

CONSTANCE WOOLSON

MENTONE,
CAIRO, AND
CORFU

Constance Woolson
Mentone, Cairo, and Corfu

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Constance Fenimore Woolson Mentone, Cairo, and Corfu

AT MENTONE

I

"Kennst du das Land wo die Citronen blühen?"

– GOETHE

It is of no consequence why or how we came to Mentone. The vast subject of health and health resorts, of balancings between Torquay and Madeira, Algeria and Sicily, and, in a smaller sphere, between Cannes, Nice, Mentone, and San Remo, may as well be left at one side while we happily imitate the Happy-thought Man's trains in Bradshaw, which never "start," but "arrive." We therefore arrived. Our party, formed not by selection, or even by the survival of the fittest (after the ocean and Channel), but simply by chance aggregation, was now composed of Mrs. Trescott and her daughter Janet, Professor Mackenzie, Miss Graves, the two youths Inness and Baker, my niece, and myself, myself being Jane Jefferson, aged fifty, and my niece

Margaret Severin, aged twenty-eight.

As I said above, we were an aggregation. The Trescotts had started alone, but had "accumulated" (so Mrs. Trescott informed me) the Professor. The Professor had started alone, and had accumulated the Trescotts. Inness and Baker had started singly, but had first accumulated each other, and then ourselves; while Margaret and I, having accumulated Miss Graves, found ourselves, with her, imbedded in the aggregation, partly by chance and partly by that powerful force propinquity. Arriving at Mentone, our aggregation went unbroken to the Hôtel des Anglais, in the East Bay – the East Bay, the Professor said, being warmer than the West: the Professor had been at Mentone before. "The East Bay," he explained, "is warmer because more closely encircled by the mountains, which rise directly behind the house. The West Bay has more level space, and there are several little valleys opening into it, through which currents of air can pass; it is therefore cooler, but only a matter of two or three degrees." It was evening, and our omnibus proceeded at a pace adapted to the "Dead March" from *Saul* through a street so narrow and walled in that it was like going through catacombs. Only, as Janet remarked, they did not crack whips in the catacombs, and here the atmosphere seemed to be principally cracks. But the Professor brought up the flagellants who might have been there, and they remained up until we reached our destination. We decided that the cracking of whips and the wash of the sea were the especial sounds of Mentone; but the whips ceased at nightfall,

and the waves kept on, making a soft murmurous sound which lulled us all to restful slumber. We learned later that all vehicles are obliged, by orders from the town authorities, to proceed at a snail's pace through the narrow street of the "old town," the city treasury not being rich enough to pay for the number of wooden legs and arms which would be required were this rule disregarded.

The next morning when we opened our windows there entered the Mediterranean Sea. It is the bluest water in the world; not a clear cold blue like that of the Swiss lakes, but a soft warm tint like that of June sky, shading off on the horizon, not into darker blue or gray, but into the white of opal and mother-of-pearl. With the sea came in also the sunshine. The sunshine of Mentone is its glory, its riches, its especial endowment. Day follows day, month follows month, without a cloud; the air is pure and dry, fog is unknown. "The sun never stops shining;" and to show that this idea, which soon takes possession of one there, is not without some foundation, it can be stated that the average number of days upon which the sun does shine, as the phrase is, all day long is two hundred and fifty-nine; that is, almost nine months out of the twelve. "All the world is cheered by the sun," writes Shakespeare; and certainly "cheer" is the word that best expresses the effect of the constant sunshine of Mentone.

We all came to breakfast with unclouded foreheads; even the three fixed wrinkles which crossed Mrs. Trescott's brow (she always alluded to them as "midnight oil") were not so deep

as usual, and her little countenance looked as though it had been, if not ironed, at least smoothed out by the long sleep in the soft air. She floated into the sunny breakfast-room in an aureola of white lace, with Janet beside her, and followed by Inness and Baker. Margaret and I had entered a moment before with Miss Graves, and presently Professor Mackenzie joined us, radiating intelligence through his shining spectacles to that extent that I immediately prepared myself for the "Indeeds?" "Is it possibles?" "You surprise me," with which I was accustomed to assist him, when, after going all around the circle in vain for an attentive eye, he came at last to mine, which are not beautiful, but always, I trust, friendly to the friendless. Yet so self-deceived is man that I have no doubt but that if at this moment interrogated as to his best listener during that journey and sojourn at Mentone, he would immediately reply, "Miss Trescott."

People were coming in and out of the room while we were there, the light Continental "first breakfast" of rolls and coffee or tea not detaining them long. Two, however, were evidently loitering, under a flimsy pretext of reading the unflimsy London *Times*, in order to have a longer look at Janet; these two were Englishmen. Was Janet, then, beautiful? That is a question hard to answer. She was a slender, graceful girl with a delicate American face, small, well-poised head, sweet voice, quiet manner, and eyes – well, yes, the expression in Janet's eyes was certainly a remarkable endowment. It could never be fixed in colors; it cannot be described in ink; it may perhaps

be faintly indicated as each gazing man's ideal promised land. And this centre was surrounded by such a blue and childlike unconsciousness that every new-comer tumbled in immediately, as into a blue lake, and never emerged.

"You have been roaming, Professor," said Mrs. Trescott, as he took his seat; "you have a fine breezy look of the sea. I heard the wa-ash, wa-ash, upon the beach all night. But *you* have been out early, communing with Aurora. Do not deny it."

The Professor had no idea of denying it. "I have been as far as the West Bay," he said, taking a roll. "Mentone has two bays, the East, where we are, and the West, the two being separated by the port and the 'old town.' Behind us, on the north, extends the double chain of mountains, the first rising almost directly from the sea, the second and higher chain behind, so that the two together form a screen, which completely protects this coast. Thus sheltered, and opening only towards the south, the bays of Mentone are like a conservatory, and *we* like the plants growing within." (This, for the Professor, was quite poetical.)

"I have often thought that to be a flower in a conservatory would be a happy lot," observed Janet. "One could have of the perfumes, sit still all the time, and never be out in the rain."

"I trust, Miss Trescott, you have not often been exposed to inclement weather?" said the Professor, looking up.

He meant rain; but Mrs. Trescott, who took it upon herself to answer him, always meant metaphor. "Not yet," she answered; "no inclement weather yet for my child, because I have stood

between. But the time may come when, *that* barrier removed – "Here she waved her little claw-like hand, heavy with gems, in a sort of sepulchral suggestiveness, and took refuge in coffee.

The Professor, who supposed the conversation still concerned the weather, said a word or two about the excellent English umbrella he had purchased in London, and then returned to his discourse. "The first mountains behind us," he remarked, "are between three and four thousand feet high; the second chain attains a height of eight and nine thousand feet, and, stretching back, mingles with the Swiss Alps. *Our* name is Alpes Maritimes; we run along the coast in this direction" (indicating it on the table-cloth with his spoon), "and at Genoa we become the Apennines. The winter climate of Mentone is due, therefore, to its protected situation; cold winds from the north and northeast, coming over these mountains behind us, pass far above our heads, and advance several miles over the sea before they fall into the water. The mistral, too, that scourge of Southern France, that wind, cold, dry, and sharp, bringing with it a yellow haze, is unknown here, kept off by a fortunately placed shoulder of mountain running down into the sea on the west."

"Indeed?" I said, seeing the search for a listener beginning.

"Yes," he replied, starting on anew, encouraged, but, as usual, not noticing from whom the encouragement came – "yes; and the sirocco is even pleasant here, because it comes to us over a wide expanse of water. The characteristics of a Mentone winter are therefore sunshine, protection from the winds, and dryness.

It is, in truth, remarkably dry."

"Very," said Inness.

"I have scarcely ever seen it equalled," remarked Baker.

Margaret smiled, but I looked at the two youths reprovngly. Mrs. Trescott said, "Dry? Do you find it so? But you are young, whereas *I* have reminiscences. *Tears* are not dry."

They certainly are not; but why she should have alluded to them at that moment, no one but herself knew. There was a mystery about some of Mrs. Trescott's moods which made her society interesting: no one could ever tell what she would say next.

After breakfast we sat awhile in the garden, where there were palm, lemon, and orange trees, high woody bushes of heliotrope, grotesque growth of cactus, and the great gray-blue swords of the century-plant. Before us stretched the sea. Even if we had not known it, we should have felt sure that its waters laved tropical shores somewhere, and that it was the reflection of those far skies which we caught here.

Miss Graves now joined us, with an acquaintance she had discovered, a Mrs. Clary, who had "spent several winters at Mentone," and who adored "every stone of it." This phrase, which no doubt sounded well coming from Mrs. Clary, who was an impulsive person, with fine dark eyes and expressive mobile face, assumed a comical aspect when repeated by the sober voice of Miss Graves. Mrs. Clary, laughing, hastened to explain; and Miss Graves, noticing Mrs. Trescott on a bench in the shade,

where she and her laces had floated down, said, warningly, "I should advise you to rise; I have just learned that the shade of Mentone is of the most deadly nature, and to be avoided like a scorpion."

Mrs. Trescott and her laces floated up. "Is it damp?" she asked, alarmed.

"No," replied Miss Graves, "it is not damp. It does not know how to be damp at Mentone. But the shade is deadly, all the same. Now in Florida it was otherwise." And she went into the house to get a white umbrella.

"Matilda's temperament is really Alpine," said Mrs. Clary, smiling. "I have always felt that she would be cold even in heaven."

"In that case," said Baker, "she might try – " But he had the grace to stop.

"What is it about the shade?" I asked.

"Only this," said Mrs. Clary: "as the warmth is due to the heat of the sun, and not to the air, which is cool, there is more difference between the sunshine and shade here than we are accustomed to elsewhere. But surely it is a small thing to remember. The treasure of Mentone is its sunshine: in it, safety; out of it, danger."

"Like Mr. Micawber's income," said Margaret, smiling. "Amount, twenty shillings; you spend nineteen shillings and sixpence – riches; twenty shillings and sixpence – bankruptcy."

A little later we went down to the "old town," as the closely

built village of the Middle Ages, clinging to the side hill, and hardly changed in the long lapse of centuries, is called. The "old town" lies between the East Bay and the West Bay, as the body of a bird lies between the two long, slender wings.

"The West Bay has its Promenade du Midi, and the East Bay has its sea-wall," said Mrs. Clary. "I like a sea-wall."

"This one does not *approach* that at St. Augustine," said Miss Graves.

"Here is one of the fountains or wells," said Mrs. Clary. "You will soon see that going for water and gossiping at the well are two occupations of the women everywhere in this region. It comes, I suppose, from the scarcity of water, which is brought in pipes from long distances to these wells, to which the women must go for all the water needed by their households. Notice the classic shapes of the jugs and jars they bear on their heads. Those green ones might be majolica."

We now turned up a paved ascent, and passing under a broad stone archway, entered the "old town," through whose narrow, lane-like streets no vehicle could be driven, through some of them hardly a donkey. The principal avenue, the Rue Longue, but a few feet in width, was smoothly paved and clean; but walking there was like being at the bottom of a well, so far above and so narrow was the little ribbon of blue sky at the top. Unbroken stone walls rose on each side, directly upon the street, five and six stories in height, shutting out the sunshine; and these tall gray walls were often joined above our heads also

by arches, "like uncelebrated bridges of sighs," Janet said. These closely built continuous blocks were the homes of the native population, "old Mentone," unspoiled by progress and strangers. The low doorways showed stone steps ascending somewhere in the darkness, showed low-ceilinged rooms, whose only light was from the door, where were mothers and babies, men mending shoes, women sewing and occupied with household tasks, as calmly as though daylight was not the natural atmosphere of mankind, but rather their own dusky gloom. Outside the doors little black-eyed children sat on the pavement, eating the dark sour bread of the country, and here and there old women in circular white hats like large dinner plates were spinning thread with distaff and spindle. Above were some bits of color: pots of flowers on high window-sills, bright-hued rags hung out to dry, or a dark-eyed girl, with red kerchief tied over her black braids, looking down.

"It is all like a scene from an opera," said Janet.

"Oh no," said Mrs. Clary; "say rather that it is like a scene from the Middle Ages."

"That is what I mean," said Janet. "The scenes in the operas are generally from the Middle Ages."

"The chorus *always*," said Baker.

"It is a pity you cannot see the old mansion of the Princes," said Mrs. Clary. "But I see the street is blockaded just now by the artist."

"By the artist?" said Janet.

"Yes; this one, a Frenchman, is rather broad-shouldered, and when he is at work he blockades the street. However, the mansion is not especially interesting; it was built by one of the later Princes with the stones of the ruined castle above, and has, I believe, only a vaulted hallway and one or two marble pillars. It is now a lodging-house. I saw dancing-dogs going up the stairway yesterday."

From the Rue Longue we had turned into a labyrinth of crooked, staircase-like lanes, winding here and there from side to side, but constantly ascending, the whole net-work, owing to the number of arches thrown across above, seeming to be half underground, but in reality a honey-combed erection clinging to the steep hill-side.

"Dancing-dogs!" said Janet, pausing in the darkest of these turnings. "Let us go back and see them."

But we all exclaimed against this; Mrs. Trescott's little old feet were wearied with curling over the round stones, and Margaret was tired. Inness and Baker offered to make dancing-dogs of themselves for the remainder of the morning, and dogs, too, of a very superior quality, if she would only go on.

The Professor, who, in his "winnowing progress," as Mrs. Trescott called it, had fallen behind, now joined us, followed by Miss Graves.

"I have just witnessed a remarkably interesting little ceremony," he began, "quite mediæval – a herald, with his trumpet, making an announcement through the streets. I could

not comprehend all he said, but no doubt it was something of importance to the community."

"It was," said Miss Graves's monotonous voice. "He was telling them that excellent sausage-meat was now to be obtained at a certain shop for a price much lower than before."

"Ah," said the Professor. Then, rallying, he added, "But the ceremony was the same."

"Certainly," I said, with my usual unappreciated benevolence.

"I wonder what induced these people to build their houses upon such a crag as this, when they had the whole sunny coast to choose from?" said Janet.

The Professor, charmed with this idle little speech (which he took for a thirst for knowledge), hastened by several of us as we walked in single file, in order to be nearer to the questioner.

"You may not be aware, Miss Trescott," he began (she was still in advance, but he hoped to make up the distance), "that this whole shore, called the Riviera – "

"Let us begin fairly," I said. "What *is* the Riviera?"

"It is heaven," said Mrs. Clary.

"It is the coast of the Gulf of Genoa," said the Professor, "extending both eastward and westward from the city of that name. On the west it extends geographically to Nice; but Cannes and Antibes are generally included. This shore-line, then, has been subject from a very early date to attacks from the pirates of the Mediterranean, who swept down upon the coast and carried off as slaves all who came in their way. To escape the horrors of

this slavery the inhabitants chose situations like this steep hill-side, and crowded their stone dwellings closely together so that they formed continuous walls, which were often joined also by arched bridges, like these above us now, and connected by dark and winding passageways below, so that escape was easy and pursuit impossible. It was a veritable – "

"Rabbit-warren," suggested Baker.

Inness made no suggestions; he was next to the Professor, and fully occupied in blocking, with apparent entire unconsciousness, all his efforts to pass and join Janet.

The Professor, not accepting, however, the rabbit-warren, continued: "As recently as 1830, Miss Trescott, when the French took possession of Algiers, they found there thousands of miserable Christian slaves, natives of this northern shore, who had been seized on the coast or taken from their fishing-boats at sea. There are men now living in Mentone who in their youth spent years as slaves in Tunis and Algiers. These pirates, these scourges of the Mediterranean, were Saracens, and – "

"Saracens!" said Janet, with an accent of admiration; "what a lovely word it is! What visions of romance and adventure it brings up, especially when spelled with two r's, so as to be Sarrasins! It is even better than Paynim."

I could not see how the Professor took this, because we were now all entirely in the dark, groping our way along a passage which apparently led through cellars.

"We are in an *impasse*, or blind passage," called Mrs. Clary

from behind; "we had better go back."

Hearing this, we all retraced our steps – at least, we supposed we did. But when we reached comparative daylight again we found that Janet, Inness, and Baker were not with us; they had found a way through that *impasse*, although we could not, and were sitting high above us on a white wall in the sunshine, when, breathless, we at last emerged from the labyrinth and discovered them.

"That looks like a cemetery," said Mrs. Trescott, disapprovingly, disentangling her lace shawl from a bush. "You *said* it was a castle." She addressed the Professor, and with some asperity; she did not like cemeteries.

"It was the castle," explained our learned guide; "the castle erected in 1502, by one of the Princes, upon the site of a still earlier one, built in 1250."

"That Prince used the ruins of his ancestors as his descendants afterwards used his," observed Margaret, referring to the mansion in the street below.

"Possibly," said the Professor. He never gave Margaret more than a possibility; although a man of hyphens and semicolons, he generally dismissed her with an early period. "These old arches and buttresses," he continued, turning to Mrs. Trescott, "were once part of the castle. Turreted walls extended from here down to the sea."

"What they did once, of course I do not know," said Mrs. Trescott, implacably, "but now they plainly enclose a cemetery.

Janet! Janet! come down! we are going back." And she turned to descend.

"The cemetery is a lovely spot," said Mrs. Clary, as we lingered a moment looking at the white marble crosses gleaming above us, outlined against the blue sky.

"Some other time," I answered, following Mrs. Trescott. For the quiet, lovely gardens where we lay our dead had too strong an attraction for Margaret already. She was fond of lingering amid their perfume and their silence, and she sought this one the next day, and afterwards often went there. It was a peculiar little cemetery, alone on the height, and walled like a fortress; but it was beautiful in its way, lifted up against the sky and overlooking the sea. On the eastern edge was a monument, the seated figure of a woman with her hands gently clasped, her eyes gazing over the water; the face was lovely, and not idealized – the face of a woman, not an angel. Margaret took a fancy to this white watcher on the height, and often stole away to look at the sunset, seated near it. I think she identified its loneliness somewhat with herself.

We went through the labyrinth again, but by another route, not quite so dark and piratical, although equally narrow. Miss Graves liked nothing she saw, but walked on unmoved, save that at intervals she observed that it was "deathly cold" in these "stony lanes," and "*must* be unhealthy." Mrs. Clary's assertion that the people looked remarkably vigorous only called out a shake of the head; Miss Graves was set upon "fever." It was amusing to see how carefully all the houses were numbered, up

and down these break-neck little streets, through the narrowest burrows, and under the darkest arches. Here and there some citizen wealthier than his neighbors had painted his section of front in bright pink or yellow, and perhaps adorned his Madonna in her little shrine over the door with new robes, those broadly contrasted blues and reds of Italy, which American eyes must learn by gradual education to admire; or, if not by education, then by residence; for he will find himself liking them naturally after a while, as a relief from the unchanging white light of the Italian day. We came down by way of the square or piazza on the hill-side, to and from which broad flights of steps ascend and descend. Here are the two churches of St. Michael and the White Penitents, whose campaniles, with that of the Black Penitents beyond, make the "three spires of Mentone," which stand out so picturesquely one above the other, visible in profile far to the east and the west on the sharp angle of the hill.

"The different use of the same word in different languages is droll," said Margaret. "French writers almost always speak of these little country church-spires as 'coquettes.'"

"There is a Turkish lance here somewhere," said Inness, emerging unexpectedly from what I had thought was a cellar. "It is in one of these churches. It was taken at the battle of Lepanto, and is a 'glorious relic.' We must see it."

"No," said Janet, appearing with Baker at the top of a flight of steps which I had supposed was the back entrance of a private house, "we will not see it, but imagine it. I want to go homeward

by the Rue Longue."

"Now, Janet, if you mean those dancing-dogs – " began Mrs. Trescott.

"I had forgotten their very existence, mamma. I was thinking of something quite different." Here she turned towards the Professor. "I was hoping that Professor Mackenzie would feel like telling me something of Mentone in the past, as we walk through that quaint old street."

"He feels like it – feels like it day and night," said Baker to Inness, behind me. "He's a perfect statistics Niagara."

"Look at him now, gorged with joy!" said Inness, indignantly. "But I'll floor him yet, and on his own ground, too. I'll study up, and *then* we'll see!"

But the Professor, not hearing this threat, had already begun, and begun (for him) quite gayly. "The origin of Mentone, Miss Trescott, has been attributed to the pirates, and also to Hercules."

"I have always been *so* interested in Hercules," replied that young person.

"Mythical – mythical," said the Professor. "I merely mentioned it as one of the legends. To come down to facts – always much more impressive to a rightly disposed mind – the first mention of Mentone, *per se*, on the authentic page of history, occurs in the eighth century. In A.D. 975 it belonged to the Lascaris, Counts of Ventimiglia, a family of royal origin and Greek descent."

"Are there any of them left?" inquired Janet.

"I really do not know," replied the Professor, who was not interested in that branch of the subject. "In the fourteenth century the village passed into the possession of the Grimaldi family, Princes of Monaco, and they held it, legally at least, until 1860, when it was attached to France."

"He is really quite Cyclopean in his information," murmured Mrs. Trescott.

But the Professor had now discovered Inness, who, with an expression of deepest interest on his face, was walking close at his heels, and writing as he walked in a note-book.

"What are you doing, sir?" said the Professor, in his college tone.

"Taking notes," replied Inness, respectfully. "Miss Trescott may feel willing to trust her memory, but *I* wish to preserve your remarks for future reference," and he went on with his writing.

The Professor looked at him sharply, but the youth's face remained immovable, and he went on.

"These three little towns, then, Mentone, Roccabruna, and Monaco, have belonged to the Princes of Monaco since the early Middle Ages."

"Those dear Middle Ages!" said Mrs. Clary.

The Professor gravely looked at her, and then repeated his phrase, as if linking together his remarks over her unimportant head. "As I observed – the early Middle Ages. But in 1848 Mentone and Roccabruna, unable longer to endure the tyranny of their rulers, revolted and declared their independence. The

Prince at that time lived in Paris, knew little of his subjects, and apparently cared less, save to get from them through agents as much income as possible for his Parisian luxuries." (Impossible to describe the accent which our Puritan Professor gave to those two words.) "His little territory produced only olives, oranges, and lemons. By his order the oranges and lemons were taxed so heavily that the poor peasant owner made nothing from his toil; his olives, also, must be ground at the 'Prince's mill,' where a higher price was demanded than elsewhere. Finally an even more odious monopoly was established: all subjects were compelled to purchase the 'Prince's bread,' which, made from cheap grain bought on the docks of Marseilles and Genoa, was often unfit to eat. So severe were the laws that any traveller entering the principality must throw away at the boundary line all bread he might have with him, and the captain of a vessel having on board a single slice upon arrival in port was heavily fined. This state of things lasted twenty-five years, during which period the Prince in Paris spent annually his eighty thousand dollars, gained from this poor little domain of eight or nine thousand souls." The Professor in his heat stood still, and we all stood still with him. The Mentonnais, looking down from their high windows and up from their dark little doors, no doubt wondered what we were talking about; they little knew it was their own story.

"A revolution made by bread. And ours was made by tea," observed Janet, thoughtfully.

"We need now only one made by butter, to be complete," said

Inness.

Again the Professor scrutinized him, but discovered nothing.

I, however, discovered something, although not from Inness; I discovered why Janet had wished to pass a second time through that Rue Longue. For here was the French artist sketching the old mansion, and with him (she could not have known this, of course; but chance always favored Janet) were the two Englishmen, the respectful gazers of the breakfast-table, sketching also. There were therefore six artistic eyes instead of two to dwell upon her as she approached, passed, and went onward, her slender figure outlined against the light coming through the archway beyond, old St. Julian's Gate, a remnant of feudal fortification. Artists are not slack in the use of their eyes; an "artistic gaze" is not considered a stare. I was obliged to repeat this axiom to Baker, who did not appreciate it, but looked as though he would like to go back and artistically demolish those gazers. He contented himself, however, with the remark that water-color sketches were "weak, puling daubs," and then he went on through the old archway as majestically as he could.

"One of the features of Mentone seems to be the number of false windows carefully painted on the outside of the houses, windows adorned with blinds, muslin curtains, pots of flowers, and even gay rugs hanging over the sill," said Margaret.

"And then the frescos," I added – "landscapes, trees, gods and goddesses, in the most brilliant colors, on the side of the house."

"*I* like it," said Mrs. Clary; "it is so tropical."

"You commend falsity, then," said Miss Graves. "*What* can be more false than a false rug?"

We went homeward by the sea-wall, and saw some boys coming up from the beach with a basket of sea-urchins. "They eat them, you know," said Mrs. Clary.

"Is that tropical too?" said Janet, shuddering.

"It is, after all, but a difference in custom," observed the Professor. "I myself have eaten puppies in China, and found them not unpalatable."

Janet surveyed him; then fell behind and joined Inness and Baker.

Some fishermen on the beach were talking to two women with red handkerchiefs on their heads, who were leaning over the sea-wall. "Their language is a strange patois," said the Professor; "it is composed of a mixture of Italian, French, Spanish, and even Arabic."

"But the people themselves are thoroughly Italian, I think, in spite of the French boundary line," said Margaret. "They are a handsome race, with their dark eyes, thick hair, and rich coloring."

"I have never bestowed much thought upon beauty *per se*," responded the Professor. "The imperishable mind has far more interest."

"How much of the imperishable M. do you possess, Miss Trescott?" I heard Inness murmur.

"Breakfast" was served at one o'clock in the large dining-

room, and we found ourselves opposite the two English artists, and a young lady whom they called "Miss Elaine."

"Elaine is bad enough; but 'Miss Elaine'!" said Margaret aside to me.

However, Miss Elaine seemed very well satisfied with herself and her Tennysonian title. She was a short, plump blonde, with a high color, and I could see that she regarded Janet with pity as she noted her slender proportions and delicate complexion in the one exhaustive glance with which girls survey each other when they first meet. We were some time at the table, but during the first five minutes both of the artists succeeded in offering some slight service to Mrs. Trescott which gave an opportunity for opening a conversation. The taller of the two, called "Verney" by his friend, advised for the afternoon an expedition up the Cornice Road to the "Pont St. Louis," and on "to Italy."

"But that will be too far, will it not?" said Mrs. Trescott.

"Oh no; to Italy! to Italy!" said Janet, with enthusiasm. Verney now explained that Italy was but ten minutes' walk from the hotel, and Janet was, of course, duly astonished. But not more astonished than the Professor, who, having told her the same fact not a half-hour before, could not comprehend how she should so soon have forgotten it.

"And if we *are* but 'ten minutes' walk from Italy' – a phrase so often repeated – what of it?" said Miss Graves to Margaret. "We are simply ten minutes' walk from a most uncleanly land." Miss Graves always wore a gray worsted shawl, and took no

wine; in spite of the sunshine, therefore, she preserved a frosty appearance.

After breakfast Miss Elaine introduced herself to Mrs. Trescott. She had met some Americans the year before; they were charming; they were from Brazil; perhaps we knew them? She had always felt ever since that all Americans were her dear, dear friends. She had an invalid mother up-stairs (sharing her good opinion of Americans) who would be "very pleased" to make our acquaintance; and hearing Pont St. Louis mentioned, she assured Janet that it was a "very jolly place – very jolly indeed." It ended in our going to the "jolly place," accompanied by the two artists and Miss Elaine herself, who smiled upon us all, upon the rocks, the sky, and the sea, in the most amiable and continuous manner. This time we were not all on foot; one of the loose-jointed little Mentone phaetons, with a great deal of driver and whip and very little horse, had been engaged for Mrs. Trescott and Margaret. This left Mrs. Clary and myself together (Miss Graves having remained at home), and Inness, Baker, the Professor, Verney, and the other artist, whose name was Lloyd, all trying to walk with Janet, while Miss Elaine devoted herself in turn to the unsuccessful ones, and never from first to last perceived the real situation.

We went eastward. Presently we passed a small house bearing the following naïve inscription in French on the side towards the road: "The first villa built at Mentone, in 1855, to attract hither the strangers. The sun, the sea, and the soft air combined are

benefactions bestowed upon us by the good God. Thanks be to Him, therefore, for His mercies in thus favoring us."

"Mentone is said to have been 'discovered by the English' in 1857," said Mrs. Clary. "Dr. Bennet, the London physician, may be called its real discoverer, as Lord Brougham was the discoverer of Cannes. From a sleepy, unknown little Riviera village it has grown into the winter resort we now see, with fifty hotels and two hundred villas full of strangers from all parts of the world."

The Professor was discoursing upon the climate. "It is very beneficial to all whose lungs are delicate," he said. "Also" (checking off the different classes on his fingers) "to the aged, to those who need general renovating, to the rheumatic, and to those afflicted with gout."

"Where, then, do I come in?" said Janet, sweetly, as he finished the left hand.

"Nowhere," answered the Professor, meaning to be gallant, but not quite succeeding. Perceiving this, he added, slowly, and with solemnity, "But the fair and healthy flower should be willing to shine upon the less endowed for the pure beneficence of the act."

Baker and Inness sat down on the sea-wall behind him to recover from this. The two Englishmen were equally amused, although Miss Elaine, who was walking with them, did not discover it. However, Miss Elaine seldom discovered anything save herself. We now began to ascend, passing between the high

walls of villa gardens along a smooth, broad, white road.

"This is the Cornice," said Mrs. Clary; "it winds along this coast from Marseilles to Genoa."

"From Nice to Genoa," said the Professor, turning to correct her. But by turning he lost his place. Inness slipped into it, and not only that, but into his information also. In the leisure hour or two before and after "breakfast," Inness had carried out his threat of "studying up," and we soon became aware of it.

"The genius of Napoleon, Miss Trescott," he began, "caused this wonderful road to spring from the bosom of the mighty rock."

"Before it there was no road, only a mule track," said the Professor from behind.

"I beg your pardon," said Inness, suavely, "but there was a road, the old Roman way, called Via Julia Augusta, traces of which are still to be seen at more than one point in this neighborhood."

"Ah!" said the Professor, surprised by this unexpected antiquity, "you are going back to the Roman period. I have omitted that."

"But I have not," replied Inness. "The Romans were a remarkable people, and all their relics are penetrated with the profoundest interest for me. I am aware, however, that other minds are more modern," he added, carelessly, with an air of patronage, which so delighted Baker that he fell behind to conceal it.

"The Cornichy, Miss Trescott, as we pronounce the Italian word (Corniche in French), is almost our own word cornice," pursued Inness, "meaning a shelf or ledge along the side of the mountain. It was begun by Napoleon, and has been finished by the energy of successive governments since the death of that wonderful man, who was all governments in one."

"You surprise me," said Janet, breaking into laughter.

"Not more than you do me," I said, joining her.

The Professor (who had rather neglected the Cornice in his Cyclopean information) gazed at us inquiringly, surprised at our merriment.

"The best description of the Cornice, I think, is the one in Ruffini's novel called *Doctor Antonio*" said Mrs. Clary. "The scene is laid at Bordighera, you know, that little white town on the eastern point so conspicuous from Mentone. Of course you all remember *Doctor Antonio*?"

Presently our road wound around a curve, and we came upon a wild gorge, spanned by a bridge with a sentinel's box at each end; one side was France and the other Italy. The bridge, the official boundary line between the two countries, is a single arch thrown across the gorge, which is singularly stern, great masses of bare gray rock rising perpendicularly hundreds of feet into the air, with a little rill of water trickling down on one side, trying to create a tiny line of verdure. Below was an old aqueduct on arches, which the Professor hastened to say was "Roman."

"The Romans must have been enormous drinkers of water,"

observed Baker, as we looked down. "The first thing they made in every conquered country was an aqueduct. What could have given the name to Roman punch?"

"Do you see that narrow track cut in the face of the rock?" said Mrs. Clary, pointing out a line crossing one side of the gorge at a dizzy height. "It is a little path beside a watercourse, and so narrow that in some places there is not room for one's two feet. The wall of rock rises, as you see, perpendicularly hundreds of feet on one side, and falls away hundreds of feet perpendicularly on the other; there is nothing to hold on by, and in addition the glancing motion of the little stream, running rapidly downhill along the edge, makes the path still more dizzy. Yet the peasants coming down from Ciotti – a village above us – use it, as it shortens the distance to town. And there are those among the strangers too who try it, generally, I must confess, of our race. The French and Italians say, with a shrug, 'It is only the English and Americans who enjoy such risks.'"

"It does not look so narrow," said Janet. Then, as we exclaimed, she added, "I mean, not wide enough for one's two feet."

"Feet," remarked Inness, in a general way, as if addressing the gorge, "are not all of the same size."

We happened to be standing in a row, with our backs against the southern parapet of the bridge, looking up at the little path; the result was that eighteen feet were plainly visible on the white dust of the bridge, and, naturally enough, at Inness's

speech eighteen eyes looked downward and noted them. There were the Professor's boots, the laced shoes of the younger men, the comfortable foot-gear of Mrs. Clary and myself, the broad substantial soles of Miss Elaine, and a certain dainty little pair of high-arched, high-heeled boots, which, small as they were, were yet quite large enough for the pretty feet they contained. I thought Miss Elaine would be vexed; but no, not at all. It never occurred to Miss Elaine to doubt the perfection of any of her attributes. But now Mrs. Trescott's phaeton, which had started later, reached the bridge, and the gorge, path, and aqueduct had to be explained to her. Lloyd undertook this.

"I wonder how many girls have thrown themselves off that rock?" said Janet, gazing at an isolated peak, shaped like a sugar-loaf, which stood alone within the ravine.

"What a holocaust you imagine, Miss Trescott!" said Verney. "How could they climb up there, to begin with?"

"I do not know. But they always do. I have never known a rock of that kind which has succeeded in evading them," answered Janet. "They generally call them 'Lovers' Leaps.'"

After a while we went on "to Italy," passing the square Italian custom-house perched on its cliff, and following the road by the little Garibaldi inn, and on towards the point of Mortola.

"This is the Italian frontier," said Verney. "In old times, during the Prince's reign, no one could leave the domain without buying a passport; any one, therefore, who wished to take an afternoon walk was obliged to have one. But things are altered now in

Menton."

"Are we to call the place Menton or Mentone?" asked Janet.
"We might as well come to some decision."

"Menton is correct," said the Professor; "it is now a French town."

"Oh no! let us keep to the dear old names, and say Men-tone," said Mrs. Clary.

"I have even heard it pronounced to rhyme with bone," said Verney, smiling. Inness and Baker now looked at each other, and fell behind, but after a few minutes they came forward again, and, advancing to the front, faced us, and delivered the following epic:

Inness:

"What shall we call thee? Shall we give our own
Plain English vowels to thee, fair Mentone?"

Baker:

"Or shall we yield thee back thy patrimony,
The lost Italian sweetness of Mentone?"

Inness:

"Or, with French accent, and the n's half gone,
Try the Parisian syllables – Men-ton?"

We all applauded their impromptu. The Professor, seeing that

poetry held the field, walked apart musingly. I think he was trying to recall, but without success, an appropriate Latin quotation.

The view from the point above Mortola is very beautiful. On the west, Mentone with its three spires, the green of Cap Martin; and beyond, the bold dark forehead of the Dog's Head rising above Monaco.

"Do you see that blue line of coast?" said Verney. "That is the island where lived the Man with the Iron Mask."

"Bazaine was confined there also," said the Professor.

But none of us cared for Bazaine. We began to talk about the Mask, and then diverged to Kaspar Hauser, finally ending with Eleazer Williams, of "Have we a Bourbon among us?" who had to be explained to the Englishmen. It was some time before we came back to the view; but all the while there it was before us, and we were unconsciously enjoying it. On the east was, first, the little village of Mortola at our feet; then fortified Ventimiglia; and beyond, Bordighera, gleaming whitely on its low point out in the blue sea.

"Blanche Bordighera," said Mrs. Clary; "it is to me like paradise – always silvery and fair. No matter where you go, there it is; whether you look from Cap Martin or St. Agnese, from Ciotti or Roccabruna, you can always see Bordighera shining in the sunlight. Even when there is a mist, so that Mentone itself is veiled and Ventimiglia lost, Bordighera can be seen gleaming whitely through. And finally you end by not wanting to go there; you dread spoiling the vision by a less fair reality,

and you go away, leaving it unvisited, but carrying with you the remembrance of its shining and its feathery palms."

"Is it palmy?" asked Janet.

"There are probably now more palms at Bordighera than in the Holy Land itself," said Verney, who had wound himself into a place beside her. I say "wound," because Verney was so long and lithe that he could slip gracefully into places which other men could not obtain. Lloyd was not with us. He had not left his post of duty beside the phaeton, which was coming slowly up the hill behind us; but I noticed that he had selected Margaret's side of it.

"Palms would grow at Mentone, or at any other sheltered spot on this coast," said the Professor, at last abandoning the obstinate quotation, and coming back to the present. "But the cultivation is not remunerative save at Bordighera, where they own the monopoly of supplying the palm branches used on Palm-Sunday at Rome."

"Excuse me," said Inness; "but I think you did not mention the origin of that monopoly?"

"A monkish legend," said the Professor, contemptuously.

"In those days everything was monkish," replied Inness; "architecture, knowledge, and religion. If we had lived then, no doubt we should all have been monks."

"Ah, yes!" said Miss Elaine, fervently. "Do tell us the legend, Mr. Inness. I adore legends, especially if ecclesiastical."

"Well," said Inness, "a good while ago – in 1586 – the Pope decided to raise and place upon a pedestal an Egyptian obelisk,

which, transported to Rome by Caligula, had been left lying neglected upon the ground. An apparatus was constructed to lift the huge block, and with the aid of one hundred and fifty horses and nine hundred men it was raised, poised, and then let down slowly towards its position, amid the breathless silence of a multitude, when suddenly it was seen that the ropes on one side failed to bring it into place. All, including the engineer in charge, stood stupefied with alarm, when a voice from the crowd called out, 'Wet the ropes!' It was done; the ropes shortened; the obelisk reached its place in safety. The Pope sent for the man whose timely advice had saved the lives of many, and asked him what reward would please him most. He was a simple countryman, and with much timidity he answered that he lived at Bordighera, and that if the palms of Bordighera could be used in Rome on Holy Palm-Sunday he should die happy. His wish was granted," concluded Inness, "and – he died."

"I hope not immediately," I said, laughing.

On our way back, Verney showed us a path leading up the cliff. "Let me give you a glimpse of a lovely garden," he said. We looked up, and there it was on the cliff above us, like the hanging gardens of Babylon, green terraces clothing the bare gray rock with beautiful verdure. Margaret left the phaeton and went up the winding path with us, Mrs. Trescott and Mrs. Clary remaining below. The gate of the garden, which bore the inscription "Salvete Amici," opened upon a long columned walk; from pillar to pillar over our heads ran climbing vines, and on

each side were ranks of rare and curious plants, the lovely wild flowers of the country having their place also among the costlier blossoms. "Before you go farther turn and look at the tower," said Verney. "It has been made habitable within, but otherwise it is unchanged. It was built either as a lookout in which to keep watch for the Saracens, or else by the Saracens themselves when they held the coast."

"By the Sarrasins themselves, of course – always with two r's," said Janet. "Think of it – a Sarrasin tower! I would rather own it than anything else in the whole world."

Whereupon Verney, Inness, the Professor, Lloyd, and Baker all wished to know what she would do with it.

"Do with it?" repeated Janet. "Live in it, of course. I have always had the greatest desire to live in a tower; even light-houses tempt me."

"I shall tell Dr. Bennet," said Verney, laughing. "This is his garden, you know."

At the end of the columned walk we went around a curve by a smaller tower, and descended to a lower path bordered with miniature groves of hyacinth, whose dense sweetness, mingled with that of heliotrope, filled the air. Here Margaret seated herself to enjoy the fragrance and sunshine, while we went onward, coming to a magnificent array of primulas, rank upon rank, in every shade of delicate and gorgeous coloring, a pomp of tints against a background of ferns. Below was a little vine-covered terrace with thick, soft, English grass for its

velvet flooring; here was another paradisiacal little seat, like the one where we had left Margaret, overlooking the blue sea. On terraces above were camellias, roses, and numberless other blossoms, mingled with tropical plants and curious growths of cacti; behind was a lemon grove rising a little higher; then the background of gray rocks from which all this beauty had been won inch by inch; then the great peaks of the mountain amphitheatre against the sky – in all, beauty enough for a thousand gardens here concentrated in one enchanting spot.

"That picturesque village on the height is Grimaldi," said Verney.

"The original home of the clowns, I suppose," said Baker.

"English and Americans always say that; they can never think of anything but the great circus Hamlet," replied Verney. "In reality, however, Grimaldi is one of the oldest of the noble names on this coast – the family name of the Princes of Monaco."

"Who are worse than clowns," said the Professor, sternly. "The Grimaldi who was a clown at least honestly earned his bread, but the Grimaldis of the present day live by the worst dishonesty. Monaco, formerly called the Port of Hercules, may now well be called the Port of Hell."

"Well," said Inness, "if Monaco, on one side of us, represents l'Inferno, Bordighera, on the other, represents Paradiso, and so we are saved."

"It depends upon which way you go, young man," said the Professor, still sternly.

After a while we came back to the bench among the hyacinths where we had left Margaret, and found Lloyd with her, looking at the sea; the lovely garden overhangs the sea, whose beautiful near blue closes every blossoming vista. It had been decided that we were to go homeward by way of the Bone Caverns, and as Mrs. Trescott was fond of bones, and wished to see their abode, I offered to remain and drive home with Margaret.

"Let me accompany Miss Severin," said Lloyd. "I have seen the caverns, and do not care to see them again."

I looked at Margaret, thinking she would object; she seldom cared for the society of strangers. But in some way Mr. Lloyd no longer seemed a stranger; he had crossed the numerous little barriers which she kept erected between herself and the outside world, crossed them probably without even seeing them. But none the less were they crossed.

So we left them in the sunny garden to return homeward at their leisure, and, descending to the road, went eastward a short distance, and turned down a narrow path leading to the beach. It brought us under the enormous mass of the Red Rocks, rising perpendicularly three hundred feet from the water. Inness, who was in advance, had paused on a little bridge of one arch over a hollow, and was holding it, as it were, when we came up. "Behold a fragment of the ancient Roman way, Via Julia Augusta," he began, introducing the bridge with a wave of his cane. "When we think of this road in the past, what visions rise in the mind – visions like – like mists on the mountain-tops floating

away, which – which merge in each other at dawning of day! In comparison with the ancient Romans, the builders of this bridge, Hercules, the Lascaris, even the Sarrasins (always with two r's), are *nowhere*. Roman feet touched this very archway upon which my own unworthy shoes now stand."

We looked at his shoes with respect, the Professor (who had gone onward to the Bone Caverns) not being there to contradict.

"The Romans," continued Inness, "never stayed long. They dropped here a tomb, there an aqueduct, and then moved on. They were the first great pedestrians. We cannot *see* them, but we can imagine them. As Pope well says,

"While fancy brings the vanished piles to view,
And builds imaginary Rome anew."

"Ah, yes," said Mrs. Trescott, "the Romans, the Romans, how dreamy they were! They always remind me of those lines:

"Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
The primal sympathy,
Which, having been, must ever be!"

This finished the bridge. As we had no idea what she meant, even Inness deserted it, and we all went onward to the Bone Caverns. The caverns were dark hollows in the cliff some

distance above the road. From the entrance of one of them issued a cloud of dust; the Professor was in there digging.

"Let us ascend at once," said Mrs. Trescott, enthusiastically. "I wish to stand in the very abode of the primitive man."

But it was something of a task to get her up; there was always a great deal of loose drapery about Mrs. Trescott, which had a way of catching on everything far and near. With her veil, her plumes, her lace shawl, her long watch-chain, her dangling fan, her belt bag and scent bottle, her parasol and basket, it was difficult to get her safely through any narrow or bushy place. But to-day Verney gallantly undertook the feat: he knew the advantages of propitiating the higher powers.

Men were quarrying the face of the Red Rocks at a dizzy height, hanging suspended in mid-air by ropes in order to direct the blasting; below, the patient horses were waiting to convey the great blocks of stone to the town, and destroy, by their daily procession, the last traces of the Julia Augusta.

"I hope these rocks are porphyry," said Janet, gazing upward; "it is such a lovely name."

"Yes, they are," said the unblushing Inness. "The Troglodytes, whose homes are beneath, were fond of porphyry. They were very æsthetic, you know."

We now reached the entrance of one of the caverns and looked in.

"The Troglodytes," continued Inness, "were the original, *really* original, proprietors of Mentone. They lived here, clad

in bear-skins, and their voices are said to have been not sweet. See Pliny and Strabo. The bones of their dinners left here, and a few of their own (untimely deaths from fighting with each other for more), have now become the most precious treasures of the scientific world, equalling in richness the never-to-be-sufficiently-prized-and-investigated kitchen refuse of the Swiss lakes."

But the Professor, overhearing something of this frivolity at the sacred door, emerged from the hole in which he had been digging, and, covered with dust, but rich in the possession of a ball and socket joint of some primeval animal, came to the entrance, and forcibly, if not by force, addressed us:

"At a recent period it has been discovered that these five caverns in this limestone rock – "

"Alas, my porphyry!" murmured Janet.

" – contain bones of animals mixed with flint instruments imbedded in sand. The animals were the food and the flint instruments the weapons of a race of men who must have existed far back in prehistoric times. This was a rich discovery; but a richer was to come. In 1872 a human skeleton, all but perfect, a skeleton of a tall man, was discovered in the fourth cavern, surrounded by bones which prove its great antiquity – which prove, in fact, almost beyond a doubt, that it belonged to – the —*Paleolithic epoch!*" And the Professor paused, really overcome by the tremendous power of his own words.

But I am afraid we all gazed stupidly enough, first at him, then

into the cave, then at him again, with only the vaguest idea of "Paleolithic's" importance. I must except Verney; he knew more. But he had gone inside, and was now digging in the hole in his turn to find flints for Janet.

Mrs. Trescott, who was our bone-master (she had studied anatomy, and highly admired "form"), asked if the skeleton had been "painted in oils."

Miss Elaine hoped that they buried it again "reverently," and "in consecrated ground."

The Professor gazed at them in turn; he literally could not find a word for reply.

Then I, coming to the rescue, said: "I am very dull, I know, but pity my dulness, and tell me why the skeleton was so important, and how they knew it was so old."

The poor man, overcome by such crass ignorance, gazed at his ball and socket joint and at our group in silence. Then, in a spiritless voice, he said, "The bones surrounding the skeleton were those of animals now extinct – animals that existed at a period heretofore supposed to have been before that of man; but by their presence here they prove a contemporary, and we therefore know that he existed at a much earlier age of the world's history than we had imagined."

Verney now gave Janet the treasures he had found – some pieces of flint about an inch long, rudely pointed at one end. "These," he said, "are the knives of the primitive man."

"They are very disappointing," said Janet, surveying them as

they lay in the palm of her slender gray glove, buttoned half-way to the elbow.

"Did you expect carved handles and steel blades?" I said, smiling.

"And here are some nummulites," pursued Verney, taking a quantity of the round coin-like shells from his pocket. "You might have a necklace made, with the nummulites above and the flints below as pendants."

"And label it prehistoric; it would be quite as attractive as preraphaelite," said Inness. "I don't know what *you* think," he continued, turning to Verney, "but to me there is nothing so ugly as the way some of the girls – generally the tall ones – are getting themselves up nowadays in what they call the preraphaelite style – a general effect of awkward lankness as to shape and gown, a classic fillet, hair to the eyebrows, and a gait not unlike that which would be produced by having the arms tied together behind at the elbows. If your Botticelli is responsible for this, his canvases should be demolished."

Verney laughed; he was at heart, I think, a strong preraphaelite both of the present and the past; but how could he avow it when a reality so charming and at the same time so unlike that type stood beside him? Janet's costumes were not at all preraphaelite; they were American-French.

We left the Red Rocks, and went slowly onward along the seashore towards home. Miss Elaine, having first taken me aside to ask if I thought it "quite proper," had challenged Inness to a rapid

walk, and soon carried him away from us and out of sight. On our way we passed the St. Louis brook, where the laundresses were at work in two rows along the stream, each kneeling at the edge in a broad open basket like a boat, and bending over the low pool, alternately soaping and beating her clothes with a flat wooden mallet. It was a picturesque sight – the long rows of figures in baskets, the heads decked with bright-colored handkerchiefs. But to a housewifely mind like my own the idea which most forcibly presented itself was the small amount of water. Of a celebrated trout fisherman it was once said that all he required was a little damp spot, and forthwith he caught a trout; and the Mentone laundresses seem to consider that only a little damp spot is needed for their daily labors.

But in truth they cannot help themselves; the crying fault of Mentone is the want of water. A spring is more precious than the land itself, and is divided between different proprietors for stated periods of each day. The poor little rills do a dozen tasks before they reach the laundresses and the beach. The beautiful terrace vegetation which clothes the sides of the mountains is supported by an elaborate and costly system of tanks and watercourses which would dishearten an American proprietor at the outset. The Mentone laundresses work for wages which a New World laundress would scorn; but there is one marked difference between them and between all the French and Italian working-people and those of America, and that is that among these foreigners there seems to be not one too poor to have

his daily bottle of wine. We saw the necks of these bottles peeping from the rough dinner-baskets of the laundresses, and afterwards from those also of the quarry-men, vine-dressers, olive-pickers, and lemon-gatherers. It was an inexpensive "wine of the country"; still, it was wine.

The sun was now sinking into the water, and exquisite hues were stealing over the soft sea. The picturesque Mediterranean boats with lateen-sails were coming towards home, and one whose little sail was crimson made a lovely picture on the water. At the sea-wall we met Miss Graves gloomily taking a walk, and presently the phaeton with Margaret and Lloyd stopped near us as we stood looking at the hues. Two ships in the distance sailed first on blue water, then on rose, on lilac, on purple, violet, and gold. Over the sea fell a pink flush, met on the horizon by salmon in a broad band, then next above it amber, then violet edged with rose, and higher still a zone of clear pale green bordered with gold. At the same moment the Red Rocks were flooded with rose light which extended in a lovely flush up the high gray peaks behind far in the sky, lingering there when all the lower splendor was gone, and the sea and shore veiled in dusky twilight gray.

"It is almost as beautiful at sunrise," said Mrs. Clary; "and then, too, you can see the Fairy Island."

"What is that?" I asked.

"Never mind what it is in reality," answered Mrs. Clary. "I consider it enchanted – the Fortunate Land, whose shores and mountain-peaks can be seen only between dawn and sunrise,

when they loom up distinctly, soon fading away, however, mysteriously into the increasing daylight, and becoming entirely invisible when the sun appears."

"I saw it this morning," said Miss Graves, soberly. "It is only Corsica."

"Brigands and vendetta," said Inness.

"Napoleon," said all the rest of us.

"My idea of it is much the best," said Mrs. Clary; "it is Fairy-land, the lost Isles of the Blest."

After that each morning at breakfast the question always was, who had seen Corsica. And a vast amount of ingenious evasion was displayed in the answers. However, I did see it once. It rose from the water on the southeastern horizon, its line of purple mountain-peaks and low shore so distinctly visible that it seemed as if one could take the little boat with the crimson sail and be over there in an hour, although it was ninety miles away; but while I gazed it faded slowly, melted, as it were, into the gold of the awakening day.

The weeks passed, and we rode, drove, walked, and climbed hither and thither, looking at the carouba-trees, the stiff pyramidal cypresses, the euphorbias in woody bushes five feet high, the great planes, the grotesque naked figs, the aloes and oleanders growing wild, and the fantastic shapes of the cacti. We searched for ferns, finding the rusty ceterach, the little trichomanes, and *Adiantum nigrum*, but especially the exquisite maiden-hair of the delicate variety called *Capillus veneris*, which

fringed every watercourse and bank and rock where there is the least moisture with its lovely green fretwork. There is a phrase current in Mentone and applied to this fern, as well as to the violets which grow wild in rich profusion, starring the ground with their blue; unthinking people say of them that they are "so common they become weeds." This phrase should be suppressed by a society for the cultivation of good taste and the prevention of cruelty to plants. Ivy was everywhere, growing wild, and heather in bloom.

Miss Graves was brought almost to tears one day by finding her old friend the wild climbing smilax of Florida on these Mediterranean rocks, and only recovered her self-possession because Lloyd would call it "sarsaparilla," and she felt herself called upon to do battle. But the profusion of the violets, the pomp of the red anemones, the perfume of the white narcissus, the hyacinths and sweet alyssum, all growing wild, who shall describe them? There were also tulips, orchids, English primroses, and daisies. Even when nothing else could grow there was always the demure rosemary. Of course, too, we made close acquaintance with the olive and lemon, the characteristic trees of Mentone, whose foliage forms its verdure, and whose fruit forms its commerce. The orange groves were insignificant and the oranges sour compared with those of Florida; but the olive and lemon groves were new to us, and in themselves beautiful and luxuriant. Our hotel stood on the edge of an old olive grove climbing the mountain-side slowly on broad terraces rising

endlessly as one looked up. After some weeks' experience we found that we represented collectively various shades of opinion concerning olive groves in general, which may be given as follows:

Mrs. Clary: "These old trees are to me so sacred! When I walk under their great branches I always think of the dove bringing the leaf to the ark, of the olive boughs of the entry into Jerusalem, and of the Mount of Olives."

The Professor: "Olives are interesting because their manner of growth allows them to attain an almost indefinite age. The trunk decays and splits, but the bark, which still retains its vigor, grows around the dissevered portions, making, as it were, new trunks of them, although curved and distorted, so that three or four trees seem to be growing from the same root. It is this which gives the tree its characteristic knotted and gnarled appearance. This species of olive attains a very fine development in the neighborhood of Mentone; there are said to be trees still alive at Cap Martin which were coeval with the Roman Empire."

Verney: "The light in an old olive grove is beautiful and peculiar; it is like nothing but itself. It is quite impossible to give on canvas the gray shade of the long aisles without making them dim, and they are not in the least dim. I have noticed, too, that the sunshine never filters through sufficiently to touch the ground in a glancing beam, or even a single point of yellow light; and yet the leaves are small, and the foliage does not appear thick."

Baker: "Olives and olive oil, the groundwork of every good

dinner! I wonder how much a grove would cost?"

Mrs. Trescott: "How they murmur to us – like doves! My one regret now is that I did not name my child Olive. She would then have been so Biblical."

Inness: "I should think more of the groves if I did not know that they were fertilized with woollen rags, old boots, and bones."

Janet: "The inside tint of the leaves would be lovely for a summer costume. I have never had just that shade."

Miss Graves: "Live-oak groves draped in long moss are much more imposing."

Miss Elaine: "It is so jolly, you know, to sit under the trees with one's embroidery, and have some one read aloud – something sweet, like Adelaide Procter."

Margaret: "Sitting here is like being in a great cathedral in Lent."

Lloyd: "Shall we go quietly on, Miss Severin?"

And Lloyd, I think, had the best of it. I mean that he knew how to derive the most pleasure from the groves. This English use of "quietly," by-the-way, always amused Margaret and myself greatly. Lloyd and Verney were constantly suggesting that we should go here or there "quietly," as though otherwise we should be likely to go with banners, trumpets, and drums. The longer one remains in Mentone, the stronger grows attachment to the olive groves. But they do not seem fit places for the young, whose gay voices resound through their gray aisles; neither are they for the old, who need the cheer and warmth of the sun. But they

are for the middle-aged, those who are beyond the joys and have not yet reached the peace of life, the poor, unremembered, hard-worked middle-aged. The olives of Mentone are small, and used only for making oil. We saw them gathered: men were beating the boughs with long poles, while old women and children collected the dark purple berries and placed them in sacks, which the patient donkeys bore to the mill. The oil mills are venerable and picturesque little buildings of stone, placed in the ravines where there is a stream of water. We visited one on the side hill; its only light came from the open door, and its interior made a picture which Gerard Douw might well have painted. The great oil jars, the old hearth and oven, the earthen jugs, hanging lamps with floating wicks, and the figures of the men moving about, made a picturesque scene. The fruit was first crushed by stone rollers, the wheel being turned by water-power; the pulp, saturated with warm water, was then placed in flat, round rope baskets, which were piled one upon the other, and the whole subjected to strong pressure, which caused the clear yellow oil to exude through the meshes of the baskets, and flow down into the little reservoir below.

"Our manners would become charmingly suave if we lived here long," said Inness. "It would be impossible to resist the influence of so much oil."

The lemon terraces were as unlike the olive groves as a gay love song is unlike a Gregorian chant. The trees rose brightly and youthfully from the grassy hill-side steps, each leaf shining as

though it was varnished, and the yellow globes of fruit gleaming like so much imprisoned sunshine. Here was no shade, no weird grayness, but everything was either vivid gold or vivid green. Janet said this.

"I am the latter, I think," said Baker, "to be caught here again on these terraces. I don't know what your experience has been, but for my part I detest them; I have been lost here again and again. You get into them and you think it all very easy, and you keep going on and on. You climb hopefully from one to the next by those narrow sidling little stone steps, only to find it the exact counterpart of the one you have left, with still another beyond. And you keep on plunging up and up until you are worn out. At last you meet a man, and you ask him something or other beginning with 'Purtorn' – "

"What in the world do you mean?" said Janet, breaking into laughter.

"I am sure I don't know; but that is what you all say."

"Perhaps you mean 'Peut-on,'" suggested Margaret.

"Well, whatever I mean, the man always answers 'Oui,' and so I am no better off than I was before, but keep plunging on," said Baker, ruefully.

But the Professor now opened a more instructive subject. "Lemons are the most important product of Mentone," he began. "As they can be kept better than those of Naples and Sicily, they command a large price. The tree flowers all the year through, and the fruit is gathered at four different periods. The annual

production of lemons at Mentone is about thirty millions."

"Thirty millions of lemons!" I said, appalled. "What an acid idea!"

"The idea may be acid, but the air is not," said Margaret. "It is singularly delicious, almost intoxicating."

And in truth there was a subtle fragrance which had an influence upon me, although no doubt it had much more upon Margaret, who was peculiarly sensitive to perfumes.

"Have you heard the legend of the Mentone lemons?" said Verney.

"No; what is it? We should be *very* pleased to hear it," said Miss Elaine, throwing herself down upon the grass in what she considered a rural way. She was bestowing her smiles upon Verney that day; she had mentioned to me on the way up the hill that she did not approve of giving too much of one's attention "to one especial gentleman exclusively" – it was so "conspicuous." I was smiling inwardly at this, since the only "conspicuous" person among us, as far as attention to "the gentlemen" was concerned, was Miss Elaine herself, when I caught her glance directed towards Margaret and Lloyd. This set me to thinking. Could she be referring to them? They had been much together, without doubt, for Margaret liked him, and he was very kind to her. My poor Margaret, she was very precious, to me; but to others she was only a pale, careworn woman, silent, quiet, and no longer young. With the remembrance of Miss Elaine's words in my mind, I now looked around for Margaret as we sat down on

the grass to hear Verney's legend; but she had strolled off down the long green and gold aisle with Lloyd.

"Miss Severin is so well informed that she does not care for our simple little amusements," said Miss Elaine, in her artless way.

"Once upon a time, as we all know," began Verney, "Adam and Eve were banished from the garden of Paradise. Poor Eve, sobbing, put up her hand just before passing through the gate and plucked a lemon from the last tree beside the angel. The two then wandered through the world together, wandered far and wide, and at last, following the shores of the Mediterranean, they came to Mentone. Here the sea was so blue, the sunshine so bright, and the sky so cloudless, that Eve planted her treasured fruit. 'Go, little seed,' she said; 'grow and prosper. Make another Eden of this enchanting spot, so that those who come after may know at least something of the tastes and the perfumes of Paradise.'"

The Professor had not remained to hear the legend; he had gone up the mountain, and we now heard him shouting; that is, he was trying to shout, although he produced only a sort of long, thin hoot.

"What can that be?" I said, startled.

"It is the Professor," answered Mrs. Trescott. "It is his way of calling. He has his own methods of doing everything."

It turned out that he had found a path down which the lemon girls were coming from the terraces above. We went up to this point to see them pass. They were all strong and ruddy,

and walked with wonderful erectness, balancing the immense weight of fruit on their heads without apparent effort; they were barefooted, and moved with a solid, broad step down the steep, stony road. The load of fruit for each one was one hundred and twenty pounds; they worked all day in this manner, and earned about thirty cents each! But they looked robust and cheerful, and some of them smiled at us under their great baskets as they passed.

One afternoon not long after this we went to the Capuchin monastery of the Annunziata. Some of us were on donkeys and some on foot, forming one of those processions so often seen winding through the streets of the little Mediterranean town. We passed the shops filled with the Mentone swallow, singing his "Je reviendrai" upon articles in wood, in glass, mosaic, silver, straw, canvas, china, and even letter-paper, with continuous perseverance; we passed the venders of hot chestnuts, which we not infrequently bought and ate ourselves. Then we came to the perfume distilleries, where thousands of violets yield their sweetness daily.

"They cultivate them for the purpose, you know," said Verney. "It's a poetical sort of agriculture, isn't it? Imagination can hardly go further, I think, than the idea of a violet farm."

We passed small chapels with their ever-burning lamps; the new villas described by the French newspapers as "ravishing constructions"; and then, turning from the road, we ascended a narrow path which wound upward, its progress marked here and

there by stone shrines, some freshly repainted, others empty and ruined, pointing the way to the holy church of the Annunziata.

"The only way to appreciate Mentone is to take these excursions up the valleys and mountains," said Mrs. Clary. "Those who confine themselves to sitting in the gardens of the hotels or strolling along the Promenade du Midi have no more idea of its real beauty than a man born blind has of a painting. Descriptions are nothing; one must *see*. I think the mountain excursions may be called the shibboleth of Mentone; if you do not know them, you are no true Israelite."

Verney had a graceful way of gathering delicate little sprays and blossoms here and there and silently giving them to Janet. The Professor had noticed this, and to-day emulated him by gathering a bunch of mallow with great care – a bunch nearly a yard in circumference – which he presented to Janet with much ceremony.

"Oh, thanks; I am *so* fond of flowers!" responded that young person. "Is it asphodel? I long to see asphodel."

Now asphodel was said to grow in that neighborhood, and Janet knew it; by expressing a wish to see the classic blossom she sent the poor Professor on a long search for it, climbing up and down and over the rocks, until I, looking on from my safe donkey's back, felt tired for him. And it was not long before our donkeys' steady pace left him far behind.

"With its pale, dusty leaves and weakly lavender flowers, it is, I think, about as depressing a flower as I have seen," said Inness,

looking at the mammoth bouquet.

"I might fasten it to the saddle, and relieve your hands, Miss Trescott," suggested Verney. So the delicate gray gloves relinquished the pound of mallow, which was tied to the saddle, and there hung ignominiously all the remainder of the day.

The church and convent of L'Annunziata crown an isolated vine-clad hill between two of the lovely valleys behind Mentone. The church was at the end of a little plaza, surrounded by a stone-wall; in front there was an opening towards the south, where stood an iron cross twenty feet high, visible, owing to its situation, for many a mile. The stone monastery was on one side; and the whole looked like a little fortification on the point of the hill. We went into the church, and looked at the primitive ex-votos on the wall, principally the offerings of Mediterranean sailors in remembrance of escape from shipwreck – fragments of rope and chain, pictures of storms at sea, and little wooden models of ships. In addition to these marine souvenirs, there were also some tokens of events on dry land, generally pictures of run-aways, where such remarkable angels were represented sitting unexpectedly but calmly on the tops of trees by the road-side that it was no wonder the horses ran. But the lovely view of sea and shore at the foot of the great cross in the sunshine was better than the dark, musty little church, and we soon went out and seated ourselves on the edge of the wall to look at it. While we were there one of the Capuchins, clad in his long brown gown, came out, crossed the plaza, gazed at us slowly, and then with equal

slowness stooped and kissed the base of the cross, and returned, giving us another long gaze as he passed.

"Was that piety or curiosity?" I said.

"I think it was Miss Trescott," said Baker.

Now as Miss Elaine was present, this was a little cruel; but I learned afterwards that Baker had been rendered violent that day by hearing that his American politeness regarding Miss Elaine's self-bestowed society had been construed by that young lady into a hidden attachment to herself – an attachment which she "deeply regretted," but could not "prevent." She had confided this to several persons, who kept the secret in that strict way in which such secrets are usually kept. Indeed, with all the strictness, it was quite remarkable that Baker heard it. But not remarkable that he writhed under it. However, his remarks and manners made no difference to Miss Elaine; she attributed them to despair.

While we were sitting on the wall the Professor came toiling up the hill; but he had not found the asphodel. However, when Janet had given him a few of her pretty phrases he revived, and told us that the plaza was the site of an ancient village called Podium-Pinum, and that the Lascaris once had a château there.

"The same Lascaris who lived in the old castle at Mentone?" said Janet.

"The same."

"These old monks have plenty of wine, I suppose," said Inness, looking at the vine terraces which covered the sunny hill-side.

"Very good wine was formerly made around Mentone," said the Professor; "but the vines were destroyed by a disease, and the peasants thought it the act of Providence, and for some time gave up the culture. But lately they have replanted them, and wine is now again produced which, I am told, is quite palatable."

"That is but a cold phrase to apply to the *bon petit vin blanc* of Sant' Agnese, for instance," said Verney, smiling.

Soon we started homeward. While we were winding down the narrow path, we met a Capuchin coming up, with his bag on his back; he was an old man with bent shoulders and a meek, dull face, to whom the task of patient daily begging would not be more of a burden than any other labor. But when we reached the narrow main street, and found a momentary block, another Capuchin happened to stand near us who gave me a very different impression. Among the carriages was a phaeton, with silken canopy, fine horses, and a driver in livery; upon the cushioned seat lounged a young man, one of Fortune's favorites and Nature's curled darlings, a little stout from excess of comfort, perhaps, but noticeably handsome and noticeably haughty – probably a Russian nobleman. The monk who stood near us with his bag of broken bread and meat over his back was of the same age, and equally handsome, as far as the coloring and outline bestowed by nature could go. His dark eyes were fixed immovably upon the occupant of the phaeton, and I wondered if he was noting the difference; it seemed as if he must be noting it. It was a striking tableau of life's utmost riches and utmost

poverty.

That evening there was music in the garden; a band of Italian singers chanted one or two songs to the saints, and then ended with a gay Tarantella, which set all the house-maids dancing in the moonlight. We listened to the music, and looked off over the still sea.

"Isn't it beautiful?" said Mrs. Clary. "I think loving Mentone is like loving your lady-love. To you she is all beautiful, and you describe her as such. But perhaps when others see her they say: 'She is by no means all beautiful; she has this or that fault. What do you mean?' Then you answer: 'I love her; therefore to me she is all beautiful. As for her faults, they may be there, but I do not see them: I am blind.'"

That same evening Margaret gave me the following verses which she had written:

MENTONE

**"And there was given unto them a
short time before they went forward."**

Upon this sunny shore
A little space for rest. The care and sorrow,
Sad memory's haunting pain that would not cease,

Are left behind. It is not yet to-morrow.
To-day there falls the dear surprise of peace;
The sky and sea, their broad wings round us sweeping,
Close out the world, and hold us in their keeping.
A little space for rest. Ah! though soon o'er,
How precious is it on the sunny shore!

Upon this sunny shore
A little space for love, while those, our dearest,
Yet linger with us ere they take their flight
To that far world which now doth seem the nearest,
So deep and pure this sky's down-bending light
Slow, one by one, the golden hours are given
A respite ere the earthly ties are riven.
When left alone, how, 'mid our tears, we store
Each breath of their last days upon this shore!

Upon this sunny shore
A little space to wait: the life-bowl broken,
The silver cord unloosed, the mortal name
We bore upon this earth by God's voice spoken,
While at the sound all earthly praise or blame,
Our joys and griefs, alike with gentle sweetness
Fade in the dawn of the next world's completeness.
The hour is thine, dear Lord; we ask no more,
But wait thy summons on the sunny shore.

II

"Thy skies are blue, thy crags as wild,
Thine olive ripe, as when Minerva smiled."

– *Byron.*

"So having rung that bell once too often, they were all carried off," concluded Inness, as we came up.

"Who?" I asked.

"Look around you, and divine."

We were on Capo San Martino. This, being interpreted, is only Cape Martin; but as we had agreed to use the "dear old names," we could not leave out that of the poor cape only because it happened to have six syllables. We looked around. Before us were ruins – walls built of that unintelligible broken stone mixed at random with mortar, which confounds time, and may be, as a construction, five or five hundred years old.

"They – whoever they were – lived here?" I said.

"Yes."

"And it was from here that they were carried off?"

"It was."

"Were they those interesting Greek Lascaris?" said Mrs. Trescott.

"No."

"The Troglodytes?" suggested Mrs. Clary.

"No."

"The poor old ancient gods and goddesses of the coast?" said Margaret.

"No."

"But who carried them off?" I said. "That is the point. It makes all the difference in the world."

"I know it does," replied Inness; "especially in the case of an elopement. In this case it happened to be Miss Trescott's friends (always with two r's), the Sarrasins. The story is but a Mediterranean version of the boy and the wolf. These ruins are the remains of an ancient convent built in – in the remote Past. The good nuns, after taking possession (perhaps they were inland nuns, and did not know what they were coming to when they came to a shore), began to be in great fear of the sea and Sarrasin sails. They therefore besought the men of Mentone and Roccabruna to fly to their aid if at any time they heard the bell of the chapel ringing rapidly. The men promised, and held themselves in readiness to fly. One night they heard the bell. Then westward ran the men of Mentone, and down the hill came those of Roccabruna, and together they flew out on Capo San Martino to this convent – only to find no Sarrasins at all, but only the nuns in a row upon their knees entreating pardon: they had rung the bell as a test. Not long afterwards the bell rang again, but no one went. This time it really was the Sarrasins, and the nuns were all carried off."

"Very dramatic. The slight discrepancy that this happened to be a monastery for monks makes no difference: who cares for details!" said Verney, who, under the pretence of sketching the ruins, was making his eighth portrait of Janet. He said of these little pencil portraits that he "threw them in." Janet was therefore thrown into the Red Rocks, the "old town," the Bone Caverns, the Pont St. Louis, Dr. Bennet's garden, the cemetery, Capo San Martino, and before we finished into Roccabruna, Castellare, Monaco, Dolce Acqua, Sant' Agnese, and the old Roman Trophy at Turbia.

Leaving the ruins, we went down to the point, where the cape juts out sharply into the sea, forming the western boundary of the Mentone bay. Opposite, on the eastern point, lay blanche Bordighera, fair and silvery as ever in the sunshine. We found the Professor on the point examining the rocks.

"This is a formation similar to that which we may see in process of construction at the present moment off the coast of Florida," he explained.

"Not *coquina*?" cried Miss Graves, instantly going down and selecting a large fragment.

"It is conglomerate," replied the Professor, disappearing around the cliff corner, walking on little knobs of rock, and almost into the Mediterranean in his eagerness.

"That word conglomerate is one of the most useful terms I know," said Inness. "It covers everything: like Renaissance."

"The rock is also called pudding-stone," said Verney.

"Away with pudding-stone! we will have none of it. We are nothing if not dignified, are we, Miss Elaine?" said Inness, turning to that young lady, who was bestowing upon him the boon of her society for the happy afternoon.

"I am sure I have always thought you had a *great* deal of dignity, Mr. Inness," replied Miss Elaine, with her sweetest smile.

We sat down on the rocks and looked at the blue sea. "It is commonplace to be continually calling it blue," I said; "but it is inevitable, for no one can look at it without thinking of its color."

"It has seen so much," said Mrs. Clary, in her earnest way; "it has carried the fleets of all antiquity. The Egyptians, the Greeks, the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, and the Romans passed to and fro across it; the Apostles sailed over it; yet it looks as fresh and young and untraversed as though created yesterday."

"It certainly is the fairest water in the world," said Janet. "It must be the reflection of heaven."

"It is the proportion of salt," said the Professor, who had come back around the rock corner on the knobs. "A larger amount of salt is held in solution in the Mediterranean than in the Atlantic. It is a very deep body of water, too, along this coast: at Nice it was found to be three thousand feet deep only a few yards from the shore."

"These Mediterranean sailors are such cowards," said Inness. "At the first sign of a storm they all come scudding in. If the Phoenicians were like them, another boyhood illusion is gone!"

However, since they demolished William Tell, I have not much cared."

"The Mediterranean sailors of the past were probably, like those of the present, obliged to come scudding in," said Verney, "because the winds were so uncertain and variable. They use lateen-sails for the same reason, because they can be let down by the run; all the coasting xebecs and feluccas use them."

"Xebecs and feluccas – delicious words!" said Janet.

"I still maintain that they are cowards," resumed Inness. "The other day, when there was that capful of wind, you know, twenty of these delicious xebecs came hurrying into our little port, running into each other in their haste, and crowding together in the little pool like frightened chickens under a hen's wings. And they were not all delicious xebecs, either; there were some good-sized sea-going vessels among them, brig-rigged in front with the seven or eight small square sails they string up one above the other, and a towel out to windward."

"The winds of Mentone are wizards," said Margaret; "they never come from the point they seem to come from. If they blow full in your face from the east, make up your mind that they come directly from the west. They are enchanted."

"They are turned aside by the slopes of the mountains," said Baker, practically.

"But the Mediterranean has not lived up to its reputation, after all," said Janet. "I expected to see fleets of nautilus, and I have not seen one. And not a porpoise!"

"For porpoises," said Miss Graves, who had knotted a handkerchief around her conglomerate, and was carrying it tied to a scarf like a shawl-strap – "for porpoises you must go to Florida."

We left the cape and went inland through the woods, looking for the old Roman tomb. We found it at last, appropriately placed in a gray old olive grove, some of whose trees, no doubt, saw its foundations laid. The fragment of old roadway near it was introduced by Inness as "the Julia Augusta, lifting up its head again." It had laid it down last at the Red Rocks. The tomb originally was as large as a small chapel; one of the side walls was gone, but the front remained almost perfect. This front was in three arches; traces of fresco decoration were still visible under the curves. Below were lines of stone in black and white alternately, and the same mosaic was repeated above, where there was also a cornice stretching from the sides to a central empty space, once filled by the square marble slab bearing the inscription. We found Lloyd here, sketching; but as we came up he closed his sketch-book, joined Margaret, and the two strolled off through the old wood, which had, as Inness remarked, "as many moving associations" as we chose to recall, "from the feet of the Roman legions to those of the armies of Napoleon."

"I wish we knew what the inscription was," said Janet, who was sitting on the grass in front of the old tomb. "I should like to know who it was who was laid here so long, long ago."

"Some old Roman," said Baker.

"He might not have been old," said Verney, who was now sketching in his turn. "There is another Roman tomb, or fragment of one, above us on the side of the mountain, and the inscription on that one gives the name of a youth who died, 'aged eighteen years and ten months,' two thousand years ago, 'much sorrowed for by his father and his mother.'"

"Love then was the same as now, and will be the same after we are gone, I suppose," said Janet, thoughtfully, leaning her pretty head back against an old olive-tree.

"A reason why we should take it while we can," observed Inness.

The Professor and Miss Graves now appeared in sight, for we had come across from the cape in accidental little groups, and these two had found themselves one of them. As the Professor had his sack of specimens and Miss Graves her conglomerate, we thought they looked well together; but the Professor evidently did not think so, for he immediately joined Janet.

"I do not know that there is any surer sign of advancing age in a man than a growing preference for the society of very young girls – mere youth *per se*, as the Professor himself would say," said Mrs. Clary to me in an undertone.

Meanwhile the Professor, unconscious of this judgment, was telling Janet that she was standing upon the site of the old Roman station "Lumone," mentioned in Antony's Itinerary, and that the tomb was that of a patrician family.

Mrs. Trescott was impressed by this. She said it was "a pæan

moment" for us all, if we would but realize it; and she plucked a fern in remembrance.

One bright day not long after this we went to Mentone's sister city, Roccabruna, a little town looking as if it were hooked on to the side of the mountain. As we passed through the "old town" on our donkeys we met a wedding-party, walking homeward from the church, in the middle of the street. The robust bride, calm and majestic, moved at the head of the procession with her father, her white muslin gown sweeping the pavement behind her. Probably it would have been considered undignified to lift it. The father, a small, wizened old man, looked timorous, and the bridegroom, next behind with the bride's mother, still more so, even the quantity of brave red satin cravat he wore failing to give him a martial air. Next came the relatives and friends, two and two, all the gowns of the women sweeping out with dignity. In truth this seemed to be the feature of the occasion, since at all other times their gowns were either short or carefully held above the dust. There was no music, no talking, hardly a smile. A christening party we had met the day before was much more joyous, for then the smiling father and mother threw from the carriage at intervals handfuls of sugar-plums and small copper coins, which were scrambled for by a crowd of children, while the gorgeously dressed baby was held up proudly at the window.

We were going first to Gorbio. The Gorbio Valley is charming. Of all the valleys, the narrow Val de Menton is the loveliest for an afternoon walk; but for longer excursions, and

compared with the valleys of Carrei and Borrigio, that of Gorbio is the most beautiful, principally because there is more water in the stream, which comes sweeping and tumbling over its bed of flat rock like the streams of the White Mountains, whereas the so-called "torrents" of Carrei and Borrigio are generally but wide, arid torrents of stone. We passed olive and lemon groves, mills, vineyards, and millions upon millions of violets. Then the path, which constantly ascended, grew wilder, but not so wild as Inness. I could not imagine what possessed him. He sang, told stories, vaulted over Baker, and laughed until the valley rang again; but as his voice was good and his stories amusing, we enjoyed his merriment. Miss Elaine looked on, I thought, with an air of pity; but then Miss Elaine pitied everybody. She would have pitied Jenny Lind at the height of her fame, and no doubt when she was in Florence she pitied the Venus de' Medici.

We found Gorbio a little village of six hundred inhabitants, perched on the point of a rock, with the ground sloping away on all sides; the remains of its old wall and fortified gates were still to be seen. We entered and explored its two streets – narrow passageways between the old stone houses, whose one idea seemed to be to crowd as closely together and occupy as little of the ground space as possible. Above the clustered roofs towered the ruined walls of what was once the castle, the tower only remaining distinct. This tower bore armorial bearings, which I was trying to decipher, when Verney came up with Janet. "Nothing but those same arms of the Lascaris," he said.

"Why do you say 'nothing but'?" said Janet. "To be royal, and Greek, and have three castles – for this is the third we have seen – is not nothing, but something, and a great deal of something. How I wish *I* had lived in those days!"

As the Professor was not with us, we knew nothing of the story of Gorbio, and walked about rather uncomfortable and ill-informed in consequence. But it turned out that Gorbio, like the knife-grinder, had no story. "Story? Lord bless you! I have none to tell, sir." Inness, however, had reserved one fact, which he finally delivered to us under the great elm in the centre of the little plaza, where we had assembled to rest. "This peaceful village," he began, "whose idyllic children now form a gazing circle around us, was the scene of a sanguinary combat between the French and Spanish-Austrian armies in 1746."

"Oh, modern! modern!" said Verney from behind (where he was throwing Janet into Gorbio).

"Your pardon," said Inness, with majesty; "not modern at all. In 1746, as I beg to remind you, even the foundation-stones of our great republic were not laid, yet the man who ventures to say that it is not, as a construction, absolutely venerable, from exceeding merit, will be a rash one. In America, Time is not old or slow; he has given up his hour-glass, and travels by express. Each month of ours equals one of your years, each year a century. Therefore have we all a singularly mature air – as exemplified in myself. But to return. Upon this spot, then, my friends, there was once – carnage! The only positive and historical carnage in the

neighborhood of Mentone. Therefore all warlike spirits should come to Gorbio, and breathe the inspiring air."

We did not stay long enough in the inspiring air to become belligerent, however, but, on the contrary, went peacefully past a quiet old shrine, and took the path to Roccabruna – one of the most beautiful paths in the neighborhood of Mentone. By-and-by we came to a tall cross on the top of a high ridge. We had seen it outlined against the sky while still in the streets of Gorbio. These mountain-side crosses were not uncommon. They are not locally commemorative, as we first supposed, but seem to be placed here and there, where there is a beautiful view, to remind the gazer of the hand that created it all. Some distance farther we found a still wider prospect; and then we came down into Roccabruna, and spread out our lunch on the battlements of the old castle. From this point our eyes rested on the coast-line stretching east and west, the frowning Dog's Head at Monaco, and the white winding course of the Cornice Road. The castle was on the side of the mountain, eight hundred feet above the sea. Although forming part of the village, it was completely isolated by its position on a high pinnacle of rock, which rose far above the roofs on all sides.

"How these poor timid little towns clung close to and under their lords' walls!" said Baker, with the fine contempt of a young American. "They are all alike: the castle towering above; next the church and the priest; and the people – nowhere!"

"The people were happy enough, living in this air," said Mrs.

Clary. "How does it strike you? To me it seems delicious; but many persons find it too exciting."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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