were enacted many momentous events of state while still it was the Burgundian capital. Again during the troublous

times of the “Ligue,” Henri IV transferred to its old chateau the Parliament which had previously held its sittings at Dijon.

Semur’s monuments deserved a better fate than has befallen them, for they were magnificent and epoch-making, if not always from an artistic point of view, at least from an historic one.

We made Semur our headquarters for a little journey to Époisses, Bourbilly and Montbard, where formerly lived and died the naturalist Buffon, in the celebrated Chateau de Montbard.

Époisses lies but a few kilometres west of Semur. Its chateau is a magnificently artistic and historic shrine if there ever was such. In 1677 Madame de Sévigné wrote that she “here descended from her carriage: *chez son Seigneur d’Époisses*.” Here she found herself so comfortably off that she forgot to go on to Bourbilly, where she was expected and daily awaited. It was ten days later that she finally moved on; so one has but the best of opinions regarding the good cheer which was offered her. At the time it must have been an ideal country house, this mansion of the Seigneur d’Époisses, as indeed it is to-day. The lady wrote further: “Here there is the greatest liberty; one reads or walks or talks or works as he, or she, pleases.” This is what everyone desires and so seldom gets when on a visit. As for the other natural and artificial charms which surrounded the place, one may well judge by a contemplation of it to-day.

Here in the chateau, or manor, or whatever manner of rank it actually takes in one’s mind, you may see the room occupied by

Madame de Sévigné on the occasion of her “pleasant visit.” It is a “Chambre aux Fleurs” in truth, and that, too, is the name by which the apartment is officially known.

Above the mantel, garlanded with flowers carved in wood, one reads the following attributed to the fascinating Marquise herself. The circumstance is authenticated in spite of the fantastic orthography. As a letter writer, at any rate, she made no such faults.

“Nos plaisirs ne sont capparence
Et souvent se cache nos pleurs
Sous l'éclat de ces belles fleurs
Qui ne sont que vaine éperance.”

The Chateau de Bourbilly, where Madame de Sévigné was really bound at the time she lingered on “*chez son cher seigneur*,” is a near neighbour of Époisses. It was the retreat of Madame de Chantal, the ancestress of Madame de Sévigné, the founder of the Order of the Visitation who has since become a saint of the church calendar – Sainte Jeanne-de-Chantal.

This fine seventeenth century chateau, with its pointed towers and its mansard, belonged successively to the families Marigny, de Mello, de Thil, de Savace, de la Tremouille and Rabutin-Chantel, of which the sanctified Jeanne and Madame de Sévigné were the most illustrious members.

Madame de Sévigné, the amiable letter writer, sojourned here often on her voyages up and down France. She herself lived in the

Chateau des Rochers in Brittany and her daughter, the Comtesse de Grignan, in Provence, and they did not a little visiting between the two. Bourbilly was a convenient and delightful halfway house.

Madame de Sévigné can not be said to have made Bourbilly her residence for long at any time. For a fact she was as frequently a guest at the neighbouring Chateau de Guitant, a feudal dwelling still inhabited by the de Guitants, or at Époisses, as she was at Bourbilly.

In the chapel, which is of the sixteenth century, is the tomb of the Baron de Bussy-Rabutin and some *reliques* of Sainte-Jeanne-de-Chantal. The latter has served to make of Bourbilly a pilgrim shrine which, on the 21st August, draws a throng from all parts for the annual fête.

There was a popular impression long current among French writers that Madame de Sévigné was born in the Chateau de Bourbilly. A line or two of that indefatigable penman, Bussy, tended to make this ready of belief when he wrote of his cousin as "*Une demoiselle de Bourgogne égarée en Bretagne.*" She herself claimed to have been "transplanted," but it was a transplantation by marriage; she was most certainly not born at Bourbilly, at any rate, for history, better informed than an unconvincing scribbler, states that she was born in Paris, like Molière and Voltaire, who also have finally been claimed by the capital as her own.

At all events, at Bourbilly Madame de Sévigné was true enough on the land of the "*vieux chateau de ses pères, ses*

belles prairies, sa petite rivière, ses magnifiques bois.” It was her property in fact, or came to be, and she might have lived there had she chosen. She would not dispose of it when importuned to do so, and replied simply, but coldly (one reads this in the “Letters”), “I will not sell the property for the reason that I wish to hand it down to my daughter.” From this one would think that she had a great affection for it, but at times it was a “*vieux chateau*” and at others it was a “*horrible maison.*” Capricious woman! The letters of Madame de Sévigné written from here were not numerous, as she only “stopped over” on her various journeyings. When one recognizes the tastes and habits of the Marquise, it is not to be wondered at that her visits to Bourbilly were neither prolonged nor multiplied.

Turning one’s itinerary south from Semur one comes shortly to Cussy-la-Colonne, where “la Colonne” is recognized by the archæologists as one of the most celebrated and most ancient monuments of Burgundy.

One learns from the inscription in Franco-Latin that the ancient monument (*antiquissimum hoc monumentum*) much damaged by the flapping wings of time, was rebuilt, as nearly as possible in its original form, by a prefect of the Department of the Côte d’Or (*Collis Aurei Praefectus*), M. Charles Arbaud, in the reign (*sous l’empire*) of Charles X (*imperante Carolo X... Anno Salutis MDCCCXXV.*) An astonishing mélange this of the tongue of Cicero and modern administrative *patois*.

The Colonne de Cussy, is rather a pagan memorial of a victory

of the Romans in the reign of Diocletian, or, from another surmise, a funeral monument to a Roman general dead on the eve of victory. In either case, there it stands fragmentary and wind and weather worn like the pillars of Hercules or Pompey.

One simply notes Cussy and its “colonne” *en passant* on the road to Saulieu and Arnay-le-Duc, where the Ducs de Bourgogne had one of their most favoured country houses, or manors.

We only stopped at Saulieu by chance anyway; we stopped for the night in fact because it was getting too late to push on farther, and we were glad indeed that we did.

Saulieu is a most ancient town and owes its name to a neighbouring wood. Here was first erected a pagan temple to the sun; fragments of it have recently been found; and here one may still see the tracings of the old Roman way crossing what was afterwards, – to the powerful colony at Autun, – the Duchy of Burgundy.

As a fortified place Saulieu was most potent, but in 1519 a pest destroyed almost its total population. Disaster after disaster fell upon it and the place never again achieved the prominence of its neighbouring contemporaries.

It was here at Saulieu in Revolutionary times that the good people, as if in remembrance of the disasters which had befallen them under monarchical days, hailed with joy the arrival of the men of the Marseilles Battalion as they were marching on Paris “to help capture Capet’s castle.” Before the church of Saint Saturnin the Patriots’ Club had lighted a big bonfire, and the

“Men of the Midi” were received with open arms and a warm welcome.

“How good they were to us at Saulieu,” said one of the number, recounting his adventures upon his arrival at Paris; “they gave us all the wine we could swallow and all the good things we could eat, – we had enough bœuf-à-la-daub to rise over our ears...”

To-day the good folk of Saulieu treat the stranger in not unsimilar fashion, and though the town lacks noble monuments it makes up for the deficiency in its good cheer. Saulieu in this respect quite lives up to its reputation of old. This little capital of the Morvan-Bourguignon has ever owned to one or more distinguished Vatel’s. Madame de Sévigné, in 1677, stopped here at a friend’s country house, and, as she wrote, “*le fermier donne à tous un grand diner.*” This was probably the Manoir de Guitant between Bourbilly and Saulieu. They were long at table, for it was a *diner des adieux* given by her friend Guitant to his visitors. She wrote further: “With the dinner one drank a great deal, and afterwards a great deal more; all went off with the greatest possible éclat. Voila l’affaire!”

Evidently such a manner of parting did not produce sadness!

A donjon tower with a duck-pond before it, opposite the Hotel de la Poste is all the mediævalism that one sees within the town at Saulieu to-day. It is all that one’s imagination can conjure up of the ideal donjon of mediævalism and interesting withal, though its history is most brief, indeed may be said to exist not at all in

recorded form, for the chief references to Saulieu's historic past date back to the pagan temple and the founding of the Abbey of Saint Andoche in the eighth century.

Still heading south one comes in a dozen kilometres to a chateau of the fourteenth century, and the restorations of Henri IV at Thoisy-la-Berchere. Later restorations, by the Marquis de Montbossier, who occupies it to-day, have made of it one of the most attractive of the minor chateaux of France. One may visit it under certain conditions, whether the family is in residence or not, and will carry away memories of many splendid chimney pieces and wall tapestries. For the rest the furnishings are modern, which is saying that they are banal. This of course need not always be so, but when the Renaissance is mixed with the art nouveau and the latest fantasies of Dufayal it lacks appeal. This is as bad as "Empire" and "Mission," which seem to have set the pace for "club furniture" during the past decade.

Arnay-le-Duc still to the south was the site of a ducal Burgundian manor which almost reached the distinction of a palace. Here the country loving dukes spent not a little of their leisure time when away from their capital.

Arnay-le-Duc, more than any other town of its class in France, retains its almost undefiled feudal aspect to-day when viewed from beyond the walls. Formerly it was the seat of a *bailliage* and has conserved the débris of the feudal official residence. This is supported in addition by many fine examples of Renaissance-Burgundian architectural treasures which give the town at once

the stamp of genuineness which it will take many years of progress to wholly eradicate.

None of these fine structures, least of all the ducal manor, is perfectly conserved, but the remains are sufficiently ample and well cared for to merit the classification of still being reckoned habitable and of importance. The old manor of the dukes has now descended to more humble uses, but has lost little of the aristocratic bearing which it once owned.

It was near this fortified bourgade of other days – fortified that the dukes might rest in peace when they repaired thither – that the infant Henri IV, at the age of sixteen, received his baptism of fire and first gained his stripes under the direction of Maréchal de Cossé-Brissac.

CHAPTER V

MONTBARD AND BUSSY-RABUTIN

MONTBARD lies midway between Semur and Châtillon-sur-Seine, on the great highroad leading from Burgundy into Champagne. The old Chateau de Montbard is represented only by the donjon tower which rises grimly above the modern edifice built around its base and the sprawling little town which clusters around its park gates at the edge of the tiny river Brenne.

The “grand seigneur” of Montbard was but a simple man of letters, the naturalist Buffon. Here he found comfort and tranquillity, and loved the place and its old associations accordingly. Here he lived, “having doffed his sword and cloak,” and occupied himself only with his literary labours, though with a gallantry and *esprit* which could but have produced the eloquent pages ascribed to him.

Buffon was a native of the town, and through him, more than anyone else, the town has since been heard of in history.

Having acquired the property of the old chateau, the donjon of which stood firm and broad on its base, he made of the latter his study, or *salon de travail*. This is the only remaining portion of the mediæval castle of Montbard. The ancient walls which existed, though in a ruined state, were all either levelled or rebuilt

by Buffon into the dependent dwelling which he attached to the donjon. The Revolution, too, did not a little towards wiping out a part of the structure, as indeed it did the tomb of the naturalist in the local churchyard.

Buffon, or, to give him his full title, Georges-Louis-Leclerc-de-Buffon lived here a life of retirement, amid a comfort, perhaps even of luxury, that caused his jealous critics to say that he worked in a velvet coat, and that he was a sort of eighteenth century “nature-fakir.” This is probably an injustice.

In 1774 Louis XV made the “*terre de Buffon*” a countship, but the naturalist chose not to reside in the village of the name, but to live at Montbard some leagues away.

Montbard’s actual celebrity came long before the time of Buffon, for its chateau was built in the fourteenth century and was for centuries the possessor of an illustrious sequence of annals intimately associated with the dukedom of Burgundy.

Jean-Sans-Peur, it is to be noted, passed a portion of his youth within its walls. This gives it at once rank as a royal chateau, though that was not actually its classification. The Princesse Anne, sister of Philippe le Bon, here married the Duke of Bedford in 1423. All this would seem fame enough for Montbard, but the local old men and women know no more of their remote rulers than they do of Buffon; local pride is a very doubtful commodity.

It is disconcerting for a stranger to accost some *bon homme* or *bonne femme* to learn the way to the Chateau de Buffon, and to

receive in reply a simple stare and the observation, "I don't know the man." Aside, to some crony, you may hear the observation, "Who are these strangers and what do they want with their man Buffon anyway?" This may seem an exaggeration, but it is not, and furthermore the thing may happen anywhere. Glory is but as smoke, and local fame is often an infinitesimal thing. *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas!*

Buffon wrote his extensive "Histoire Naturelle" at Montbard. It created much admiration at the time. To-day Buffon, his work and his chateau are all but forgotten or ignored, and but few visitors come to continue the idolatry of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who kissed the "*seuil de la noble demure.*"

Not long since, within some few years at any rate, a former friend of Alfred de Musset quoted some little known lines of the poet on this "*berceau de la histoire naturelle,*" with the result that quite recently the local authorities, in establishing the Musée Buffon, have caused them, to be carved on a panel in the naturalist's former study at the chateau.

"Buffon, que ton ombre pardonne
A une témérité
D'ajouter une fleur à la double couronne
Que sur ton front mit l'Immortalité."

Buffon's additions to the old chateau were made for comfort, whatever they may have lacked of romanticism. The French Pliny was evidently not in the least romantically inclined, or he

would not have levelled these historic walls and the alleys and walks and gardens laid out in the profuse and formal manner of those of Italy. The result is a poor substitute for a picturesque grass-grown ruin, or a faithfully restored mediæval castle.

Between the Brenne and a canal which flows through the town rises an admirable feudal tower indicating the one time military and strategic importance of the site. It is called Mont Bard, and marks where once stood the fortress that surrendered in its time to the "Ligueurs."

Near Montbard is a hamlet which bears the illustrious name of Buffon, but it is doubtful if even a few among its three hundred inhabitants know for whom it is named.

Still further away, on the Châtillon road, is the little town of Villaines-en-Dumois, a bourg of no importance in the life of modernity. It is somnolent to an extreme, comfortable-looking and apparently prosperous. The grand route from Paris to Dijon passes it by a dozen kilometres to the left, and the railway likewise. Coaching days left it out in the cold also, and modern travel hardly knows that it exists.

In spite of this the town owns to something more than the trivial morsels of stone which many a township locally claims as a chateau. Here was once a favourite summer residence of the Burgundian dukes, and here to-day the shell, or framework, of the same edifice looks as though it might easily be made habitable. The property came later to the Madame de Longueville, the sister of the Grand Condé. There is nothing

absolutely magnificent about it now, but the suggestion of its former estate is still there to a notable degree. The walls and towers, lacking roofs though they do, well suggest the princely part the edifice once played in the life of its time.

In spite of the fact that the name of the town appears in none of the red or blue backed guide-books, enough is known of it to establish it as the former temporary seat of one of the most formal of the minor courts of Europe, where – the records tell – etiquette was as strict as in the ducal palace at Dijon. Four great round towers are each surrounded by a half-filled moat, and the suggestion of the old chapel, in the shape of an expanse of wall which shows a remarkably beautiful ogival window, definitely remains to give the idea of the former luxury and magnificence with which the whole structure was endowed.

A detached dwelling, said to be the house of the prior of a neighbouring monastery who attached himself to the little court, is in rather a better state of preservation than the chateau itself, and might indeed be made habitable by one with a modest purse and a desire to play the “grand seigneur” to-day in some petty gone-to-seed community. These opportunities exist all up and down France to-day, and this seems as likely a spot as any for one who wishes to transplant his, or her, household gods.

Beyond Montbard is Les Laumes, a minor railway junction on the line to Dijon, which is scarcely ever remembered by the traveller who passes it by. But, although there is nothing inspiring to be had from even a glance of the eye in any direction as one

stops a brief moment at the station, nevertheless it is a prolific centre for a series of historical pilgrimages which, for pleasurable edification, would make the traveller remember it all his life did he give it more than a passing thought. One must know its history though, or many of the historic souvenirs will be passed by without an impression worth while.

On Mont Auxois, rising up back of the town, stands a colossal statue of Vercingetorix, in memory of a resistance which he here made against the usually redoubtable Cæsar.

Six kilometres away there is one of the most romantically historic of all the minor chateaux of France and one not to be omitted from anybody's chateaux tour of France. It is the Chateau de Bussy-Rabutin, to-day restored and reinhabited, though for long periods since its construction it was empty save for bats and mice. This restoration, which looks to-day like a part of the original fabric, was the conceit of the Comte de Bussy-Rabutin, a cousin of Madame de Sévigné in the seventeenth century. It gives one the impression of being an exact replica of a seigneurial domain of its time.

The main fabric is a vast square edifice with four towers, each marking one of the cardinal points. The Tour du Donjon to the east, and the Tour de la Chapelle to the west are bound to a heavy ungainly façade which the Comte Roger de Bussy-Rabutin built in 1649. This ligature is a sort of a galleried arcade which itself dates from the reign of Henri II.

As to its foundation the chateau probably dates from an

ancestor who came into being in the twelfth century. In later centuries it frequently changed hands, until it came to Leonard du Rabutin, Baron d'Epiry, and father of the Comte Roger who did the real work of remodelling. It was this Comte Roger who has gone down to fame as the too-celebrated cousin of Madame de Sévigné. To-day, the chateau belongs to Madame la Comtesse de Sarcus and although it is perhaps the most historic, at least in a romantic sense, of all the great Renaissance establishments of these parts, it is known to modern map-makers as the Chateau de Savoigny. Much of its early history is closely bound with that picturesque owner, Comte de Bussy-Rabutin.

In Holy Week in 1657, at the age of forty-one, Bussy became involved in some sort of a military scandal and was exiled from France. The following year he made peace with the powers that be and returned to court, when he composed the famous, or infamous, "Histoire Amoureuse des Gaules," a work of supposed great wit and satirical purport, but scandalous to a degree unspeakable. It was written to curry favour with a certain fair lady, the Marquise de Monglat, who had an axe to grind among a certain coterie of court favourites. Bussy stood her in great stead and the scheme worked to a charm up to a certain point, when Louis XIV, not at all pleased with the unseemly satire, hurried its unthinking, or too willing, author off to the Bastille and kept him there for five years, that no more of his lucubrations of a similar, or any other, nature should see the light.

In 1666 Bussy got back to his native land and was again

heard of by boiling over once more with similar indiscretions at Chazeu, near Autun. Finally he got home to the chateau and there remained for sixteen consecutive years, not a recluse exactly, and yet not daring to show his head at Paris. It was a long time before he again regained favour in royal circles.

The Cour d'Honneur of the chateau is reached by a monumental portal which traverses the middle of the *corps du logis*. Above this are two marble busts, one of Sainte-Jeanne-de-Chantal, which came originally from the Couvent de Visitation at Dijon, and the other of Colbert, the minister of Louis XIV.

The ancient Salle des Devises (now the modern billiard room) has a very beautiful pavement of hexagonal tiles, and a series of allegorical *devises* which Bussy had painted in 1667 by way of reproach to one of his feminine admirers. On other panels are painted various reproductions of royal chateaux and a portrait of Bussy with his emblazoned arms.

The Salon des Grands Hommes de Guerre, on the second floor, is well explained by its name. Its decorations are chiefly interlaced monograms of Bussy and the Marquise Monglat, setting off sixty odd portraits of famous French warriors, from Duguesclin and Dunois to Bussy himself, who, though more wielder of the pen than the sword, chose to include himself in the collection. Some of these are originals, contemporary with the period of their subjects; others are manifestly modern copies and mediocre at that, though the array of effigies is undeniably imposing.

The Chambre Sévigné, as one infers, is consecrated to the memory of the most famous letter writer of her time. For ornamentation it has twenty-six portraits, one or more being by Mignard, while that of “La Grande Mademoiselle,” who became the Duchesse de Berry, is by Coypel.

Below a portrait of Madame de Sévigné, Bussy caused to be inscribed the following: “Marie de Rabutin: vive agreable et sage, fille de Celse Béninge de Rabutin et Marie de Coulanges et femme de Henri de Sévigné.” This, one may be justified in thinking, is quite a biography in brief, the sort of a description one might expect to find in a seventeenth century “Who’s Who.”

Beneath the portrait of her daughter – Comtesse de Grignan – the inscription reads thus: “Françoise de Sévigné; jolie, amiable, enfin marchant sur les pas de sa mere sur le chapitre des agreements, fille de Henri de Sévigné et de Marie de Rabutin et femme du Comte de Grignan.” A rather more extended biography than the former, but condensed withal.

Another neighbouring room is known as the Petite Chambre Sévigné, and contains some admirable sculptures and paintings.

Leading to the famous Tour Dorée is a long gallery furnished after the style of the time of Henri II, whilst a great circular room in the tower itself is richly decorated and furnished, including two *faisceaux* of six standards, each bearing the Bussy colours.

Legend and fable have furnished the motive of the frescoes of this curious apartment, and under one of them, “Céphale et Procris,” in which one recognizes the features of Bussy and the

Marquise, his particular friend, are the following lines:

“Eprouver si sa femme a le cœur précieux,
C’est être impertinent autant que curieux:
Un peu d’obscurité vaut, en cette matière,
Mille fois mieux que la lumière.”

Not logical, you say, and unprincipled. Just that! But as a documentary expression of the life of the times it is probably genuine.

Here and elsewhere on the walls of the chateau are many really worthy works of art, portraits by Mignard, Lebrun, Just, and others, including still another elaborate series of fourteen, representing Richelieu, Louis XIII, Anne d’Autriche, Mazarin, Louis XIV. Again in the *plafond* of the great tower are other frescoes representing the “Petits Amours” of the time, always with the interlaced cyphers of Bussy and Madame la Comtesse.

From the Chambre Sévigné a gallery leads to the tribune of the chapel. Here is a portrait gallery of the kings of the third race, of the parents of Bussy, and of the four Burgundian dukes and duchesses of the race of Valois. The chapel itself is formed of a part of the Tour Ronde where are two canvasses of Poussin, a Murillo and one of Andrea del Sarto.

The gardens and Park of the chateau are attributed to Le Notre, the garden-maker of Versailles. This may or may not be so, the assertion is advanced cautiously, because the claim has so often falsely been made of other chateau properties.

The gardens here, however, were certainly conceived after Le Notre's magnificent manner. There is a great ornamental water environing the chateau some sixty metres in length and twelve metres in width, and this of itself is enough to give great distinction to any garden-plot.

CHAPTER VI

“CHASTILLON AU NOBLE DUC” (The War Cry of the Bourguignons)

THE importance of the ancient Chastillon on the banks of the Seine was entirely due to the prominence given to it by the Burgundian dukes of the first race who made it their preferred habitation.

The place was the ancient capital of the Bailliage de la Montague, the rampart and keep to the Burgundian frontier from the tenth to the fifteenth century.

The origin of the Chateau des Ducs is blanketed in the night of time. Savants, even, can not agree as to the date of its commencement. One says that it and its name were derived from Castico, a rich Sequanais; and another that it comes from Castell, an enclosed place; or from Castellio – a small fortress. Each seems plausible in the absence of anything more definite, though according to the castle’s latest historian it owes its actual inception to the occupation of the Romans who did build a castrum here in their time.

During the pourparlers between Henri IV and the League, the inhabitants of the city demanded of Nicolas de Gellan, governor

of the place, the giving up of the castle which had for years been the cause of so much misery and misfortune. The place had been the culminative point of the attacks of centuries of warriors, and the inhabitants believed that they had so suffered that it was time to cry quits.

When the surrender, or the turning over, of the castle took place, all the population, including women and children, marched en masse upon the structure, and wall by wall and stone by stone dismantled it, leaving it in the condition one sees it to-day. A castle of sorts still exists, but it is a mere wraith of its former self. There is this much to say for it, however, and that is that its stern, grim walls which still stand remain as silent witnesses to the fact that it was not despoiled from without but demolished from within. Peace came soon after, and the people in submitting to the new régime would not hear of the rebuilding of the chateau, and so for three hundred years its battered walls and blank windows have stood the stresses of rigorous winters and broiling summers, a silent and conspicuous monument to the rights of the people.

The majestic tower of the chateau, for something more than the mere outline of the ground-plan still exists, is bound to two others by a very considerable expanse of wall of the donjon, and by the *courtines*

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