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A Sketchy Scene in the Mediterranean

As the tidy white steamer heeled
out into the deep blue of the Mediterranean
a vigorous, young woman impulsively
jumped from the chair beside her
companion and walked to the bow.

They had been watching with great
interest the colorful ^{harbor} life of Barcelona
full of boats of every description
even an important ^{looking} French

warship was here visiting, but what
caught the fancy of this romantic pair was
the picturesque native craft manned by
vociferous bucksters - or indolent
fisherman, and ^{they} were highly impressed
by the burners like, disdainful way their
boat picked her way, as our young
woman laughingly said "like some
fair lady, head high and skirts
daintily lifted with many a toss
of her petticoat in her wake!"

The companion, a youthful man
remained in his chair reclining
with eyes closed a smile on his lips,
over this last remark perhaps, yet
his eyes closed but his ears keenly
alive to every swish of the water &
halloo-a from the distance, rounding
on that brain a fanciful melody

II

to be transported to those long white
hands at first opportunity -

You may have guessed by now
who these two may be - Lucille
Chapin and Amantio George Sand.
dudvant.

This glimpse of these celebrities reveals
their characters to us as ^{we} muse back
over the years - There she stood, bobbed
~~head thrown back~~ belching lead worms
back, clicking the harps the breeze
was playing with her bobbed black hair.
yes bobbed it was after the fashion
of her compatriot Jeannette Arc.
She was as independent in her mode
of dress as her mode of living
which latter, would ~~be~~ be considered
most independent even in these modern
times for hadn't she run off two years
previous to Ruiss with de Musset
for her inspiration just as the young Polish
poetess was this time! - ~~She scorned~~ ^{she scorned} ~~at~~
~~public criticism~~ ~~as she frowned~~
at the visiting battleship
as they sailed by for didn't it
represent that body politic which
she scorned and of which she
scathingly wrote round in

III

the writings for its hypocrisy.
Her worst enemy could never
accuse her of this ^{hypocrisy}. For she was honest
to a fault and so generous of the
faults of others. ^{to} ~~the~~ ^{unwilling} what is she was
thinking as she stood there ^{gazing ahead} of

James I, perhaps, the youthful
King of Aragon, who in the
early part of the 13th century
set forth with a proud fleet
and army of seventeen thousand
men to wrest these islands from the
moors for his boats stored this self
same course - ^{was} she might have been
was she recalling ancient myths for wasn't
she headed straight for the
Balearic Islands or The Golden Isles
of the Ancients? Or was she looking
forward (which would have been
more typical) and musing at the
reception they would get in the
morrow bag and baggage with her
two children and Chopin's piano!!

So much for our imaginings.
They took found the little steamer
set us to work our surprises
curtains and get our subject

IV

in hand for after all our romantic pair are not the only ones who travel to Mallorca and even the ordinary tourists would be carried away by the sight. Daybreak brings for them are the purple headlands of the island rising from the sea sheer & precipitous & these cliffs rise higher & still higher as the little steamer draws near -

The Harbor of El Terno, pink blue & green suffused in sunlight takes on a surface-like translucent enamel not unlike those ^{pottery} majolica in which the island is famous & indeed took their name -

The town of Palma girdled by massive walls lies clustered thick about the golden mass of its ^{huge} cathedral the roads are so steep that they are laid out in steps and so narrow that only a slit of sky appears between the cornices above your head.

The balconies suggest the orient - descendants of Iberians, of Carthaginians & Romans, of Vandals & of Moors

V

the Mallorcans are a mixed race with what a heritage! Though truly meridional in temperament with their quick gestures & vivacious ways, they are quite insular, none, too fond of the stranger & a little jealous of their own beautiful island. ^{Every good} Every good Mallorcan when he goes forth to America, north or south or to France to seek his fortune, dreams ^{that} some day he will return ^{to his beloved island} rich & build a villa - (unfortunately for the towns of Soller, a little farther on, many of these dreams have come true & the valley fairly bristles with just the sort of houses that one would expect to find under these circumstances.)

They speak a vigorous but rather harsh patois. Their national costume has about disappeared except in the remote districts, its only vestige remaining being the "sobocillo" still worn by many of the women, a sort of cap & shoulder cape combined. (Listen to one writer's description of this special dish.)

"Ensaimada" is served for breakfast

IV

its origin lost in remotest antiquity, and is food fit for the gods — being something like a doughnut, but a doughnut without a hole, pale & golden in color, light & fluffy as a dream, absorbing in its tender coils, your coffee or your chocolate to melt deliciously in your mouth."

After some of our excursions on this Mediterranean cruise, you will be surprised when I say that cleanliness is quite a characteristic of most of the villages of Mallorca.

~~of the island~~ This palace, with flagstoned ^{patios} vaulted loggias decorated with handsome ironwork. Staircases to the second floor, where steps are sanded early morning for the visitors. One is admitted into a vast vestibule with a lofty beamed ceiling & whitewashed walls hung with family portraits. From this hall you enter a succession of rich salons that seem to continue forever, a salon of red brocade, a tapestry salon, a green salon & so on. The furniture is interesting whatever

from Moorish or French influence it shows more restraint in their designs & ^{more} finish to their work than the more flamboyant products of other Spanish artisans -

Beyond Palma stretches the road through a flat vega, well tiled & dotted with farms, dominated by the Randa a single conical peak -

The Mediterranean stretches glittering along the southern horizon, while to the west & north rise the mountain ranges that are the crowning glory of the island.

It was along this road that Chopin and George Sand came, for, after their arrival in the town of Palma Chopin was taken ill with the ^{first} ^{symptoms of} the malady that was to carry him off in the full prime of his life. This illness combined with their irregular situation created very serious difficulties for them in Palma & after vainly searching for shelter they were compelled to go to the town of Valdemosa -

What solace and inspiration Sand

VIII

most have been to him now, her
tenderness and cheer, her ~~enthusiasm~~
^{her} ~~and~~ ability of infusing human
emotion into external & inanimate
objects. I am thinking especially
what she must have made of this
trip along the road from Palma
to the abandoned monastery of
Valdemora (where they finally took
refuge) Her innate love of the
country and the peasantry, of the simple
things of the soil, Her enthusiasm
for this particular country side, this
dirty white road bordered by low
walls covered with prickly pear &
cactus, the houses with their walls
shaded by deep colonades & marked
in almost every case by one or two
tall palm trees; the olive groves,
the acacias & fig trees & sycamores
along the way all making a truly
apricot scene and like the water-
courses, hollowed in the tops of
the walls to irrigate the thirsty fields
as well as the primitive water-wheels
turned by blindefoldded donkeys!
After they had installed themselves
at the monastery, but may have been

IX

difficult to settle the children's needs but how in the world they ever managed to get the piano up such a precipitous slope, no one knows.

However there they were and both started work - Chopin on his Preludes & his Nocturnes of which the 13th - notably bears the imprint of the place with its groans of anguish alternating with the chanting of the monks. The strange spot made a deep impression on his romantic nature & the cold vaults of the monastery, accustomed only to monastic chants, must have been surprised at the passionate sounds of his piano -

Reference
means
Schubert -

George Sand describes their life & their troubles in Valdemosa in her "Un Hiver à Majorque".

She made many excursions to the quaint village of Pollensa where the inhabitants make their living plying their humble trades as netting the fish of the sea and it is this primitive life that held such fascination for her

X

In every open doorway, an aged granny sits spinning on her distaff or a child is busily making brooms, or women chatter in groups as they make or embroider on linen & as you pass you catch glimpses of a cobbler or cabinet-maker at work in shops centuries old using the same implements that their forefathers had used many years ago -

Goat herds & sheep herds bring their flocks, pig's squeal as they are graded along the road, the 2 wheeled country carts return from the fields laden with singing harvesters, while every once in a while there passes an old man, his long gray locks covered with a broad felt hat & dressed in the wide baggy trousers & the beflowered vest of other days -
Go

Back to Paris, after one winter in Mexico went Chopin, Sand & the two children. & the piano. To be truthful I don't know.