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PEEPS AT MANY LANDS

CORSICA

BY

ERNEST YOUNG, B.Sc.
Head Master, Lower School of John Lyon, Harrow
Author of
"A Peep at Siam," "The Kingdom of the Yellow Robe," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

E. A. NORBURY, R.C.A.

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1909
TO

MY FRIEND AND FELLOW TRAVELLER

A. E. DYSON
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CHAPTER I

A PEEP AT THE ISLAND

Corsica is so small that from its highest point one can see almost all over the island. It is only about three times the size of Yorkshire. As the island is approached by steamer, it appears from every point of view something like an ocean of granite, a mass of rock-waves. High up on the crests of some of the granite billows small villages can be seen, themselves resembling a heap of rocks more than anything else.

An examination of the map at the front of this book will show that there is one principal mountain-chain bending round from the north-west to the south-west, and rather nearer the west coast than the east, so that it divides the island into two unequal parts. From the central chain numerous small ranges run more or less directly to the sea. On the west, north, and south these chains end in capes, but in the east they form a series of terraces. Between the watersheds are hundreds
Corsica

of little streams and rivers. To get from the basin of one stream to that of another is so difficult, except along the coast, that each basin forms, as it were, a little world in itself.

Most of the soil is uncultivated, and in many parts the great rocks of red granite come up above the surface, and lie bare to the eye, unadorned with either tree, grass, or flower.

On the east coast there is a long stretch of low-lying land between the mountains and the sea. This is the most unhealthy part of the island, a mixture of swamps and lagoons, where deadly fevers have their home. It is only in winter and spring that life is possible on the eastern plain. In the spring the plain is exceedingly beautiful, decked with flowers and bright with verdure. On one side rolls the bluest of seas, crested with the whitest of foam. As you stand by the shore, and watch the great waves dashing themselves to pieces on the breakers or rippling caressingly over the tawny sands, it is almost impossible to believe that this smiling region is, during the hot weather, one of the unhealthiest places in Europe. About July or August the peasants lock up their houses, pack their carts with poultry, provisions, and children, and go up 3,000 feet into the mountains, to escape the fevers that come with the hot weather. Houses are shuttered and barred, fields and vineyards are left untended, and the peasants simply run away as fast as they can from a land where merely to sleep means death. The French
A Peep at the Island

Government is doing its best to improve the condition of things by planting groves of eucalyptus-trees in the most unhealthy places.

The eastern plain is broken here and there by a number of lagoons or shallow lakes, separated from the sea by long narrow sand-banks. These lagoons swarm with fish and cockles. One of them is known as the Lake of Diana. It is a great sheet of salt water, with one narrow opening to the sea. It contains a small island, 460 yards in circumference, which is made up entirely of oyster-shells, covered, however, with grass, shrubs, and trees. The island is built in the shallowest part of the lagoon, and dates from the time when Aleria used to send large supplies of salted oysters to the people of Rome.

The sharp piece projecting from the north of Corsica is called the Cap. It is only from eight to ten miles wide. Through it runs a range of mountains between 3,000 and 4,000 feet high, which lies nearer the west coast than the east, and has short narrow valleys running down to the eastern coast. The people of this part of Corsica are noted for being more peaceful and law-abiding than those in the other parts of the island.

The climate of Corsica is a very delightful one. More than half the days in the year are sunny ones, and of the dull, dreary kind that so often trouble our own island there are perhaps not more than fifty in a year. Mist and fog are seldom seen, and the rains, though heavy, do not last for long together. At times the islanders suffer
Corsica

from two objectionable winds, the mistral and the sirocco. The mistral comes over the sea from France. It is violent and cold, and arises in the highlands of Central France. It rushes down the Valley of the Rhone like “a blast from a giant’s bellows,” making those people who have gone to Southern France for warmth wish that they had stayed at home. Then it sweeps across the blue waters of the Mediterranean, and by the time it arrives at Corsica it has lost a little of its sting. Yet it still remains cold enough to be unpleasant. The sirocco is a hot wind from the south. It blows from the fiery desert of Sahara, and as its hot, sand-laden breath passes over the northern shores of Africa, the people find it nearly impossible to work, or even to move. In its journey across the Mediterranean it is slightly cooled, but it is never welcomed by the Corsicans, for not only is it still hot, but it has also become moist by contact with the water, and therefore produces great discomfort.

CHAPTER II

A PEEP AT CORSICAN HISTORY

A few of the main events in Corsican history during the last three or four hundred years will be told in connection with the accounts given in the following chapters, of the principal towns of the island. But before speaking of these later years of bloodshed and
A Peep at Corsican History

strife, let us get a glimpse of what happened during earlier times.

The first thing that strikes us on reading a history of Corsica is that, though the people live upon a small island, they have never acted as so many other island races have done. We never hear of Corsican sailors setting forth on voyages of adventure or exploration. There is no record of them invading the lands of their neighbours, either upon the islands or upon the shores of the Mediterranean. They do not appear to have practised piracy, preying upon the ships that passed their very doors as they carried the goods of other countries to and fro across the waters. As a rule, it may be said that they did not seek to interfere with anyone else. But, on the other hand, many people interfered with them. No one seemed to be able to leave them alone. The Mediterranean was of old "the Great Sea." On its waters the earliest sailors of whom we know anything went out to trade and to travel. On its shores many of the great nations that we read about first grew to glory and then sank into silence. Amongst these we may mention the people of Carthage, Greece, Rome, Pisa, and Genoa. All these in turn invaded Corsica, and did their best to conquer the island.

Corsica was at one time in the hands of the Carthaginians, but between two and three hundred years before the birth of Christ it passed under the control of Rome, at that time the mistress of the
Corsica

world. The Romans had their chief settlement at Aleria, near that Lake of Diana of which we have already spoken. The Corsicans did not tamely submit to the Roman invaders. They never, in fact, tamely submitted to anyone. They fought with courage and cunning. Like true mountaineers, they were hardy and fearless. They captured one of the Roman generals, and sent him home with a treaty of peace which they had forced him to sign. They rebelled over and over again, and it took the Romans nearly a hundred years before they obtained a peaceful occupation. Even then the islanders had not been completely conquered, and it was only in the lands by the sea that the Romans could really call themselves masters.

The next invaders came from the north of Europe—Goths and Vandals, those wild and wandering tribes that broke the power of Rome. They were followed about A.D. 720 by the Moors, who, having conquered Spain and passed the Pyrenees, turned their attention to this isle of the sea. About A.D. 1000, a number of lords leagued themselves together and set up a capital at Corté, in the centre of the island. They treated the people with great cruelty, and their subjects rose in rebellion and largely destroyed their power. It would take too long to tell here how, towards the end of the eleventh century, the Pisans conquered the island from the Moors, and how, about the middle of the fourteenth century, it passed finally to the Genoese. In 1768 Genoa sold the island to France; from 1793 to 1796 it belonged to England;
A Peep at Corsican History

it then passed once more under the control of France, and with them it has remained to this day, slowly but surely becoming more civilized and peaceful. But though the story is too long to tell in detail, yet a few incidents may be related merely to illustrate the quarrelsome, restless, and withal independent character of the people.

One feudal lord treated his retainers with great severity. Amongst them was a very daring man, whose heart burned at the injuries he had received. He came to his master and offered him a beautiful horse as a present. He proposed to the signor that he should come and see the animal put through its paces. The lord never dreamt that his vassal would dare to attack him, and left his friends and retainers behind. When they were in a lonely place, the vassal suddenly whirled a lasso over his head, caught his master round the neck, put spurs to his horse, and galloped away as fast as he could, thus dragging his prisoner after him and strangling him. When the man returned home, he was treated with great respect by his neighbours, for they looked upon him as a brave man, who had fought not only his own battles, but theirs also.

On another occasion, two of these great lords and their followers met one another and entered into conversation. While they were talking, two of their servants quarrelled. One of them picked up a little dog and threw it at the other. The dog missed the man at whom it was thrown and hit his lord instead.
Corsica

The great man was furious. He refused to accept any apology, and a quarrel broke out between the two friends which lasted many a day and cost many a life.

The rule of the Genoese lasted for 400 years, during which time the people were fined, exiled, and ill-treated in many ways. Most of the great names in Corsican history are the names of the men who, from time to time, called the people to arms, and tried to drive the oppressors away. One of the most famous of these was a man called Sampiero. He was born in 1497 and died in 1567, so that his life was lived during the time that Henry VII., Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary and Elizabeth sat upon the English throne. Many are the stories that are told of Sampiero that preserve for us the memories of his great courage and strength. When at Rome, a rival defied him to fight a wild bull. He accepted the challenge, tackled the bull, and killed it. Sampiero entered the French army, and at the siege of a certain town he, with the aid of fifty Italians, put 500 Spanish knights to flight. About the year 1553 he went to Corsica, and, assisted by the soldiers of France and the ships of Turkey, he attempted to drive the Genoese from the island. Six years later France made peace with Genoa, and took away her troops, but the Corsicans had no idea of surrendering, and Sampiero remained their leader. As he made little headway against the foe, he went to Constantinople and other places on the Continent to get foreign friends to aid him. While he was absent at Constantinople, he left
A Peep at Corsican History

his wife Vanina and his younger son at Marseilles. During his absence a priest, a pretended friend, persuaded Vanina that it would be well for her to go to Genoa. He told her that if she would surrender herself to the Genoese her husband would be pardoned, and the lands that had been taken away from him would be restored. She listened eagerly, agreed to the proposal, and set sail for Genoa. But some of Sampiero’s friends heard of this, pursued her, caught her, and managed to prevent her from surrendering to their violently hated foe. When Sampiero came home and heard that his wife had actually tried to make terms for him with the Genoese, his anger knew no bounds. He told her to prepare for instant death, and ordered her black slaves to strangle her. She pleaded for mercy, but he would not listen. Then she asked that if she had to die she might die by his hands, and not by the hands of slaves. He begged her pardon for the awful punishment he was about to inflict, and then straightway killed her. In the end he paid for this cruel deed with his own life, for his wife’s relatives were determined to avenge her death. They sent a false message to Sampiero by a trusted servant, telling him to go to a certain place to put down a rising. His way lay through a narrow defile, and there, behind the rocks, his enemies lay concealed. At a convenient moment they surrounded him and fired upon him. He fought valiantly for his life, but fell at last, stabbed to the heart. His head was cut off and taken to the Genoese, as evidence that their powerful
foe was dead. Sampiero was nearly seventy when he died. Except for the murder of his wife, whom he regarded as a traitor to his country, his life was singularly pure and upright, and he was respected by friend and foe alike. Here for the present we may leave off our history. What remains to be told can best be related in connection with one or two of the towns that we shall presently describe.

CHAPTER III
ALERIA AND THEODORE

Aleria is a little hamlet on the east coast of Corsica. In the days when the Romans held the island there was a population of about 20,000. To-day there is but a mere handful of dirty houses. In those times there was a residence for the governor and several important public buildings. All that is left to remind us of the Romans consists of a few formless heaps of stone, and the oyster-shell island in the neighbouring Lake of Diana.

As I rode into Aleria on my bicycle one sunny afternoon, I was greeted by a crowd of children and a shower of stones. The little ones seemed quite good-natured, but their stony welcome was rather too vigorous to be pleasant. Everybody in Corsica throws stones, and most people can aim straight. A shepherd will bring back a straggler into the flock with a well-directed pebble; a muleteer will guide his mule in the
same way; the dogs are so used to this kind of message that if a man but stoop to the ground, they expect a visit from a lump of granite, and fly with all the speed they possess.

The three most interesting things to be seen in Aleria to-day are the inn, the village bakehouses, and the old Genoese fort. The inn is a poor specimen of a place of rest for a weary traveller. It contains a shop, where wine and hair-oil, biscuits and tin-tacks, straw hats and jam, are sold to the people of the hamlet; a dark kitchen; one bedroom for all the family, and another for all the guests. The breakfast served in the morning is not a tempting one. All the food that can be obtained is sour bread without butter, bacon, or jam, and black coffee without either milk or sugar. Sour bread and black coffee form the usual breakfast of the Corsican peasant, and are all that the traveller can obtain in out-of-the-way places.

In the towns the ovens in which bread is baked are usually inside the houses, but in the villages bread is baked in stone bread-ovens placed by the road-side. Some villages seem to possess more bread-ovens than houses. Aleria certainly has a full share. If the number of ovens be limited, the people have to take their turn at baking the family loaves, and only one baking-day in each week can be allowed to each family. Corsican bread is hard enough on the day when it is baked. On the seventh, when it is thoroughly stale, it requires a hammer and chisel to make a hole in the
Corsica crust. On baking-days big bundles of blazing shrubs are first put into the oven, and the whole of the interior is made almost red-hot. The ashes are swept out with a branch, and the loaves are placed on the hot stones and left there for about a couple of hours.

The old Genoese fort is picturesque, but useless. Its presence, however, reminds us of the strange history of King Theodore. In a previous chapter we have stated that the Genoese got possession of Corsica about the middle of the fourteenth century, and that they kept it for nearly 400 years. The people made many attempts from time to time to get rid of the foreigners, whom they hated violently, on account of their cruel and oppressive rule. One of the most interesting chapters in the story of this struggle for freedom is that which relates the doings of Theodore van Neuhoff. He was a German, born at Metz in 1696, and brought up as a page at the Court of the Duchess of Orleans. He led a very roving life, and in the course of his wanderings he arrived one day at Genoa. It happened that at that very time a number of Corsicans had been brought as prisoners to the city. Theodore talked to the captives, and from them he learned of the efforts which the Corsicans were making to be free. From Genoa he went to Leghorn, where he met a powerful Corsican nobleman. He promised this man that he would undertake to drive the Genoese out of the island in less than a year, provided only that in return he should be elected King of Corsica. The proposal was
Aleria and Theodore

considered and accepted, and early on the morning of March 12, 1736 (that is, during the reign of our King, George II.), he arrived at Aleria. The people crowded to the shore to welcome the new-comer, whom they expected to bring arms and ammunition. Theodore was dressed in a curious fashion. He had on a long Persian vest of scarlet silk, Moorish trousers, yellow shoes, and a Spanish hat and feather. He carried a pair of pistols in his belt, a sabre at his side, and a truncheon in his hand by way of a sceptre. With him were sixteen attendants—two Frenchmen, eleven Italians, and three Moors. Everyone anxiously watched the discharge of the ship's cargo. This included 10 pieces of cannon, 4,000 muskets, 3,000 pairs of shoes, 700 sacks of grain, a great deal of ammunition, and some casks filled with money. Theodore handed all these things over to the chief men of the island, telling them that more would soon follow.

He was taken to a village not far away, and there in the village church he was solemnly crowned as Theodore I. As the people were too poor to buy him a crown of gold, he had to be satisfied with one of plaited oak and laurel leaves. It was not long before all his money was spent. No more arrived, and the subjects of the new King began to grumble. Theodore wished them farewell for a time, and came over to the continent of Europe to get fresh assistance. He fell into debt, and was imprisoned at Amsterdam, but in 1738 he returned to Aleria accompanied by three men-of-war,
Corsica

a number of gunboats, and some vessels bearing stores. This time he brought 27 pieces of cannon, 7,000 muskets with bayonets, 1,000 muskets of a larger size, 2,000 pistols, 24,000 pounds of coarse powder, 100,000 pounds of fine powder, 200,000 pounds of lead, 400,000 flints, 50,000 pounds of iron, 2,000 lances, and 2,000 grenades and bombs. But to his great disappointment, he found that during his absence the very people who had crowned him King had entered into a league with France, and would no longer receive him as their Sovereign. But he did not give up hope, and after a visit to England he once more returned to Corsica, bringing with him gifts of guns and money. The people took his gifts willingly enough, but they refused to take him as their ruler, and in despair he finally left the island and came back to England.

Soon after his arrival in London he was thrown into the King's Bench Prison for debt. In order to regain his liberty, he made over his kingdom of Corsica to his creditors. On leaving the gaol, he was taken in a sedan chair to the house of the Portuguese Minister. The Minister was not at home, and as Theodore had no money with which to pay the chairmen, he told them to carry him to the house of a tailor in Soho. There he died three days later. He was buried at the cost of a small tradesman named John Wright, who had known him in better days, and who generously wished to save the exiled monarch the shame of a pauper's funeral.

Theodore rests to this day in St. Anne's Church, Soho
Bonifacio

London. On the wall of the church there is a tablet to his memory, which bears an epitaph written by Horace Walpole, and which concludes with these words:

"The grave, great teacher, to a level brings
Heroes and beggars, galley slaves and kings;
But Theodore, this moral learn'd ere dead,
Fate pour'd its lessons on his living head,
Bestow'd a kingdom and denied him bread."

CHAPTER IV

BONIFACIO

The Genoese founded five colonies in what are now five of the chief towns of Corsica. These were Bonifacio, Calvi, San Florent, Bastia, and Ajaccio. Four of these towns are described in this and the three succeeding chapters. Each of the towns possesses its own particular interest, and differs from the others in many ways.

Bonifacio owes its name to Boniface, a Tuscan Duke, who founded the town over a thousand years ago. He had been fighting in Africa, and on his way home he touched at the southern end of the island and built a fortress which he called by his own name, a name that has also been given to the strait that separates Corsica from the more southerly island of Sardinia. Boniface intended his fort to be used as a defence against Saracen pirates.

In due time (1195) it was taken by the Genoese, who drove out nearly all the original inhabitants and replaced
them by their own people. To these people they gave a great deal of liberty. The new colonists were allowed to coin their own money and to make most of their own laws. In consequence of this treatment, they remained faithful to the Genoese in later years, at a time when most of the other towns in the island were rebelling against foreign rule. They defended their town with courage and determination on many occasions, when they were attacked by Corsican or other forces. At one time they were besieged by Alphonso V., the King of Aragon, who said that the island belonged to him, because the Pope had made a present of it to his father. As no one paid any attention to his claims, he came with a fleet and 10,000 men to obtain possession of his rights. He laid siege to Bonifacio. He surrounded the town both by land and by sea for a period of five months. From a hill to the north of the town he directed a steady bombardment against the fort, and destroyed a part of the defences. Provisions grew scarce, but the colonists still held out. A small vessel escaped from the harbour and managed to reach Genoa, carrying the news to the doge of that city that if help did not soon arrive, the inhabitants of Bonifacio would be forced by fire and hunger to surrender the fort that they had so valiantly defended. The doge lost no time in sending a small fleet laden with provisions, but this fleet carried only 1,500 men to relieve a place that was besieged by 10,000. The inhabitants had almost given up all hope of relief, and the Spaniards were expecting
THE HARBOUR, BONIFACIO.
the immediate surrender of the fort and town, when a new Genoese force, clad in bright armour, appeared upon the walls. The Spaniards were told that reinforcements had arrived during the night, though, as a matter of fact, nothing of the kind had happened. The new army consisted simply of the women, children, and priests of the town, who had clothed themselves in steel in order to take part in the defence of their homes. When the real Genoese relief force did arrive, it found the harbour blocked by a number of galleys firmly chained together. The Genoese commander drove his vessels against the chain, forced the barrier, and so got through the Spanish lines and saved the town. Alphonso left the Corsicans to themselves, and never again made any attempt to capture the island.

The inhabitants of Bonifacio speak a special dialect of their own. They are much more gentle in their manners than the rest of the Corsicans, whom they regard as strangers. They are not quarrelsome, and murders, which are so common everywhere else, are here almost unknown. The men work hard, and do not treat their women as slaves and beasts of burden. About the only time in the year when the women of Bonifacio are expected to work in the fields is at the time of the olive harvest, when everybody leaves the town in the morning and returns again only in the evening. During the day the town is completely deserted. The whole population is in the fields. The return of the labourers in the evening is a curious sight. They come home in a
Corsica

long procession, walking one behind the other in single file, accompanied by hundreds of donkeys bearing baskets full of ripe olives.

Bonifacio is one of the most picturesque and interesting places in the island. It is built on the top of a high mass of white chalk, and is reached by a steep and winding road. The streets are narrow alleys with numerous passages, connecting one with the other, and winding in and out in all directions. The houses are tall and dirty, and so close together that in many places the sun finds little chance of entering the unpleasantly smelling byways.

On one side of the town, overlooking the sea, there is a terrace, from which you can pass by means of a long flight of steps to the waves at the foot of the rock. Tradition states that the staircase was cut in a single night. Not far from the terrace is an old church, which is said to contain a piece of the cross upon which Christ was crucified.

I must tell you how this bit of the true cross came to be found. Bonifacio had been attacked and plundered by the Saracens, and the people were in great distress. One morning, some of the inhabitants observed an ox and an ass kneeling in front of their one little spring. The animals were gazing intently at the surface of the water. The men who had seen this curious sight ran away and told their friends. It was not long before a huge crowd had gathered round the kneeling animals. Amongst this crowd were two or three priests. They noticed that the waters of the spring, which were usually quiet,
Bonifacio

were now jumping about and bubbling over in a most excited manner. Coming nearer, they found that there was a bit of wood in the water, and that it was whirling round at a great rate. They seized it and examined it, and pronounced it to be a bit of the true cross.

The sacred morsel of wood is now kept in a cupboard built into the wall, and is guarded by an iron door. The door has two keys, one of which is in the possession of the Mayor, while the curé has charge of the other. The lock is so made that both keys are required to open it. On certain days of the year the relic is carried in procession through the town. On dark nights, when tempests are howling, and the great waves are dashing in fury against the base of the rock, the people go to the Mayor, and then to the curé, and escort them both to the church. The cupboard is unlocked, the bit of sacred wood is carried to the edge of the cliffs, and prayers are said above the angry waters. Then the tempest ceases, the waves become still, and the morsel of the true cross is once more locked up in its strongly guarded resting-place.

There are other superstitions at Bonifacio, such as the one which tells you never to sleep with your feet pointing to the door, as that is the way corpses go out. Then, if anyone is ill in the house, or away from home, so that he cannot take his usual place at the table, no one else is allowed to sit in the empty chair. If there be any fear that this will happen, the table is always pushed with one side against the wall, thus preventing
Corsica

anyone from sitting on that side. The plate and knife and fork of the sick or absent one are laid just the same as if he were present.

The bit of sacred wood is not the only valuable relic that Corsicans claim to possess, for in the crypt of one of their churches in the north they have a little bit of the earth out of which Adam was made, a handful of almonds from the Garden of Eden, a handful of manna gathered by the Israelites in the wilderness, and the rod with which Moses divided the waters of the Red Sea so that the Jews could pass over. These precious relics have been in the country between five and six hundred years. They were saved from the wreck of a Spanish ship that was three times cast upon the shore.

There is no public water-supply for the houses in any Corsican town. Most of the water required for washing and cooking has to be carried from wells, streams, or springs. In that part of Bonifacio which is built on the summit of the rock there are one public and thirty-nine private cisterns, in which rain-water from the roofs is stored. Down by the sea there is one, and only one, spring of water fit to drink. The people who have no private cisterns are obliged to descend every day to the low town to get water for use in their houses. Some men get their living by carrying water to the high town in barrels on the backs of mules. They sell the water at a penny a barrel. Now people must eat, though they need not wash. Hence water is chiefly used for cooking.
Bonifacio

is reserved as a special duty, to be performed only on high days and holidays. Such a thing as a good bath is unknown, and there is probably not a single bathroom in the whole place. This is the case, not merely in Bonifacio, but throughout the length and breadth of the island. The difficulty of getting water is so great that the people decline to waste it by pouring it over their bodies. When they wish to wash their clothes, they carry them to the nearest stream, and there, in full view of every passer-by, they cleanse the family linen. Floors are never scrubbed, window-panes are never cleaned. Both houses and people are nearly as dirty as if soap had never been invented.

Wherever you travel throughout the land you will see peasant-women and young girls carrying water in big pails. Some of these pails weigh, when full of water, from 50 to 60 pounds. They are balanced on the head. The women trip along merrily, never stumbling on the mountain-paths nor tripping over the holes in the streets. Except in Bonifacio, it is always the women who carry the water, never the men. They seldom hurry over their task. At the fountain or the spring they meet their neighbours and have a good gossip, and the Corsican woman is fond of gossip, even if she is not fond of carrying heavy pails of water.

There are few industries in Corsica, except those of tilling fields and tending vines and orchards, so that the existence of one in any place is worth mentioning. At Bonifacio there is a factory for the manufacture of
Corsica
corks. The cork-oak is a common tree in the island, and its bark is of great value. It is exported either in strips, or else as corks for bottles. The cork-factory at Bonifacio is the most important in the island, and one of the first four belonging to France. It makes as many as 24,000,000 corks in a year.

CHAPTER V
CALVI

Calvi was the second colony founded in Corsica by the Genoese. These "colonies" were not places like the English colonies of Canada, South Africa, and elsewhere, where people emigrate to trade and live and make a home for themselves and their families. They were rather strong fortresses, where soldiers were kept in readiness to subdue rebellious natives. As has already been pointed out in the case of Bonifacio, the colonists had special privileges, and in times of trouble could generally be relied upon to prove loyal to the power to which they belonged.

The Genoese were not the first to build a fort at Calvi, for one had been erected there in the thirteenth century by the leader of one of those many Corsican factions that were always fighting each other when there was no need to fight anybody else. Once, when the builder of the fort was absent, it was attacked and captured by another powerful island family. In course of time the dwellers within and without the walls
Calvi

rebelled against their lords, and drove them away. The place fell finally into the hands of the Genoese, who, in 1278, gave to their colonists the same privileges that they had granted to the settlers at Bonifacio. As usual in such cases, the rulers reaped the reward of their kindness and their foresight, for when, in 1553, a combined army of Turks and French tried to capture Calvi, the women mounted the walls by the side of their husbands, and fought bravely for their foreign overlords.

As English people we have a special interest in Calvi. In 1793 we were at war with the French Republic. It was decided by the English Government that, amongst other places in the Mediterranean that ought to belong to England, that might be useful to us, and which we therefore ought to possess, was Corsica. It must be remembered that by this time Corsica had passed completely from the possession of Genoa, and was now in the hands of France. The Corsicans had fought against the French, as they had fought against the Genoese. Their leader at this time was a man named Paoli. He asked the English to help him to drive out the French, and promised that in return for that help the island should be ceded to us. Amongst the sailors who were employed to help the Corsicans in the capture of the forts was Nelson. In 1794 he wrote home: “This island is to belong to England, to be governed by its own laws as Ireland, and a Viceroy placed here, with free ports. Italy and Spain are jealous of our obtaining possession; it will command the Mediterranean.”
Corsica

When Bastia had been captured, an attack was made on Calvi. The work was very difficult. The guns had to be dragged at least a mile and a half, always over bad roads, and often up steep slopes. While Nelson was superintending the bombardment, a shell from the enemy fell almost at his feet. It burst among some sand-bags, and when Nelson rose from the ground, he complained that there was something in his right eye. The doctors examined the eye, but said they could only see a little sand in it. They did not regard the matter as serious, but the eye was so badly injured that Nelson eventually lost the use of it.

One day, a few years ago, I steamed into the little station of Calvi, and as I looked at the still blue waters of the bay and the grim grey flanks of the snow-capped mountains on the other side of the harbour, I could not help thinking of that eventful day in 1794 when the English pitched 4,000 bombs into the town and reduced it to a heap of ruins. After I had duly lunched on Corsican wine and sausage, I strolled down to the shore of the little bay. I sat down on the jetty to think. My eye wandered to the spot where a part of the fort came down to meet the water. My meditations upon Nelson and his deeds were interrupted by a small boy in scarlet knickerbockers and a blue jersey. I turned to him eagerly, as I was in want of information. He was young enough to be at school, and therefore not old enough to have forgotten all he had learned there.

"Have you ever heard of Nelson?" I asked.
Calvi

"Non, monsieur. Where does he live?"
"I can't say exactly. He came to Calvi more than a hundred years ago."
"Then he must be dead?"
"Yes; he is dead."
"Donnez-moi un sou."

I passed along the almost deserted quay. Old men and young were taking refuge from the sun in shady nooks and corners. Straggling up from the sea to the rocks above were tiny crooked little streets, houses with curious balconies, outside staircases, and powerful odours. The quay was closed at the far end by the walls of the fort. A bank of prickly pear covered the mound that led from the sea to the wall of the citadel. Here I photographed, surrounded by a troop of small children. One urchin in particular attracted my attention. He had on a blue coat and trousers. On his head was a flat blue cap. Round his neck he wore a pink and white striped handkerchief. His feet were bare, but it was so long since they had been washed that the covering of grime upon them served for boots.

"Have you ever heard of Nelson?" I asked.
"No; who was he?"
"An English sailor."
"Is he on the Nice boat?"
"No."
"Is he on the Marseilles boat?"
"No."
"Then he never comes to Calvi. Donnez-moi un sou."

COR. 25 4
Corsica

As I politely refused his request, he climbed to the top of a high rock, and began to hurl stones at me. I found that in the Basse Ville, where the sailors and the shopkeepers live, there was little chance of getting any information about our greatest naval hero. But far above me, dark and frowning, high and strong, were the walls of the citadel. I made my way up a pebbly incline, and presently found myself at the entrance to the fort itself. Inside, a roughly paved road ascended rapidly by means of steps, winding round and round, and ever getting nearer the summit of the rock on which the fort is built. Narrow streets dodged hither and thither. Houses played hide-and-seek in all sorts of strange and smelly places. Hospitals, churches, barracks, houses, canteens, were piled about and on top of one another as though somebody had accidentally upset the whole lot out of a sack.

I noticed two intelligent-looking little girls, and I entered into conversation with them. After a time I asked, "Do you go to school?"
"Certainly."
"And do you learn history?"
"Truly."
"Then who was Nelson?"
"Who?"
"Nelson."
"Who was he?"

I explained, but she knew nothing about him. She had never even heard his name. And yet he blew her
Calvi

native town to pieces, and lost his right eye while he was doing it! A boy who had been listening to our conversation now joined in and said, "I know about Christopher Columbus."

"Well," said I, "what do you know about him?"

"He was born here. I am one of his descendants. Shall I show you the house where he was born?"

Now this was the first time that I had ever heard that Christopher Columbus was a Corsican, but I followed the guide, and presently we arrived in front of a ruined house. Near to what had once been a doorway there was a white marble slab, on which were the following words: "Here was born, in 1441, Christopher Columbus, immortalized by his discovery of the New World at a time when Calvi was under the domination of the Genoese. He died at Valladolid on the 20th May, 1550."

So my ramble to Calvi had resulted in my finding, not the spot where Nelson had lost his eye, but the place where the Corsicans say Christopher Columbus was born.

At Bonifacio we found a cork-factory. At Calvi there is a pipe-factory. One of the chief shrubs that clothe this island like a carpet of green is the white heath, or bruyère. It has a heavy red root, which is used in the manufacture of briar pipes. The word "briar" is only a corruption of the word bruyère. The briar-wood is boiled in big vats for sixteen hours, and then sawn into blocks that are more or less of the shape of a pipe. The blocks are sent to Europe to be finally carved into proper shapes. Many of the so-called "French briars" really
Corsica
come in the first instance from Corsica. Perhaps it is because briars are so plentiful that the Corsican peasant smokes a pipe. Nearly everywhere else in the south of Europe the poorest classes of people smoke cigarettes and cigars. In Corsica cigarettes are rarely seen, and cigars are not much more common. The proper native cigar is a strange-looking brown stump, about two inches long and three-quarters of an inch thick.

CHAPTER VI

BASTIA

The third of the Genoese colonies in Corsica, St. Florent, we shall pass over without further mention. The fourth, Bastia, was at one time the capital, and is still the chief commercial town of the island. In its earlier days, when it was only an unimportant fishing village, it was known by another name. But in 1380 a strong fort was built here, and from the word "bastille," which means a "fort," the name of Bastia was obtained. Under the Genoese Bastia became a very important place, and contained the residence of the Governor. Although it was strongly fortified, yet it was captured and recaptured more than once. Like Calvi, it is associated with some of the deeds of Nelson. Nelson was very anxious to take Bastia from its French possessors, and he tried hard for a long time to get the commander of the English soldiers to lend him some assistance. But the
Bastia

military leader was timid, and very slow in making up his mind. Nelson, lying off Bastia at the time, wrote to his wife: "If I had carried with me 500 troops, to a certainty I should have stormed the town, and I believe it might have been carried. Armies go so slow that seamen think they never mean to go forward.'"

At last, however, he had his way, and troops and seamen were landed to attack the fort. After a short but fierce bombardment, the French flag was hauled down and the British colours were run aloft. Nelson says it was "the most glorious sight that an Englishman could experience, and which I believe none but an Englishman could bring about. Four thousand five hundred men laying down their arms to less than 1,000 British soldiers who were serving as marines." During this attack Nelson was wounded in the back.

In Bastia we can see many excellent examples of the Corsican method of building houses. The houses are very tall, and consist of a huge number of flats, with one or more families in every flat. When a Corsican builds a house, he never thinks of occupying the whole of it himself. He lives on the third or fourth floor, and lets the rest of the building out to other tenants. On the ground-floor there is probably a shop. On the top-floor there will be a washerwoman or a gardener. The higher you live, the less rent you have to pay, so that many different classes of society are often gathered together under the same roof. Sometimes the various stories are not let for rent, but are sold outright, and
Corsica

In that case there may be as many landlords as there are flats. In Bastia some of these tall, dirty houses contain over 500 people. They are rarely less than five to six stories high, and from six to nine windows broad. It is just the same in Calvi, Bonifacio, and the other Corsican towns. Even in the villages a man rarely has a whole house to himself. Every room in every flat is about as dirty as it can well manage to be, owing to the lack of a proper water-supply. The only clean thing in the houses, and to the credit of the peasant let it be mentioned, is the bed-linen; that is always as spotless as the visitor could desire. In the rooms there is but little furniture of any kind; in the poorest houses there is often an insufficient supply of beds, and the men-folk sleep on the floor in the clothes they have worn all day long. The kitchen contains small stoves, which are used for cooking; when the cooking is finished, the fire is allowed to go out. Only very rarely are fires used for warmth; the houses are therefore cold and uncomfortable, and as each room has a number of doors that never fit, they are very draughty. The floors are usually of tiles, or even of the bare earth; wooden floors are not common; the chimneys generally smoke. To get from one story to the next, stone staircases are employed. The only light they obtain comes from openings pierced in the outer walls. As the stairs belong to everybody in general, and therefore to nobody in particular, they are rarely repaired, and are rather dangerous to those who are not used to them. A description of a house
Bastia

in Ajaccio, written by a lady who has travelled much in Corsica, will serve to give an idea of many of the dwellings occupied by the poor: “The house consisted of two tiny chambers, the inner one a mere cupboard some 8 by 10 feet, which only received light from the outer room by the communicating door; this acted as bedroom and kitchen combined. On the narrow bed lay four loaves; a small kitchen range and a table crammed with cooking-pots left scarcely space to turn round. In the bigger room stood two beds, on one of which lay what at first sight we took for a crumpled patchwork quilt, but which turned out to be a sick grandmother swathed in rags. The table was occupied by some artichokes and a basket of small fish. A couple of chairs stood on the uncarpeted plank floor, and the only other articles in the room were the lamps, some vases of paper flowers, and the inevitable family photographs upon the mantelpiece. . . . In this unlovely home live an old woman, her daughter and granddaughter, with the occasional additional presence of the grandson, a young fisherman, who occupied the kitchen during his brief home-comings, his mother and sister then sharing a bed in the next room.” *

Most of these high houses surround a central court. The system of drainage is bad. All the refuse is got rid of by the simple plan of pouring it into a number of earthenware pipes which are so arranged that the

* “Through Corsica with a Camera.”—D'Este.
Corsica

open ends of the pipes are under the several windows of the house. When the occupants are in a hurry, they throw all the rubbish into the courtyard below, and leave it there to rot. The odours are indescribable, and one wonders how the people find it possible to live amongst them.

The chief things noticeable in all places, large or small, where the Corsican lives are always dirt and smells. The shutters of the houses are broken, the paint on the woodwork is blistered, the plaster is peeling off the walls, and ugly stains disfigure the ancient whitewash. The family washing is hung on lines between the different houses, and there is usually so much of it that the visitor is left bewildered as to why a people who are so uncleanly as regards their bodies and their houses should take the trouble to wash their clothes.

In Bastia there are two towns, an old and a new. The new is certainly at the present time a little cleaner than the old, but given sufficient time, it will surely become equally unpleasant to the nose. In the new town stands a statue of Napoleon, looking dreamily away across the harbour to that little island of Elba, where he spent a period of short exile from France. As someone has remarked, the stone figure seems to be saying, "How could you expect that little island to hold me?"

It is to the new town that the ships come that carry the produce of the island to other lands. The quays
OLD HOUSES, BASTIA
Ajaccio and Napoleon

are always busy and crowded, and people have to pick their way amongst piles of cork, stacks of wine-bottles, casks of olive-oil, and loads of charcoal.

CHAPTER VII

AJACCIO AND NAPOLEON

Ajaccio as we see it to-day is not an old town. The fortress that is known to have existed here in earlier times has disappeared, and the city that was the seat of a bishopric for hundreds of years has vanished, without leaving a trace of its former existence behind. The modern Ajaccio, or rather, the older part of the modern Ajaccio, was established in the fifteenth century by the Genoese on a site about a mile to the south of the old hill-city which tradition asserts to have once flourished there.

The chief feature of Ajaccio as one sees it on arriving by steamer from Marseilles is the gaiety of its aspect. The tall houses are painted pale blue, pink, or light green, and in the early morning, when the face of the gulf is without a ripple, the many-coloured town is reflected as in a Swiss lake. It is set in a framework of high mountains, which until late spring remain crowned and adorned with masses of snow. The streets are lined with palms and orange and lemon trees, which give the place quite an Oriental appearance. The trees at Easter are laden with fruit, but the ripe oranges are
Corsica

left severely alone by the children in the streets, for they are bitter and unpleasant to the taste.

The men walk about in the squares, sit at the cafés, lounge on the benches, and stare at the sea, and seem to know little of the meaning of work. What they want in the way of food, clothing, and rent is obtained for them by their hard-working women-folk. The women are seen riding and driving mules, carrying water, buying and selling in the markets. The general rule is that the women do all the work, while the men sit and think. If their thinking is equal to their sitting, they must be a very thoughtful race. They do nothing else. Even the only engineer, motor and cycle repairer in Ajaccio is a wrinkled old woman.

At all hours of the day women assemble at the public fountain, which also serves as the public washing-place. These women are mostly dressed in black, for a reason that will be best understood after reading the chapter on "The Vendetta."

The houses are of the usual pattern, tall, arranged in flats, and containing an enormous number of tenants. The open drain-pipes that crawl over the outsides of the dwellings are as offensive to the nose as they are to the eye.

As every schoolboy knows, Ajaccio, the present capital of the island, was the birthplace of Napoleon. And even if you have forgotten the fact, you have not long set foot in the town before you are reminded of it. Everything speaks to you of Napoleon. His
Ajaccio and Napoleon

shadow haunts the place. Streets have been named after him, chapels have been built to his memory, the local museum is crowded with souvenirs of himself and his family, his statues adorn the public squares, and the dull-looking house that was the nest of this imperial eagle is a place of frequent pilgrimage. Like a good tourist, I went to see the great usurper’s earliest home. It is very plain, but it is one of the best in Ajaccio. It is built in three stories, each containing six windows. Over the front-door is inscribed on white marble, “Napoléon was born in this house, August 15th, 1769.”

No sooner does the traveller get within easy reach of the Place Letitia, where the house stands, than he is surrounded by children screaming, “La maison Napoléon! la maison Napoléon!” I chose a little girl as a guide. A score or two of children, friends and acquaintances of the guide, followed us, forming a very noisy escort. They demanded with great patience and energy, “Un sou, monsieur—un sou.” Our chosen leader proved herself a true daughter of a fighting race by turning round from time to time and dealing vigorous blows at anybody within convenient reach. The blows, however, were without the least effect, nor did the crowd diminish or the cries cease because I steadily refused to reply to the demand for sous.

We were conducted over the house by an elderly, benevolent-looking woman.

“Are you French?” I asked.
Corsica

She was highly offended, for the Corsicans are an extremely patriotic nation, and think most other people, the French included, far beneath themselves in courage and other manly virtues. The old lady drew herself up to her full height, and, looking as vicious as such a nice old lady possibly could, she snapped out, "No; Corsican."

"So much the better," I replied, and she forgave me at once. She showed us only the rooms on the first floor of the house. There was the little parlour with a few articles of furniture which she said had originally belonged to the family. I learned afterwards that they had never done anything of the kind. There was the little room where the hero was born, a dining-room with a floor of glazed tiles, and a drawing-room with a floor of inlaid wood.

The baby Napoleon was an ugly little fellow, with a very big head. He screamed so loudly that he astonished most people who had ever had any experience of the strength of a baby’s lungs. As he grew to boyhood he was noted for his ugliness. Everyone who saw him remarked his enormous head and his feeble body. He had a naughty temper, and gave himself and others a great deal of trouble in consequence. When he was taken at the age of two to be baptized at the cathedral, he resisted the sprinkling of the holy water, screaming violently, "No, no!" and striking everyone within reach, the priest included. The only person whom he feared, as a boy, was his mother. She realized what a passion-
Ajaccio and Napoleon

ate temper he possessed, and sent him, when five years old, to a girls' school, hoping that the influence of his new companions would soften him a little. He seems to have been quite happy amongst his girl school-fellows, until he chose a sweet-tempered child of his own age as his first sweetheart. This aroused the jealousy of some of the girls and the taunting of others. The elder girls in particular made fun of the loving pair. One day, Napoleon, furious at the jeers of his school-fellows, seized a big stick and drove his persecutors away in a manner at once astonishing and painful. For this act he was expelled from the school and severely thrashed by his mother, whom, nevertheless, he dearly loved. He always said in after-life that all that was best in him was due to the influence of his mother in his early days. And yet Madame Letitia was fond of the rod when the boy was naughty.

"Another day he made fun of his grandmother, who was in the habit of leaning on a stick as she walked, and said that she was like a witch. His mother happened to hear the remark, and looked sternly at the child, who contrived to keep out of her way until towards evening; then, when she seized him to administer punishment, the boy escaped from her grasp. The following morning he greeted his mother and prepared to embrace her as usual, but she had not forgotten the punishment that was his due, and pushed him from her. Later on in the day she told him that he was invited to dine with one of their relatives in the town, and he went up to his room
Corsica

to get ready. Madame Letitia followed him, found him changing his clothes, and fastened the door behind her, after which the young man had to submit to a flogging which was none the less severe that he had managed to evade it for a whole day.”*

Just outside Ajaccio is the Villa Milelli, in a garden where pomegranates, myrtles, and roses bloom. This was the summer residence of the Napoleon family, and it is said that here the young soldier spent his furloughs, pursuing his favourite mathematical studies under a big oak-tree. Thither I bent my steps. I found the house in a lonely, lovely spot, guarded by two ferocious-looking, ferocious-barking, mildly-mannered dogs, and by a big, untidy, unwashed Italian, equally ferocious in appearance, and equally mild in manner. He could not speak English; I could not speak Italian. Nevertheless, we understood each other well enough. I had come to see the house; he was there to show it. He led us first into a deserted kitchen, and, waving his hand with an almost circular sweep, he exclaimed in a low gruff voice, “Napoleon.” As there was nothing whatever in the room, it was difficult to understand what he expected us to admire. He led us up a rickety ladder—the staircase had disappeared—to an upper story. We entered a room which, like the kitchen, did not possess a single stick of furniture. The walls were decayed; the rafters were worm-eaten. The guide bowed to the fireplace, the floor, and each of the walls in turn, and

* "Napoleon’s Mother."—Tschudi.
at every bow he exclaimed, "Napoléon!" He threw open one of the windows, and pointing to the broad bay beyond, to the long line of white-capped, purple heights, to the pine-groves and the palms, he finally remarked in the most solemn of voices, "Napoléon." After that he uttered not another word. He closed the window, showed us down the ladder, accepted our little silver offering with becoming politeness, pointed with his hand to the path through the wood, and bowed us a graceful and respectful farewell.

CHAPTER VIII

Corté

Somewhere about the year 1000 a number of feudal lords, or "signori," leagued themselves together and set up a capital at Corté, the centre of the island, and in the very heart of the mountains. What the place looked like in those days we have no means of knowing, for in this, as in most of the other towns of the island, there is nothing belonging to the remote past to remind us of very early events in the history of the land. Corté is lonely enough still, and you may wander for days in the great granite hills without meeting a single human being. The circle of gorges, the ravines, and the mountains present to us the same features that they presented to the feudal lords, and account for the choice of the position of the feudal capital, and for the part which
Corsica

the town has played in the military history of Corsica. Corté is a proud and heroic town. Around it have gathered numerous stories of gallant attacks upon the grim and frowning citadel that has been both won and lost by Corsicans, Genoese, and French. The men of this proud hill-fortress have throughout the centuries ever been faithful to their country, and willing to shed their blood for it. They are worthy descendants of a people that honours only the warriors that have led them to the field, a people whose only literature consists of wild songs of war, and chants that call aloud for vengeance on oppressors. The women have at all times been as true and as valiant as the men. They are, as they have always been, noted for their beauty. At the time when the hand of the Genoese lay heavy upon their land they vowed never to marry, that they might not give birth to slaves.

Corté is connected by rail with Ajaccio, and there are probably few visitors to the island who do not, during their stay, forsake the orange-trees and the palms upon the coast to visit the barren hills where the feudal capital once stood. Preferring the road to the rail, I made the journey from the sea to the mountains by bicycle, walking the greater part of the way and freewheeling the rest, ascending and descending continually the steep granite waves which rise and fall from one end of the island to the other.

At the foot of the rock on which the modern town stands it is necessary to dismount from the bicycle. The
houses and the churches are far above on the crest of a
great billow of rock. Corté can hardly be said to stand
on the side of the mountain. It does not stand; it
floats. Towering above all, on a slightly higher crest
of granite, is the citadel, which was erected about the
fifteenth century. Here and there amongst the tall houses
are dotted the slender campanili which are common in
most of the towns of Southern Europe. As seen in the
distance, the appearance of the citadel-crowned breaker,
with the smaller undulations of white and grey houses,
is eminently picturesque. On closer acquaintance the
most noticeable thing is dirt. In a general way it may
be quite truthfully said that the more attractive a Corsican
town may appear in the distance, the less comfortable it
proves when you wish to stay there.

We ascended on foot the steep and narrow streets,
assailed from time to time by crowds of stone-throwing
children. As we returned soft smiles for hard stones, we
soon became good friends with the little ones; in fact,
their friendship for us proved so strong that it became
a nuisance. The moment a camera was erected all the
youngsters crowded in front of it, and insisted on form-
ing a part of the picture. In Siam, as soon as the natives
see a camera they run away; in certain parts of Holland
the children will allow themselves to be photographed if
they are paid for it; but in Corsica everyone wants to
be photographed, and the sight of a Kodak will produce
a crowd at any hour of the day. To escape the troop
of followers, we went into the church. While we were
Corsica

pretending to be solemnly gazing at the altar, the children marched in after us by the dozen and played at leap-frog over the chairs, while the breezes wafted into the sacred building odours that overpowered the incense and nearly killed the worshippers.

Finding that it was quite impossible to escape the crowd, we went outside into the open air again and began to work. Our first object of attack was the Maison Gaffori, in front of which stands a statue of Gaffori, one of the many Corsican heroes who headed revolts against the Genoese. On the side of the pedestal that supports the statue there are a number of carvings, one of which recalls a story of the bravery of the General’s wife.

In the year 1750 this house was besieged by the Genoese. Gaffori was absent, and the defence of the home rested entirely upon his wife and servants. When the servants began to get frightened, and to talk of surrender, their mistress went into a lower room, got a barrel of powder and a torch, and threatened to blow herself and all the rest of them to pieces if they left off firing. The servants, under the circumstances, wisely continued their resistance, and held the Genoese in check until their master returned and drove the enemy away. It was in this house that Joseph Bonaparte, the brother of Napoleon, and afterwards King of Spain, was born.

We escaped the crowd at last, and tried to find our way to the citadel. We wandered through winding streets and crooked alleys, and arrived as often as not at the end of a blind passage, blocked with manure-heaps
Corté

and piles of disgusting refuse. Finally, guided by two or three small children, we clambered to the summit of a rock, from which the citadel could be seen on the other side of a deep but narrow valley. We were on the edge of a precipice unguarded by wall or railing, and on the edge of which the children skipped about as carelessly and as safely as their own mountain-goats. We turned our faces away from the children and their perilous amusements, in order to view the great citadel crowning a rock that rises up 400 feet sheer above the river that foams at its base. There were men inside the fort, but we could not see them. Doubtless there were guns too, but they, like the soldiers, were invisible. Not such was the scene in 1746, when Gaffori made up his mind to recapture the fort from the Genoese, who were then in possession of this mountain stronghold. There was noise enough then, as the brave General directed a steady and vigorous assault upon the walls. So skilful and so persistent was the attack that the Genoese commander began to have grave doubts as to his ability to hold the place. It so happened that amongst the prisoners within the fort was Gaffori’s youngest son. The Genoese leader ordered the boy to be brought out and bound to the outside of the walls, thinking that this would certainly put an end to the firing. For a moment his plan succeeded: the guns were silent; the Corsicans gazed in terror, first at the boy, and then at their horrified leader. But the period of peace passed quickly away. Gaffori, fear and resolution painfully mingled in his
Corsica

breast, shrieked the command, “Fire!” Out burst the artillery with redoubled fury. The fort was captured, and Gaffori was rewarded, not only with the possession of an ancient fort, but with the yet dearer treasure of a living son.

Gaffori died, as so many of his countrymen have died, by the hand of an assassin, and the assassin was a man of this very town. But the inhabitants of Corté marked their horror of the deed by destroying the house of the murderer, and the spot where that house once stood remains bare unto this day.

CHAPTER IX

PAOLI

Perhaps the best known of all the Corsican heroes is the last upon the national roll, Pascal Paoli. He is certainly the most popular in his native land, where he is affectionately called the “Father of the People.” In many an out-of-the-way village, in many a lonely mountain inn, his portrait hangs upon the wall, where it is always regarded with respect. Paoli was born at the hamlet of Stretta in 1726. His father’s house was a mere cottage of the usual ugly and uncomfortable pattern. When the boy was twelve years old, his father was ordered by the Genoese to leave the island. He went to Naples, and took Pascal with him. But seventeen years later (1755), when the Corsicans had once more risen in revolt against the Genoese, Pascal was
Paoli

invited to return to his native land and become the leader of his countrymen. The Genoese were assisted by the French, but in the end they grew weary of a conflict where they were never sure of victory, and they sold the island to the French. But the Corsicans were as much opposed to the idea of being governed by France as they had been to that of being governed by Genoa. What they wanted was complete independence, and a war broke out with the object of gaining it. This war was fought with great bravery on both sides. The islanders were united by love of freedom, and were supported and encouraged by their confidence in their leader.

"Paoli is in danger!" said a widow to her only son, as she handed him her late husband's pistols; "haste to his assistance." Another woman led the last of four sons to the General, saying, "I had three sons who have died for their country, and I bring you the last."

There were successes and defeats on both sides, but finally, on May 9, 1769, the Corsicans were severely repulsed at the Battle of Ponte Nuovo. The spirit of the vanquished islanders is shown in the reply that one of them made to a French officer who had found him lying wounded on the field of battle.

Said the Frenchman, "Where is your doctor?"
"We have none."
"What becomes of you, then?"
"We die."

Paoli himself escaped on board a British ship.
Corsica

lay during the voyage hidden in a sea-chest, in case the vessel should be boarded and searched by a French cruiser. When he landed at Leghorn he was greeted by the people rather as a hero and a conqueror than as one who had just suffered complete defeat upon the field. He made his way to England, and here he received a pension of £1,200 a year, which enabled him to live comfortably in London. Boswell, the friend of Dr. Johnson, had once visited Paoli in Corsica, and he now introduced the exile to his friends. He tells us: "On the evening of October 10 (1769) I presented Dr. Johnson to General Paoli. I had greatly wished that two men for whom I had the highest esteem should meet. They met with manly ease. General Paoli spoke Italian and Dr. Johnson English, and understood one another very well with a little interpretation from me, in which I compared myself to an isthmus which joins two great continents together."

Paoli's own account of how he first met Boswell is told by an English lady* who, in writing down what she heard, used the actual words of the speaker. Paoli said to her: "He came to my country, and he fetched me some letter of recommending him; but I was of the belief he might be an impostor and one spy; and I only find I was the monster he had come to see. Oh! he is a very good man. I love him indeed; so cheerful! so gay! so pleasant! but at the first, oh! I was indeed angry."

* Fanny Burney.

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Paoli

And he told the same lady another little story about himself in the same queer broken English: "I walk out in the night—I go towards the field; I behold a man—oh, ugly one! I proceed—he follow; I go on—he address me: 'You have one dog,' he says. 'Yes,' say I to him. 'Is he a fierce dog?' he says. 'Is he fiery?' 'Yes,' reply I, 'he can bite.' 'I would not attack in the night,' says he, 'a house to have such a dog in it.' Then I conclude he is a breaker, so I turn to him—oh, very rough, not gentle—and I say, very fierce, 'He shall destroy you, if you are ten.'"

When Pascal left the island after the Battle of Ponte Nuovo, his brother Clement continued the fighting for a little while; but when he knew that the General was safe, he gave up the struggle, went to Florence, and became a monk. This Clement was a very religious man, and it is said that always, on the field of battle, every shot that he fired was accompanied by a prayer for the soul of the man that it might slay.

When the French Revolution broke out, the Corsicans made yet another attempt to regain their freedom, and Paoli was sent back to the island as Lieutenant-Governor, with full control over the whole military system of Corsica. On his arrival at Marseilles he was met by a body of his countrymen, who had come to welcome and escort him home. Amongst those who greeted him with great rejoicing was the young Napoleon. Before long Paoli became disgusted with the murders that were being committed in the name of Liberty by the mob
Corsica

at Paris. Five days after the French King had been executed by his own subjects, Corsica declared herself free of France, and Paoli was elected Commander-in-Chief and ruler of the island. "Long live Paoli!" they shouted. "Paoli shall reign over us! We agree to all that he asks. Vengeance and ruin to his enemies!"

It was soon evident, however, that the Corsicans could not preserve their independence against so powerful a foe, and upon the advice of Paoli, and with the approval of a number of Corsican nobles, the crown was offered to George III., the King of England. It was accepted on his behalf by Sir George Elliott. The mass of the people was still dissatisfied. They wanted to govern themselves, and they loved the English no better than they had loved the Saracen, the Genoese, or the French. After two years England abandoned the island, and it then passed again into the possession of the French, who hold it to this day.

A year before the English forces left the island, Paoli had been requested to return to London, as his presence in Corsica was found to be rather inconvenient in many ways. He obeyed the summons to return, and he lived in London for the next twelve years on a pension of £2,000 a year, granted to him by the English King. He died at the age of eighty-two, and was buried in old St. Pancras Churchyard. In 1889 his body was taken back to the land for which he had so bravely fought, and was laid to rest in his native village.
Paoli

Paoli’s life in London was, after all, a fairly pleasant one, for not only had he money to spend, but he knew Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and all the leading men of the day. He lived in good style, and Dr. Johnson says that he “loved to dine” at the General’s house. About six months before Johnson died he was entertained by Paoli, and Boswell tells us: “There was a variety of dishes, much to his [Johnson’s] taste, of all of which he seemed to me to eat so much that I was afraid he might be hurt by it, and I whispered to the General my fear, and begged he might not press him. ‘Alas!’ said the General, ‘see how very ill he looks; he can live but a very short time. Would you refuse any slight gratifications to a man under sentence of death?’ There is a humane custom in Italy by which persons in that melancholy situation are indulged with having whatever they like to eat and drink, even with expensive delicacies.” Boswell makes the General speak like a master of English. That he did not actually talk like this we know from other writers, and by way of conclusion we may tell another little story in his own words. While he was residing in London, he was one day taken to see an Irish giant that was then on show. He says, “He is so large I am as a baby! I look at him—oh, I find myself so little as a child. Indeed, my indignation it rises when I see him hold up his hand so high. I am as nothing, and I find myself in the power of a man who fetches from me half a crown.”
CHAPTER X

IN BUSH AND FOREST

There are some scholars who say that the word "Corsica" means the "Land of Woods," and that this name was given to the island at a very early time by the Phoenicians. Several of the old writers, when mentioning Corsica in their works, describe it in some such terms as "shaggy and almost savage with woods." At one time Corsican timber was amongst the best known, and there are still a number of fine forests left. But what strikes the visitor most is the way in which the island is clothed with flowering shrubs. These are collectively known as the maquis. The maquis is that feature which distinguishes the island of Corsica from all other islands. It is not a forest, but an immense thicket. So closely is it interlaced that a shrub rarely becomes a tree. If the thick tangle be cut down, it grows again with wonderful rapidity. The stems of one kind of flowering shrub have been known to grow as much as 5 feet in a single year, 3½ feet in the spring, and 1½ feet in the following autumn. The chief plants which together form the maquis are the arbutus, which bears white flowers, purple fruit, and shiny leaves; the myrtles, with their snow-white blossoms; the cistus, scenting the air with the odour of honey; and great flowering heaths, with white and rose powdered tufts. This carpet of shrubs stretches from the bottoms of the valleys
In Bush and Forest

to the tops of the mountains, rolls over and around the rocks, finds its way into hollows and ravines, and fears neither torrent nor gorge. In spring, when the different shrubs all burst into bloom, the hill-sides are a mass of flowers. As the hot sun beats down upon the blossoms, it causes them to exhale a peculiar smell, strong, but not unpleasant. This odour can even be detected far out at sea when the wind is blowing from the shore. It is so unlike any other odour that, once known, it can never be forgotten. Napoleon is reported to have said, "Put me blindfold on the shore of my native land, and I should recognize it by the perfume of the maquis."

The Corsicans do not admire this beautiful covering. They have little love for Nature, and few of them ever think of travelling in search of the beauties of mountain, moor, or wood. They are fond of the company of their fellow-men, and like to live in towns. They leave to "mad Englishmen" the task and the delight of roaming about on their flower-decked hills. They would rather see a garden of onions than a plantation of pines; they would rather look at a row of carrots than a grove of beech. But though they do not admire the beauty of their surroundings, they do not despise them. If the shrub is a poor thing to look at, yet it has certain uses which they keenly appreciate.

Corsica possesses no coal, and the people in the mountain villages are too poor to buy it even if it were imported. The villagers depend for fuel on the wood that grows at their very doors, using it both in
Corsica

the form of logs for firewood and of charcoal. Charcoal takes the place of coal for cooking purposes, and not only is it manufactured for home use, but hundreds of tons are exported every year to France, Spain, Italy, and Sardinia. The method of making charcoal appears very simple, but great care and experience are necessary to avoid wasting the wood. The black-faced, black-handed charcoal-burners cut down the thick stems of the arbutus and other plants, and stack them in a heap. Round this heap smaller pieces of wood are arranged, till the whole pile is something of the shape of an enormous plum-pudding. The mound is covered over with green leaves and earth. A hole is left in one side of the heap, and through this a fire is lighted. In about ten days the mass of wood is reduced to charcoal. To get a ton of charcoal it is necessary to cut down nearly a quarter of an acre of strong, healthy shrubs—that is, to destroy about eight tons of brushwood. In this way much of the maquis is continually being destroyed, but so rapidly do new plants spring up that the harm done is not nearly so great as would at first be expected.

The bush is also cut down for use as firewood, for though charcoal is used in the kitchen, logs are burned in the “parlour.” Cutting and selling firewood is quite an important occupation. Some of the work is done by boys, but as a rule it is the barefooted, bareheaded women who toil with the axe upon the hill-side, and come home in the evening heavily laden, bearing their
In Bush and Forest

bundles on their heads. A Corsican woman seems to carry everything except her baby on her head—boxes, firewood, water, and provisions. If by any chance a man be seen transporting firewood, he is as often as not dragging it along on a trolley. He is not fond of carrying heavy articles.

The firewood is not good of its kind; it soon sinks down, and leaves a heap of ashes. To keep it glowing, someone must be continually blowing it. As a peasant said to me once, "It takes four people to make a wood fire—one to cut, one to carry, one to light, and one to blow." What the log-fire lacks in cheerfulness it makes up in heat. It is wonderful how much warmth is sometimes given out by what appears to be a mere heap of ashes and dead wood.

We have already referred to the uses of certain kinds of heath in the manufacture of briar pipes, and of the use of cistus for heating baking-ovens. The amount of cistus used in baking bread is enormous. The shrub has light roots, and as it is much easier to pull the whole plant up than to cut it, it is usually completely uprooted. A hard-working woman can gather and bind from eight to fourteen bundles of cistus in a day. These she can sell for about a half-penny each, so that she can earn from fourpence to sevenpence a day.

There are still many fine forests in the island, containing glorious specimens of pine, oak, beech, chestnut, and walnut. In the south the woods are chiefly of
Corsica

cork-oak. The chestnut-trees are of great value, as the nut is the principal form of food for man and beast during the winter months. Certain parts of Corsica were never entirely subdued by either the French or the Genoese. The people hid themselves away amongst the mountains, and existed on chestnuts. The trees bear an abundance of fruit, and require no cultivation, so that plenty of food was always at hand, and merely required gathering. It was like the manna in the wilderness. Thus the people were enabled to fight all the year round. There is no fighting now, and there are other foods besides chestnuts, but in many out-of-the-way places, where the fruit is plentiful and good, the people still make it their chief food, because it costs nothing, either in labour or money. They can spend their time in idleness, "in playing cards and dominoes, in gossiping, in talking politics, and in doing as little work as possible." The chestnuts are ground into flour, out of which bread is made, and also a kind of pease-pudding called polenta. "It is cooked in a great cauldron with much stirring over a wood fire, and is eaten hot, the dough-like mass being cut into thick slabs by means of a wire." Chestnut flour costs about half the price of wheaten flour, for, as no wheat is grown in the island, wheaten flour has to be imported from Marseilles.

Another important plant is the olive, which will ripen its fruit up to an elevation of 2,000 feet. The best olive district is not far from Calvi. It is said that
In Bush and Forest

the Corsicans were forced by one of their Genoese Governors to plant the olive-trees for which this part of the island is now so famous. If this be true, then it is one of the very few things for which the Corsican has to thank the Genoese. When the olives are ripe, they are gathered by the women, and taken to the mills to be crushed. Two or three qualities of oil can be got by repeated crushings, but that which is first obtained is the best, and is used for table purposes. The inferior kinds are used for lighting, and for oiling machinery. The salted olives sold in bottles in English shops are unripe fruits soaked in water and then bottled in brine. The leaves of the olive are sharp and slender, and greyish-green in colour. They are something like those of the common willow, but smaller. The fruit, when ripe, is small, shiny, and black. It must be remembered that the wild olive is a native of the Mediterranean, and not an imported plant, as most of the fruit-trees of England are.

The most striking trees in appearance are the tall, dark pines, of which there are several kinds. Then there are tangled masses of prickly pear (the common cactus). The prickly pear is a perfect weed. It grows anywhere and everywhere, and once it has taken root, it is almost impossible to kill it. If a leaf be broken off and allowed to fall to the ground, it takes root where it falls and starts a new plant. It is used for making hedges, and the boldest boy would think twice before he tried to make his way through its numerous
Corsica

thorns and poisonous bristles. Some of the spines are so strong that they can be used as pins, and a certain writer* says that a friend of his "used to save the buying of pins on the part of the ladies of his family by going out to gather the spines of the most prickly variety of cactus."

CHAPTER XI

THE VENDETTA

We know that in very early times, when a man felt himself injured, he took the law into his own hands and punished the offender—that is, if he were strong enough. Later on, when men got more civilized, this was not permitted, but offenders were punished by being fined. The fine was paid to the injured person or to his family—so much for an eye, so much for a leg, and so much for a life. Thus we read in the laws of Ethelbert: "If one man strike another with the fist on the nose—three shillings. If the eye be struck out, let boot (i.e., amends) be made with forty shillings."

So in due time law took the place of private vengeance, and now, throughout almost the whole of Europe, if a man is wronged, he seeks redress in the public courts of law. This, however, is not yet the case in Corsica. There many people carry out their own punishments in their own way, or, in other words, they shoot their

* Barry.
The Vendetta

foes. Hence murders are common. At one period of Corsican history it is said that there were 28,000 murders in thirty years. Things are not nearly so bad as that now. The practice of taking private revenge is called the vendetta.

The Corsicans are quarrelsome by nature, and often, when excited by wine or by losses at cards, they will stab and shoot each other. Then they are rather fanciful about what they consider insults. If a neighbour's dog strayed into a garden and rooted up the cabbages, this might perhaps be considered as a personal insult, especially if the neighbour were not friendly, and the owner of the dog would be in fear of his life. The offended one would hide behind a rock or a tree, and when a favourable opportunity occurred he would put a bullet through his enemy.

In former days, when daggers only were used, a man avoided a stronger foe, and waited for a chance to stab him in the back. But guns are now so common that any man with a grievance finds it easy to take the life of an enemy. Guns are seen everywhere. The shepherd guards his flock with a gun on his back; the travelling pedlar slings one over his shoulder; the driver of the diligence would as soon forget his whip as his gun. Small boys save up the odd coppers that they can earn or beg in the big towns, and carefully hoard them till they can afford to buy a gun, or at least a pistol.

But the quarrel does not end with the death of the
first offender, for the relatives of the dead man think it their duty to avenge his unhappy end. If they can, they shoot the murderer himself. If they cannot do this, then they shoot one of his relations—any one will do—father, mother, cousin, uncle, or nephew. Of course, more deaths follow on the other side, and so the game goes on. At times a whole village is divided into two opposite parties, and the people are afraid to go to their work in field or garden.

When a man has made up his mind to avenge a death, he often allows his beard to grow until the terrible deed has been done. It sometimes happens that so many people are employed in tracking each other that life becomes next to impossible. In such cases a priest is often called in to try to act as peacemaker. If he is successful, the leaders of both parties meet in the village church, and solemnly swear before the altar to put an end to the quarrel.

After a murder has been committed, the guilty person "takes to the maquis." Away he goes into the Bush, and, hidden in a hollow, he lives a lonely but not altogether miserable life. He is not so much afraid of the gendarmes, for, should they set out to trap him, some member of his own party will be sure to give him warning, so that he may get safely away to another hiding-place. He is much more afraid of a relative of the murdered man who may be hiding in the next hollow, ready to shoot him as soon as he shows himself. As a rule he hides fairly near to his own village, where
The Vendetta

he can receive food and clothing from his friends and relatives.

No one thinks any the worse of a man who has revenged himself in this way. In fact, if he did not, he would be regarded with contempt by friends and enemies alike. He is actually expected, as a matter of course, to take vengeance for his own or someone else's injuries, and if he is successful, and has to go into hiding, the neighbours say that he "has had a little misfortune." In some villages there exists to this day the practice of preserving the blood-stained shirt of a man who has been assassinated. If the man's children are too young to seek out those who have killed him, the relic is shown them from time to time until they are old enough to wash out the stain with the blood of someone else. "One does not cry for a father who has been assassinated," said a mother to her children; "one avenges him." And a man has been known to cry out over the body of his father, who had died a natural death, "Alas! why did you not die by violence, that I might have avenged you?"

As girls are not supposed to be able to avenge the family insults in the same way as men, they are not treated as being of much account. A peasant who had six daughters and three sons has been heard to remark, "I have only three children." Still, stories are told of women who have practised the vendetta like men. Some years ago a poor widow lost her only son by the hand of an assassin. The son was a good-looking,
Corsica

sturdy fellow of about twenty-two, and his mother's only support. She had no relative to take up her cause. She went into the Bush herself, and searched every hole and corner, gun in hand, tracking the murderers of her son. They escaped from time to time, but she never gave up, and for several months the outlaws knew neither peace nor safety. One morning, however, she also was found dead at the corner of a wood. She had fallen a victim to the man who had robbed her of her much-loved son.

Sometimes it is not possible to find an opportunity to slay immediately the man you seek. But vengeance, though long delayed, is fairly sure. There is a story told of a man who was wanted by a neighbour whom he had offended. For twenty years this man kept inside his house, never daring to show his face upon the doorstep. At last he heard that his tireless enemy was dead, and he ventured into the street to see the funeral procession go by. No sooner did he put his foot outside the door than bang went a rifle, and he fell dead on his own threshold. The funeral procession broke up with a laugh, for the whole burial business was a sham, a mere trick to get the man into the open.

A small cross is erected wherever a dead body is found, and in some places these crosses are scattered about so plentifully that the sight is quite saddening. As the peasants pass the cross they throw a stone or a branch at the foot, until in time a large mound is raised to the memory of the departed. Though murders are
The Vendetta

so common, yet theft is almost unknown. It is looked upon as a terrible disgrace to be a thief, and the traveller may sleep securely in the most out-of-the-way part of the country without any fear of being robbed.

One of the greatest things that Paoli ever tried to do when he was ruling the island was to put down the vendetta. He sent the priests throughout the land to preach mercy and forgiveness, and he himself travelled long distances to reconcile families who were at war with each other. He enacted severe penalties against all those whom he could capture who had taken the life of a fellow-countryman, and he was particularly stern towards all those who killed, not a personal foe, but the relative of a foe. Amongst the first victims of his new law was one of his own relatives, who, having committed a murder, was arrested and executed. Paoli was not able to completely suppress the vendetta, but so successful were his efforts that in a few years the population of the island was increased by several thousands, although the Corsicans were still at war with the Genoese, and losing men in every conflict.

The French Government is doing its best to put down murder, but, like Paoli, has not by any means been completely successful. In Ajaccio, in the early part of 1907, a porter on the quay felt that he had been insulted by a young French officer. So one Saturday evening he took his gun, walked into the restaurant where the young Lieutenant was dining, and shot him as he sat at table. No one attempted to stay him as he turned and
Corsica

fled to the maquis. He even dared to come back into the town on the Sunday afternoon, and sit in the crowded streets with his gun across his knees. My wife said to a local tradesman, "I hope he will soon be captured." "Why?" exclaimed the man she addressed. "He is really a very good fellow."

CHAPTER XII

WHEN THE END COMES

Though life is held very cheaply in Corsica, mourning and burials are attended with a great deal of ceremony. It is a fairly general rule throughout the world that, as a race becomes more and more civilized, the ceremonies connected with death and burial become simpler and simpler. In many respects Corsica is not a civilized country, and its inhabitants mourn for their dead much after the fashion that Jacob mourned for the death of Joseph, or David for the deaths of Saul and Jonathan.

When it is thought that a man is about to die, a candle is lit, and the sign of the cross is made with it over the body. Then the relatives wait in solemn silence until life has passed away. But at the very moment when the last breath has been drawn the women come close to the bedside, burst into sobs, and utter loud cries of sorrow. The men remain perfectly still and quiet, and it would be difficult to tell from any change in their manner that they are at all affected by their loss. Some-
When the End Comes

times the women lose all control of themselves, roll upon the floor, and even beat and bruise their own bodies.

While the corpse is still warm the eyes are closed, and a handkerchief is passed under the chin and tied above the head to close the mouth. It is dressed in its best clothes and laid upon a funeral couch.

In former times the funeral couch was an ordinary table, because in the poor houses of the village there was never any unnecessary furniture. Nowadays the body is placed, when possible, upon a couch or sofa in one of the living-rooms of the house.

If a person dies in the evening, after sunset, the noise of the wailing soon ceases. During the night prayers are said around the body. Only the women enter the chamber; the men remain silent and serious in a neighbouring room. Towards midnight, or about one o'clock in the morning, a light meal is served which varies in different districts. At Ajaccio it consists of anchovies in vinegar, bread, wine, cheese, and a cup of coffee. In certain villages it consists of cakes of a kind of sweet cheese called *broccia*, which is made from the milk of goats.

As soon as the dawn comes, loud cries are heard, and dirges are chanted without ceasing until the body is taken away. These funeral songs are called *voceri* or *ballata*. They are composed on the spot by women members of the family who possess the gift. If there is no relative of the dead who is able to do this, a friend or neighbour is asked to undertake the duty. In the
 Corsica

songs questions are addressed to the dead man just as though he were alive; all the chief incidents in his life are recounted; his features and his virtues are described; and if he has been murdered the relatives are incited to take vengeance.

The appearance of the singer is mournful in the extreme. Her eyes are red with tears, and her face is convulsed with grief. She tears her hair violently, stoops down over the body, kisses it, calls it by name, and sways from side to side, all the time shrieking at the top of her voice. Other mourners arrive, all in black. On the threshold of the chamber they stop, raise their hands towards the heavens, and cry three times with all their might the name of the dead. Then they go forward, bathed in tears. When they reach the bed, they stoop to kiss the body and the relatives, and do their best in broken tones to mutter words of sympathy and consolation. They take their places in the circle of figures upon the floor, and the penetrating shrieks and cries are heard once more. All this time the voceratrice is chanting the praises of the dead. When she is exhausted, she sinks upon a chair, and calls one of the mourners by name to take her place and continue the lamentations. So it goes on for hours, one after the other chanting the songs of misery and woe.

People passing by the house hear, but give little heed to all this clamour. They are used to it. Barry says: "One fine day when I was strolling about, and nearing a place where the washerwomen wash, I heard a suc-
ROADSIDE CROSS.
When the End Comes

cession of piercing shrieks, and, turning my steps in the direction of the sounds, perceived the clothes and figure of a female rolling about in the dust of the road. The said female, who was respectably dressed, and who seemed to be a girl of about sixteen or seventeen, would from time to time rise from the ground, walk a few steps in the direction of the town, and then again throw herself down, casting handfuls of dirt over her head, tearing out her hair, which was perfectly dishevelled, and frantically screaming all the while, though none of the washerwomen took the least notice, 'My sister is dead! My sister is dead!'

It can easily be imagined that when a man has been assassinated the wailing and the chanting are more violent than usual. In 1896 a celebrated bandit was killed. In the night, his wife, his sister, and his cousins went to the village where his body was publicly exposed. They howled like tigresses in the silence of the night, and their cries were so piercing and so full of sorrow that all the people of the town were awakened in great fright, and shivered with terror.

On the morning of the funeral, when the bearers come to take the body away, the noise is terrible; the women huddle together at the windows, tear their hair, scratch their faces, and hurl violent adieus after the hearse. The funeral is arranged to take place at an hour when as many people as possible can see it, and, for the same reason, the longest way to the cemetery is chosen. In a big town the bells will play a merry tune; a band will

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deafen the spectators with its not too solemn music; and a long procession of choir-boys and clergymen in white, and of bands of men with white cowls and scarlet tippets, walks rather joyfully behind the bier. The procession does not always continue as far as the cemetery. When the spectators along the road-side thin out, the procession breaks up, and its members come back to feast. Even the clergy return with hurried footsteps, as if anxious not to miss any of the good things that are provided on these occasions. There is little solemnity and sometimes little decency about the whole of the proceedings. Members of the procession will smoke cigars both going and coming, and there is always a bit of a scramble for a ride home again in the vacant hearse.

On the return from the cemetery, a funeral banquet is served, which often causes the expenditure of a large sum of money, for everyone who attends the funeral expects to share in the feast. It is a matter of family pride that the feast shall be as grand as possible, and poor people will kill their last few cows and sheep in order that they shall not be accused of being mean and stingy at such a time. Rich men will not only provide a feast, but give presents as well. At Ajaccio the custom of the funeral banquet has almost disappeared, but gourds of wine, biscuits and cigars, are placed in the hearse and are carried to the cemetery, where they are consumed and enjoyed by the poor.

It is considered a matter of great importance that one should be buried in the proper clothes, and when a man
When the End Comes

is supposed to be in danger, the family at once begin to
make his shroud, and even carry on their work in the
room where the sick person lies.

Black is worn as a sign of mourning, as in other
European countries. As murders are so common, it can
safely be said that in almost any town or village in
Corsica you can see more people in black than in any
other town or village of the same size in Europe. The
period of mourning for a near relative is, amongst the
women, from four to five years. After a second bereave-
ment they never wear coloured clothes again. Even
the children are oftener dressed in black than in any
other colour, so that to a land which Nature has decked
with every beautiful tint and hue, man has added nothing
but a sombre and distressing black.

CHAPTER XIII

THE KING OF THE BANDITS

The most famous bandit of modern times died early in
the year 1907. The story of his life, interesting as it is in itself, is still more interesting as illustrating what
was said in a former chapter about those who "take to
the maquis."

Antonio Bellacoscia, the King of the Bandits, was born
not far from Ajaccio. His father was already living in
the Bush. When the boy was seventeen, a quarrel arose
between certain members of his family and the Mayor
Corsica

of Tavera. Antoine, feeling that his family had been insulted, took his gun and shot the Mayor, thus avenging the insult in the ordinary manner. No sooner had the deed been done than he fled to the maquis and prudently hid himself. So carefully did he choose his hiding-place that for weeks and weeks no one knew what had become of him. One morning, however, he suddenly reappeared again, seized the father of a young girl with whom he was in love, and carried him off into captivity. The father had refused to allow his daughter to marry the young bandit, and had betrothed her to a more respectable suitor. For this offence he was now shut up in a cave, and Antoine kept guard over him, waiting for him to change his mind. The young man to whom the girl had been betrothed also felt called upon to take the law into his own hands. So, accompanied by several friends, he set off with the idea of releasing the father of his sweetheart and of punishing his rival. But, unfortunately for him, he got captured too, and Bellacoscia could only be persuaded to spare his life and set him free on condition that he would renounce his intention of marrying the disputed maiden. He promised all that was asked of him, but no sooner did he find himself at liberty than he once more sought the hand of the maiden. When Bellacoscia heard that his rival had failed to keep his word, he went in search of him, and, having found him, promptly shot him.

The soldiers made many attempts to capture the outlaw, but nearly every attempt ended in the death of one
The King of the Bandits

or more of their comrades. As they could not get what they wanted in the ordinary way, they offered a large reward to anyone who would betray the bandit into their hands. It happened that Bellacoscia had a nephew of whom he was very fond, but this nephew had no love for his outlaw uncle, and he promised to betray the fugitive to the gendarmes. He set off with a party of nine soldiers, all in the highest spirits, because they felt sure of success at last. But the bandit knew of their coming, and from the shelter of a rock he fired upon his enemies. One man fell with a hole in his forehead, another was shot through the breast, and the rest took to their heels. After this, Bellacoscia hid himself in the densest part of the thicket, away amongst the deepest and the darkest of the mountain gorges. There he lived for nearly forty years, his food being often only the chestnuts that grew around him, and his only drink the water that trickled from the springs amongst the rocks. The officers of the law sent bands of soldiers from time to time to look for him, but they never could find him. As a rule, if they had any idea where he was, they kept out of the reach of his terrible gun. But, in revenge, they seized his property, sold his flocks, and put some of his relatives in prison. Still, he never gave in, and finally they determined to leave him alone, hoping that if no one interfered with him he would be so kind as not to shoot anybody else. All this time, despite the murders he had committed, the people of the country-side looked upon him as a brave and honourable
Corsica

man. They admired his skill with the rifle; they boasted of his courage and determination; and they praised the unfailing cunning that had helped him to escape all the traps that had been set for him.

Round their firesides, during the long dark evenings of the winter, they told wonderful stories of his daring. Some of these stories show us a cruel man, but a brave one; some of them reveal him as patient and watchful, and full of resource in time of danger. Once, when his home was surrounded by soldiers, he put the bell of one of his own goats round his neck, got down on all fours, and, making a great noise, crawled right through a crowd of gendarmes, who were only waiting for the daylight to seize him and carry him off to prison. On another occasion he had been tracked for three hours, and his pursuers were at his heels. The shots were whistling about his head. He came to the bank of a river. It was swollen with recent rains, and to attempt to swim it was almost certain death; for, even if he were not dashed to pieces on the rocks, he would certainly be seen by the soldiers and shot like a dog. He had just made up his mind to plunge into the roaring torrent, when he noticed a swamp a little to his right. He rushed down to the water's edge, pulled up a long reed, cut it off between two of the knots, and so provided himself with a hollow tube. He put this in his mouth, and then, falling on his back, allowed himself to sink completely under the mud. There he remained quite hidden for twelve long and terrible hours, breathing
The King of the Bandits

through the reed, one end of which was in his mouth, while the other was just above the surface of the water. The soldiers looked everywhere for him, but failed to find him, though he was almost in their hands. They departed at last, completely bewildered as to what could have become of him. When he was quite certain that his foes were far from the river's edge, he crawled out from the swamp, and was once more free and safe.

The people honoured him. They said that in taking the law into his own hands in the first instance to avenge his real or fancied wrongs, he had but acted as his forefathers had always done. And if the gendarmes got killed when they pursued him—well, so much the worse for the gendarmes; they should have kept out of the way. Bellacoscia became the most noted man in Corsica, and many famous people who visited the island from time to time were taken to see him in his retreat amongst the hills. At last the old man got tired of his solitary life, and in 1892 he came out of his hiding-place and surrendered himself to the captain of the gendarmes. He had no fear for his life, for, according to the French law, a man cannot be hung for murder thirty years after it has been committed. The prisoner was taken to Bastia, and there tried in the assize courts. The Judge solemnly reminded him that for his early offences he had been three times sentenced to death, and once to penal servitude for life. He was set free, but, lest he should return to his old pursuits, he was ordered to leave the country and live in Marseilles. A pension of £100 a
year was given to him to provide for his wants and to keep him quiet.

But he was unable to live out of his native land, and he returned to Corsica without asking the permission of either Judge or General. He went back to his native village, and the police very wisely left him in peace. The villagers treated him as a hero, and were more than a little proud of the fact that he had once more come to live amongst them. He gave no more trouble, looked after his chestnut-trees, tended his farm, and in his spare moments hunted the wild boar and the wild sheep. In the evening he would tell stories of his adventurous career to a few chosen friends, and occasionally he would even condescend to go to the village inn and take a hand at cards with the soldiers.

To the end of his life he remained a fine, handsome old man. He had a long snowy beard, a grave sweet face, and bright sparkling eyes. No one, looking at him, would have taken him for anything but one of the kindest and tenderest of men.

He died in 1907, over eighty years of age, having passed fifty years of his life in hiding amongst his native thickets. As the French are gradually tightening their hold upon the island, brigandage of this kind must ere long happily become a thing of the past. The young men of the present day are already beginning to realize that there are finer ways of spending their lives than in wandering in wild places, fugitives from justice.
In whatever country you travel, sit awhile by the roadside. If it be a small country, and you sit down for an hour or two, you may see and hear much that is typical of the land you are visiting. Do not stay only in towns; go out into the country places and watch, and make friends with the people who live upon the soil.

Let us ramble out towards one of the lonely places that are so plentiful in the little island about which we are speaking. Any road and almost any direction will do. We need not hesitate for long. In many respects the sights to be seen are much the same. Sometimes, it is true, the highway lies by the side of a foaming torrent, hurrying over stones and boulders to join the sea; sometimes it climbs amongst untrodden snows; sometimes it creeps along the edge of the foam-clad blue, or wanders through a grove of tall and silent pines. But we are not out to see the scenery so much as the things that men do and make.

Just over yonder there is a tawny-skinned man in soiled shirt and trousers, and wearing heavy boots. He is a cantonnier, or road-mender. The high-roads of the island are under the care of the French Government. They are excellent. Being cut mostly in the granite, the surface is hard, smooth, and free from dust. So gently do
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ey they ascend the mountain-sides, zigzagging backwards and forwards with easy slopes, that carriage-drives can be comfortably taken over the highest passes in the island.

The houses in which the cantonniers live are built of rough stones, and, unlike other dwellings, are usually only one story high. They are placed at fairly regular intervals between the different villages and towns. The cantonniers lead very lonely lives, and often their only companion is a dog. Sometimes, especially in the winter, they do not see a human face for several days together. Their pay is poor, only a few shillings a week. Yet these men, like all their countrymen, are noted for their kindness and their hospitality towards strangers. They will give the weary or benighted traveller bread, cheese, wine, or any other simple food they possess. They will shelter him from sun or storm, and wish him a hearty farewell when he takes his departure, without dreaming of payment in money. In fact, they would feel insulted if money were offered them in return for their hospitality.

We are not long upon the road before we meet a mule, or, rather, many mules. Horses are seldom seen in the mountains. Their place is taken by mules and donkeys. Here comes a mule heavily laden. He bears a man and a woman, to say nothing of an assortment of sacks, baskets, and pans. The woman is riding astride like the man. Now the mule, though a very hardy and useful animal, has an unusually nasty temper and an unobliging will at the back of it. He has to be humoured from time to time, and a little thing will often frighten
By the Road-side

him and send him flying like the wind. The women seem to be quite as much at home on these animals as the men, and on market-days they are seen in great numbers coming home in the evening sitting on the backs of the mules, packed round with cans and baskets, and quietly knitting as they go. If a cyclist appears, however, the women quickly jump down to the ground, and hold the head of the animal until the man a-wheel has gone by.

Mules are not only ridden; they are harnessed to many different kinds of vehicles. The market-cart is not much more than a flat platform on wheels, with a kind of bridge raised over the middle on which two people can sit. The timber-carts that carry the logs from the forests to the sea are provided with huge wooden brakes. To put on the brake, a man hangs on to a lever with all his weight. Very often, when the mule refuses to halt at the word of command, the driver applies the brake as tightly as possible, and so forces the animal to stop. He finds this an easier method than that of tugging at the reins, for the mouth of the mule is hard, and his temper stubborn. Mules are employed to pull the heavy roller that is used in mending the roads, for in this land steam-rollers are not known. Mules are also used to draw the diligence, or omnibus. Railways are very few and far between, and the omnibus is well patronized for journeys that are beyond a walking distance. The place of the diligence will some day be taken by the motor-bus. Already there is one automobile running between Ajaccio and some of the coast
towns. Perhaps the people will not be so very sorry when the diligence is done away with entirely, for it is a dirty, lumbering vehicle, though, like all the dirty things in Corsica, exceedingly quaint and picturesque. In front there is a little space shut off for the first-class passengers, of whom not more than three can be carried. The back part is like an ordinary omnibus, but it rarely holds more than six people. The windows are always closed to keep out the draught. The travellers are half stifled with the heat, and almost choked with the dust. They sit with their heads poked down between their shoulders and their knees drawn up to their chins to avoid banging their heads against the roof. The mules tear up and down the mountain-sides with truly remarkable speed, and as the lumbering old coach sways from side to side, the stranger expects every moment to see it topple over into the valley below.

In the field on the other side of that thick cactus hedge the mules are pulling a plough. Though three mules will drag a heavy diligence up the side of the mountain, it is no uncommon thing to find a dozen or more of them yoked to the same plough. They take their time over this kind of work, and do not fly about as they do on the roads. The peasants walk slowly after them, guiding either the plough or the mules, quite content to go at a snail's pace. The Corsican farmers are not experts. Their vines are badly tended, their seed-potatoes are not good, and their breeds of sheep and goats are very poor. Of late years many of them
By the Road-side

have taken to growing citrons, which, in a good year, yield them a considerable profit; but owing to frosts that often come at inconvenient times and destroy the fruit, citron-growing is rather a risky occupation.

That soft rippling noise that you hear is made by a fountain of running water. These fountains are numerous in the villages and by the road-side, and the water is cold and sparkling, though not always pure. It is not wise to drink water in a land where the art of proper drainage is unknown. Many of the fountains were originally made by the Moors, and the people have had the sense to preserve them for their own use.

The louder noise that is now making itself heard comes from a peasant who is singing. The Corsicans are said to be fond of music, but their singing is atrocious. They shriek in a high falsetto voice, beginning on a very high note and ending on a low one, and they make up in volume what they lack in sweetness. The music sounds strange to those not acquainted with the bagpipes, or with the instruments and voices of the Far East. The same music sung by a cultured voice has a certain charm of its own, though too much of it is apt to prove monotonous. If you are so unfortunate as to be shut up for half an hour in a railway carriage with a peasant who likes the sound of his own voice, you will probably be rewarded with a splitting headache. And so it goes on all day—streams of mules and sheep, peasants and goats, women carrying wood and water, men smoking and singing, and women knitting. Everyone greets the
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passer-by with a polite salute, wishing him "Good-
morning" or "Good-evening," as the case may be.

At the entrance to a village, or at places where the road divides, a huge wooden cross is erected. This bears wooden models of a hammer, pincers, spear, and nails, and is meant to remind the traveller of Him who died for all the world so many years ago. But neither men nor women seem to take much notice of this memorial of the Christ, and, once it has been erected, it is allowed to go gradually to ruin.

CHAPTER XV

ANIMALS

It might be thought that it was hardly worth while to write a chapter on Corsican animals, as they would be sure to resemble those found in other parts of Europe, and would, therefore, be quite familiar and uninteresting. To some extent this is true. Corsican horses, sheep, goats, and cows resemble their brethren in other lands so closely that no one would be likely to mistake any one of them for any other animal should he meet them on the hill-side or the road. But for all that, there are certain facts about the animal life of the island that are worth noting down in a book of this description. For instance, Corsica has a special variety of sparrow not found elsewhere. Although there are hares on the island, there are no rabbits. Then there is a wild sheep which
Animals

is found nowhere else in Europe, except in the neighbouring island of Sardinia. It is known as the *mouflon*, and it resembles that almost extinct animal, the ibex of the Alps. It lives in the highest parts of the mountains amongst the bare rocks. Few people would, perhaps, recognize it as a sheep even if they saw one, for the moufflon has no fleece like its domesticated relatives; instead, it has a short brown hairy coat. The body is light; the legs are slender; the tail is short. The moufflon is agile in its movements; the ordinary sheep is clumsy. This animal is not often seen upon the high mountains where it makes its home. Tracking the moufflon is a difficult task, for the hunter must make his way over rocks and boulders, and often risk his life on the edge of a steep precipice. The beast is keen of smell and sight, and runs away from the hunter before he has even seen it. It is hunted for its skin, which can be sold in the markets of Paris for about thirty shillings. Travellers to the island will often pay as much as three or four pounds for one.

The young ones are captured in the following manner. The hunter, who must be exceptionally keen and clever, searches till he sees a ewe with her lambs. He then fires a shot. This frightens the mother, and she runs away; but the little ones are so startled by the unusual noise that they remain quite still, while the hunter runs forward and takes them prisoners. If it happens that the lambs have ever been frightened before—as, for instance, by a clap of thunder—then the dodge fails, for
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the moment they hear a loud noise, such as is made by
the firing of a gun, they follow the mother as fast as
they can to a place of safety.

Though the moufflon is wild and shy upon the moun-
tains, it can be tamed if caught young. It then becomes
docile, and will follow its owner like a dog. It objects
to being teased, and instantly seeks revenge upon the
offender; in fact, it is quite capable of practising a little
vendetta on its own account. As the tamed creature
gets older, it becomes savage again, and gives a great
deal of trouble. Punishment only makes it still more
furious, and, in the end, it has usually to be put to death.
This is particularly the case with the males.

The ordinary sheep are very small, and their mutton
is exceptionally tough. This is probably due to the
amount of exercise they obtain in scrambling over rocks
and climbing mountains in search of food.

There are few cows, and most of the milk used is
obtained from goats. The goats are handsome creatures,
with plenty of energy and spirit. As there are no
fences on the hill-side to keep them within bounds, and
as they are daring enough to wander into the most
dangerous places, their front feet are fastened together
to prevent them from straying far away. The goats are
sent to the maquis under the charge of a goatherd,
who leads them to the pastures in the morning and sees
them safely home again in the evening. For each goat
in his charge he receives about eight or nine shillings a
year, out of which he has to pay fivepence per head to
WOMEN WASHING LINEN.
Animals

the local authorities for permission to feed his herds upon
the common land. From time to time the old maquis is
burnt, but it is never long before new shoots spring up,
which are more suitable for food than the old dry
branches, though the goat is a true mountain animal,
and, unlike the sheep, will eat practically anything.

Goat’s milk is used in making a soft white cheese
called broccio or brôche, which is one of the specialities
of the island, and is obtainable everywhere. When
sprinkled over with sugar it is a most delicious and
refreshing dish. The peasant, to increase the flavour,
is fond of adding a little cognac. About May the goats
are shorn, just like sheep. Their hair is used for making
capes, coats, and ropes. They look very strange
creatures when they have lost their hairy coverings.

Birds are not numerous, except during a few months
of the year. Amongst the most noticeable are the
ravens and the blackbirds. The ravens are unusually
impertinent, and will steal the workmen’s dinners if they
leave them unprotected upon the ground, or fly away
with their caps in order to make nests with them. The
blackbirds are eagerly hunted, especially during the
months when the arbutus and myrtle berries are ripe,
for at that time they are plump, and make very savoury
and delicate eating. The Corsicans prefer blackbirds to
any other kind of game, and go out in large parties to
shoot them. Shooting blackbirds is a popular and
fashionable form of “sport” with all who possess a gun.
Not only are blackbirds roasted and eaten like game,
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but their flesh is also potted, forming “terrine de merle,” a kind of “pâté de foie gras.” Potted blackbird is now a widely known and much appreciated delicacy.

There are millions of bees, wild and tame. Those kept at home are housed in rectangular boxes, and not in dome-shaped hives. The honey has a strong taste—a taste which suggests the odour of the maquis—and is not agreeable to everyone. Travellers in out-of-the-way parts of Corsica would find it worth remembering that honey can sometimes be obtained in village inns and farmhouses when butter is quite unobtainable.

CHAPTER XVI

CHARACTER

In the previous chapters we have learned something about the character of this island race. We have seen that in general the men are lazy and quarrelsome, yet fond of their country and their liberty, and ready to fight and die for both when the call comes.

When Napoleon became the ruler of France, he proclaimed himself a Frenchman. This offended most of his countrymen, who think themselves superior to any of the other peoples of Europe. They never forgave the great soldier for disowning his native land in this way; and though in a few places you will see statues to his memory, yet you will not find his portrait in any
Character

of the peasants' houses, or upon the walls of the village inns. Paoli and Sampiero are there, but not Napoleon. The love of the Corsican for his country is only equalled by his love for his family and his home.

A Corsican never forgets a kindness. He is hospitable, welcomes the stranger with open arms, and refuses to be paid for the services he renders. I once lost my way at night-time on the mountain-side. It was pitch-dark. I came across a peasant-boy, and asked him where I could get rest for the night. He led me over a rough, uneven track, over fields and through rivulets, and after a long and very tiring scramble we arrived at the door of a small house. As the boy turned to go home again, I offered him a franc. He refused it with a polite bow. I pressed him, and he angrily took himself off into the darkness, muttering something which I did not understand, but which sounded as though he were mightily offended at my bad manners. In the house to which he had brought me there were only two people, an old woman and her daughter. They were making a frugal supper off strong cheese and sour wine. I was a stranger to them, and we could but half understand each other, but they gave me shelter for the night, and provided me with a supper much better than their own. They gave me soup, trout, goat, cheese, and fruit. Any other peasant in the island would have done the same.

Though the natives are much given to murder, they do not steal, and the traveller need have no fear that he
Corsica

will be robbed of his money or his mule. There is something mean about stealing, and the Corsicans are never mean.

They are amongst the most independent people in the world. Years ago, when the Romans took Corsican slaves back to Italy, they could get no work out of them. The captives refused to eat, and they gradually starved themselves to death rather than live in bondage. The people are just as independent to this day, though they show their independence in other ways. For instance, they never bargain about prices in a shop or market. There are the goods, to be sold at a certain fixed price, and you may take them or leave them; you can please yourself. The dealer does not care whether you buy them or not, and he will even refuse to sell you an article which he thinks you do not need, or which will not suit you. He will leave you for half an hour while he goes outside for a chat, and will never dream of apologizing for keeping you waiting. It is his free and easy way of doing business, and if it displeases you, you had better return to the land from which you came.

It is because the people are so independent that the women do not make good servants. They do not object to work, and hard work, too—they have been used to that all their lives; but they do most strongly object to being ordered about by anyone except their husbands and fathers.

There is a man in Ajaccio who has pulled the root off his house to avoid paying taxes. He prefers to live
Character

with no covering over his head rather than admit that he is bound to pay money to a foreign ruler.

The children are distinctly amusing. They are very inquisitive, and ask the traveller all kinds of questions. They certainly welcome him with stones, but they send him away with smiles if he behaves himself nicely. They follow him all about the place, and spoil most of his photographs by getting in places where they are not wanted. They have no great love for soap and water, and do not mind holes in their clothes. They will climb a rock or a tree like a squirrel, and hop about on the edge of a precipice like a mountain-goat. In a word, they are fearless and free. They are fond of learning, and would be more angry with a master if he were late than a master would be with a pupil in this country under similar circumstances.

The old people are very superstitious, and they teach the young ones many curious beliefs. When an ox bellows in a particular way, snow is coming; if you see a weasel, it will rain. Never sell an animal on a Monday, for that is unlucky. A sacred key thrown amongst a herd of cattle will sometimes cure the animals of any disease from which they may be suffering. If you kill a young goat and examine the shoulder-blade, the signs on it will tell you many things about the future, if only you know how to read them.

On two particular saints’ days little loaves are made and taken to the church. There they are blessed, after which they are carried home again. If you possess one
of these loaves, it will keep danger away from you; it you put it on your window in a storm, you will not be hurt by lightning; if the cow is ill, give her a bit, and she will get better; if the house takes fire, throw the little loaf in the flames, and they will go out.

CHAPTER XVII

SOME STORIES AND LEGENDS

Amongst the mountain ranges that run through and across the island, and amongst the cliffs that line the shore, or the great rocks that lift their heads threateningly above the waters, there are many curious shapes, and it does not need much imagination to give names to these unusual forms.

At Bonifacio there is a rock that is called the Lion, because someone thought that it bore a resemblance to the king of beasts. At Piana there are rocks of so many comical shapes that you could almost fancy that a lot of ugly old demons had been turned into stone by someone as a kind of joke. They stand one after the other along the edge of a steep precipice, sneering at you, laughing at you, and all the time making you feel as though you would like to make faces at them in return, or at least to box their ears.

In some cases stories are told in order to account for the appearances which the rocks present.

Once upon a time there were seven ships coming from
Some Stories and Legends

the north of Africa. On board were a number of people suffering from the plague. As the Corsicans saw the vessels approaching the coast, they were seized with fear. If the sick were permitted to land, they would bring the terrible disease with them, and many would die. In despair the islanders flung themselves on the ground, and prayed to St. Roch to save them from this terrible calamity. He heard and answered their prayers. Suddenly the ships ran aground. All the people aboard perished in the sea, and the seven ships were changed into the seven rocks, that stand to this very day, firmly planted in the bottom of the sea with their heads above the water, to prove the truth of this story.

In another place there are two rocks known as the Brother and the Sister. The brother was a monk and the sister was a nun; and the monk persuaded the lady to leave her convent and run away with him. They had got away into the mountains, and thought themselves quite safe; but God was very angry with them, and as they sat resting by the little river that comes babbling down from the hills they were changed into stone.

Then there was a young lady who got married against her mother's will. This annoyed the mother so much that as soon as the marriage was over she had her naughty daughter turned into a big rock. And there it is at the present time as a warning to wilful maidens not to disobey their mothers.

Some day you may go to Ota, where the rocks over-
Corsica

hang the village and threaten every minute to fall and destroy the people who live there. But there is no real danger, for the mountain-side cannot slip. It is held in a big net made of goat’s-hair. You cannot see the net, but it is there all the same, and the threads are held tightly in the hands of saintly monks who live on the top of the mountain. Every night, when the people of the village are fast asleep, a number of old women climb slowly up the steep paths with offerings to the holy men who are saving Ota from destruction. The offerings are of food for the hungry men, and of oil with which to rub the threads of the net and keep them from wearing out.

Such are some of the stories of the mountain, that pass from mouth to mouth amongst the peasants, and that are firmly believed both by young and old. There are hundreds more, but these few will help you to understand what an interesting people still live in the island.