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ILLUSTRATIONS, ETC.

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The Characters of Dickens portrayed by "Kyd" in color. N. D.

MENTONE IN SPRING.

How reluctantly one leaves this beautiful place, beautiful all winter, but still more so now, when over the stone walls are caught glimpses of fruit trees in blossom and the vivid green of young leaves. The long rows of plane trees in several of the streets, will soon be in full leaf, forming shady promenades beneath, where will soon be left to walk only the permanent residents, for the English are rapidly moving on.

One sees the omnibuses laden with luggage on their way to the station. The many large hotels filled all winter with gay and fashionable crowds, are closing. The band deprived of its audience will soon cease to charm, or the reverse, according to the tastes of its hearers. Yes—the season is over!

Not only for its scenery and climate is Mentone attractive. The historian, the botanist, and the artist may each find much to interest them. The old town, with its narrow, gloomy streets, is built on a promontory, on each side of which are two large bays, named respectively, the East and West Bay.

Although no precise date is given for the foundation of Mentone, it is supposed to owe its origin to the landing of pirates from the island of Lampedusa, near Malta, in the eighth century. The Romans once established a post there. The Counts of Kentimiglia took possession of Mentone about the thirteenth century, and afterwards ceded their rights to a Genoese noble. The next noteworthy event in the history of the town, was its purchase by Charles Grimaldi, Lord of Monaco, who, at the time of the French Revolution, was conquered by the troops of the Republic, and his possessions, Mentone, Monaco, and Roccabruna, were then joined to France, again in 1815 to be restored to the Prince of Monaco, and again in 1848 to rebel and throw off his yoke. Since that time, Mentone and its sister town of Roccabruna have belonged to France.

The sun beats down somewhat glaringly on the promenade by the sea, and the white dusty roads; but how lovely are the valleys, of which several run northward

from the sea. Their sides are terraced, and planted principally with the grape-vine and lemon, the latter fruit very largely predominating here over every other. A tradition says that Eve, driven from the Garden of Eden, carried in her hand a lemon, and seeking the most beautiful spot wherein to plant it, chose Mentone. Here at any rate it is seen to flourish in profusion, forming the principal trade of the place, and surely a profitable one, as there are three crops in the year.

Choosing this morning my favorite valley, that of the Gorbio, for a stroll, I wandered on, passing first the Palais Carnoles, with which are connected some historic facts. A guide book says: "If we may trust the manuscript history left in 1575 by Father Peter Boyer of the Order of St. Francis, a bloody battle took place in A. D. 70, in the plain of the Madone and Carnoles, between Otho and Vitellius, who were disputing the empire left vacant by the death of Galba. The name 'Carnoles,' says this writer, is derived from 'carnis laesio,' which means carnage."

The Palais Carnoles was once a residence of the Princes of Monaco, but it now belongs to the Saveresse family. I peeped through the old gateway, up a long and neglected avenue, at the end of which stood the faded, antiquated looking Palais. Then I continued my walk, admiring some beautiful roses. A great tree of white ones trailed long branches, perfect wreaths of leaves, flowers, and buds, over the stone wall; then there were large, soft, yellow ones, in which I would have liked to have buried my face.

Women passed me frequently, carrying on their heads with remarkable skill, burdens of all kinds, baskets filled with clothes, bundles of sticks, and some had their hands occupied with knitting.

My compassion was aroused for a donkey, ridden by a tall man. The donkey was gray, shaggy, diminutive, and the man's long legs almost touched the ground, but the little animal trotted along bravely.

My next object of interest was a picturesque old arch spanning the road, part of an aqueduct, the water from which turned a large wheel in connection with machinery for the manufacture of olive oil. The odour of the oil was heavy and sickening, but the splashing and falling of the water was so pleasant and musical. The outlines of the arch, the broken masses of masonry, with little tufts of ferns and green leaves growing out of the crevices, would form a tempting subject for the pencil of an artist.

On I went, on my right, reaching high up, were terraces of lemon trees, still bearing their golden fruit, such fine ones sometimes, large, fragrant and glossy. On my left was a valley, and in its green depths "A sound as of a running brook." The lemons were soon succeeded by a grove of olives, which I thought to-day particularly beautiful, with their dark trunks, and the sunshine on their greenish grey foliage, contrasting here and there with a fig tree. The ground was dotted with scarlet poppies. The birds here do not seem numerous, but one hears chirping, and now and then an interrupted song.

The village of Gorbio finally came into view. I had followed its zigzag ascent some weeks previously, accompanied by a friend, and with the assistance of a donkey. It is situated on a plateau, 1428

feet above the sea, and contains 500 inhabitants. It is a strange and interesting place. Its old circle of fortifications are now demolished. The castle called Lascais, occupied nearly the whole site of the village, which is detached and broken up by small, stony courtyards, connected by narrow alleys or lanes, (they are not worthy the name of streets) arched over. The glimpses we caught of interiors through the small dark windows, did not convey an idea of comfort. The place was moreover very dirty, with that peculiar odour which seems to distinguish old continental towns.

Gorbio also, has its history of battles and sieges, and is certainly advantageously situated for such catastrophes. In 1745 it was the scene of a desperate battle between the French and Austro-Sardinians. The inhabitants attribute their conversion to St. Barnabas, therefore their patron saint.

The annual fete, as is customary with the village fetes of this region, consists of religious observances, mingled with dancing and ordinary amusements. We remarked the pretty dark eyes and refined faces of the little girls who were playing about, and wondered if the "beauty born of murmuring sound" and the varying charm of their surroundings accounted for the delicacy of their expression.

Behind the plateau on which Gorbio stands, rise the higher mountain peaks, pinky grey in the sunshine, deepening to purple when shadowed by a cloud; some with smoothly rounded summits, others with serrated edges. Altogether a lovely scene.

One of the most delightful hours, now that the warmer weather has come, in which to see Mentone to advantage is just before sunset. The sun on the point of sinking behind a mountain, sends his rays far eastward, bathes in sunshine the mountains opposite, lights up wonderfully the distant promontory of Bordighera, and causes Les Rochers Rouges to glow with a richer colour. The sea, such a brilliant blue in the morning, changes to many softer and more neutral tints.

Along the promenade the peasant girls loiter idly beside their long line of donkeys, for which there is now little demand. The gay parties who used to ride them up the steep ascents, have gone to seek amusement elsewhere—so I hope, Oh, Montebello, Victoria, Garibaldi and the other less renowned of your species, that rest, or at least an easier form of labour will be your lot during summer months! Gone, alas, from their accustomed places are the invalids in their wheeled chairs, young men for the most part, in whose white, ghastly faces we longed to see the sunshine working a change for the better.

Yes, the season is over! But there is one place in the vicinity, only five miles distant, where the season is never over—the far-famed Monte Carlo. Year in and year out, on all the 365 days, excepting neither Sunday nor holy festival respected by the rest of the civilized world, its doors are open; and the strains of classical music from a band, said to be one of the best in the world, entice fashionable crowds to enter, where around tables may be seen the votaries of chance—men and women to whom the green cloth is more attractive than nature's various hues, and the glitter of the golden louis more delightful than the sunshine without on the Mediterranean.

C. T. L.