

CASTLE IN BOHEMIA

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden, Artist, of his
wife Ada Louise Ahier and their family, to 1900

By their son,

Alfred Ahier Wickenden

CASTLE IN BOHEMIA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER 1 -- THOSE THAT CAME AND WENT BEFORE	1
2 -- THE STRUGGLES OF A FATHERLESS FAMILY	5
3 -- STUDENT YEARS	9
4 -- ENGAGEMENT AND MARRIAGE	16
5 -- GRANDFATHER AHIER	21
6 -- EARLY YEARS AT AUVERS	27
7 -- TRIPS	33
8 -- WE LEAVE AUVERS	39
9 -- RETURN TO AUVERS	42
10 -- BONANZA	45
11 -- CASTLE IN BOHEMIA	49
12 -- SUPPLIES	55
13 -- VISITORS	58
14 -- THE STUDIO	62
15 -- CHEZ MADAME DAUBIGNY	65
16 -- ESCAPADES	71
17 -- OTHER ACTIVITIES	73
18 -- MEDICAL ATTENTION	76
19 -- MORE TRIPS	80

	PAGE
CHAPTER 20 -- SCHOOL	85
21 -- MONSIEUR CAZIER'S TEACHINGS	94
22 -- DOINGS OUT OF SCHOOL	99
23 -- FAIRY GIFTS FADING AWAY	103
24 -- BYE-LOW BABY BUNTING FATHER'S GONE A-HUNTING	107
25 -- RECONNAISSANCE OVER NEW TERRITORY	116
26 -- COLLÉGE DE PONTOISE	122
27 -- HYMN TO EARTH	128
28 -- ROMANY PATERAN	136

NOTES REGARDING THIS COMPUTER TRANSCRIPTION

The original document was written by Alfred Ahier Wickenden, with some notes penned by his sister, Alice Marie (Fifille) Wickenden. Alice's son, Robert Early Phelan, transcribed this document from a photocopy of the "original" carbon copy to computer (from experience - a long and arduous task). Due to current (1997) computer technology, the system that Robert used (Macintosh) was not directly compatible with IBM PC compatible systems. Robert sent a disk of the data in mac format to Ken W. Watson who reformatted the text into PC compatible format (a task that proved a tad more difficult than expected due to the non-conversion of all the extended characters, which included all 6,432 French accents in this document). Due to formatting changes, this version does not directly correspond to the version created by REP (140 pages for this document vs REP version of 146 pages).

- KWW, 1997

THOSE THAT CAME AND WENT BEFORE

In August 1833 James Quaife wrote to his parents-in-law. Mary Poynter added a few words. The letter, folded in the old style, was addressed:

“For Mr. Thomas Poynter,
Chatham, Kent,
England.
to go by the first packet.”

There are two post marks, one Sept. 11 -- at Cornwall, Ontario, another October, 16, 1833, presumably at Liverpool. As letters were scarcer in those days it was meant to convey a great deal in relating the experiences of a newly settled English couple in Canada. They had spent one winter and were about to spend another in the Township of Mille Roches, Cornwall County, Ontario.

James Quaife began: “Through the mercy of God...”

Acknowledging a letter from his parents-in-law he explained that although it had arrived in July it had waited for some weeks at the Post Office, seven miles from their homestead. Thanks to a “neighbour”'s inquiry it had been picked up and delivered on or about the 23rd of August 1833. James Quaife thanked Providence that his father and mother in law were still “in the body.” He related that truly the winter was long and cold from the beginning of December to the middle of March, that they had had but a scant supply of butter and meat; “wagers are low,” wrote he, but he hoped to do better the following winter as they had “to pigs” and a “few dollers coming in.” The superior attitude of natives towards newcomers rather irked him but “it is only a conceited idea as we can do everything as well as the natives.” He conceded, however, the latter were better at chopping. Not wishing to get into debt they had no cow. He gave lengthy instructions for money to be sent, if it could be spared, through agents at Montreal or Prescott or else through the “Canada Company.” He explained differences in currency, 23/5/6d being paid for the pound sterling in Canada at that time. After writing one page and four lines James handed the letter to Mary as we can note by the changed handwriting. She went on “You must not feel offended at James not writing more.” Her poor “scrabby” hand -- of which she was ashamed -- she apologized for. But she was most thankful to have received the letter of her parents -- “youre letter graitley liting my herrt - for I can indeed say with you that I spent many a sorrowful day about you all and scarcely a night but what I was with some of you in my sleep...”

It was hard for Mary Quaife to have travelled so far from her folks. The excitement of leaving had dulled her sorrow but it became poignant once aboard the ship, one of the square rigged sailing craft of that period. Loneliness continued to be her lot in the new land. Their house stood all alone, her husband was away two or three days at a time, no neighbors were within half a mile. But her mind was free of worldly care, said she, since she became a wife in her humble cottage. They went to church sometimes “the house of grase.” Her health was poor, she had to wean Sarah at eleven months but the baby nevertheless did very well. She expected a baby in January. Their prospects for the winter encouraged her. Her husband was kind to her -- her children were hearty and talked about their grandfather and grandmother -- Robert went to school and learnt well, though his eyes troubled him. Charlotte was the same careless child she was when she left home -- Mary Ann was a great girl and Sarah a very smart child and very engaging and like her grandparents. James thought of looking up the Quaifes -- not two hundred miles away. Mary hoped her parents could join them some day.

This letter gives us a picture of a settler's family at Cornwall, near Prescott, Ontario. James and Mary

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Quaife's child Charlotte -- careless child of four -- became the mother of R. J. Wickenden and is my grandmother. From a "careless child" she grew to see her father, broken in health and discouraged, return with all his family and few possessions to England.

I understand the ship was wrecked off the coast of Ireland. There was a terrible night of anxiety as the seas broke over the battered hull. The sailors got out of hand, broaching casks of rum as was the custom of that day, when all hope was gone. The sailors would get completely drunk then lie in their hammocks to wait the end, so my father told me. Nevertheless the family reached land somehow and were harbored at some poor Irish farm. Typically enough their shoes were stolen. The boy Robert, (my grand uncle), proceeded on foot across Ireland and England to Chatham, Kent, where he surprised his relations who had lost all hope of every hearing again of James Quaife and his family. Overjoyed, all sent money and supplies to the stranded little group who finally reached home.

When Charlotte, the careless child, became a young woman of twenty or so she met an attractive young master mariner of Halling, Kent, aged twenty-two or three. His name was Thomas Wickenden, born December 29, 1826. They were married at Bethel Chapel, Rochester, Kent, October 31, 1849. Of this marriage were born James William, November 15, 1850, Thomas Rogers, February 7, 1853, a daughter, who died in infancy and my Father, Robert John, July 8, 1861.

Captain Thomas Wickenden belonged to a younger branch of the old Kentish family of that name whose origin I describe in the Wickenden Tree. This branch had fallen to humble circumstances. I understand that they had had a seat at Finnsbury, named St. Michael's Manor. It was understood that in the Middle Ages they had reached some affluence, sufficient to incur the displeasure or jealousy of Henry VIII, who took away important fishing rights from them. In defiance of being thus fleeced some became pirates. Crime does not pay. Several were caught and hanged at Little Hampton, thus blemishing a coat of arms granted in early times. It is of simple design. Three chevrons interlaced on a field of blue give a W shape which might be connected with the name. The crest consists of an arm holding a cross-crosslet, fichée, gules. Hereditary rights to become freemen of the City of Rochester permitted my grandfather Thomas to avail himself of this privilege, he being the last of our line to do it.

The master mariner thrived -- he carried on the hazardous coastwise trade of the North Sea. Before me I have a picture, a daguerreotype showing him in those days, a good-natured strong smiling face with side burns. Ultimately he became master of the barque "Mary Caroline." Accounts have that this was a rather unwieldy boat, wide of beam, carrying a heavy tonnage for those times, which made it profitable for the owners, but unsafe for the crew.

Constant trips up and down familiarised him with all the currents, winds and coves along the North Sea coast. Nevertheless winter travel, then as now always held its hazards, especially where one had to find one's way along reefs, shoals and rocks.

His last trip started at the end of December 1860. My father wrote in youth the following touching poem, about his own Father's departure:

"Father's Farewell"

"I'm going boys now, Goodbye,' he said
And father bent low to our warm cot-bed;
'Be good to your mother' I heard him say,
Then he kissed us again, and he sailed away.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

“I remember his stalwart frame and strong,
I’ve ne’er seen the like in my whole life long,
As he held us and kissed us and said ‘goodbye,’
Awaking from dreams my brother and I.

“He stepped down stairs and I heard his tread
But sleep soon o’er came my flaxen head
Till we woke, and spoke with pride at dawning
‘Father is out on the sea this morning.’

“And then we began to count the days,
And trace on the map his watering ways,
Until bye and bye a letter was hailed,
That father that day for home had sailed.

“The outward voyage had been fast and fine
And as far as now he could well divine,
He was hoping to spend his Christmastide
With wife and bairns at his own hearth-side

“Then how we watched for that happiest hour,
When safe ashore from the wild sea’s power,
He would come and bend and kiss us again
And call us his mates, and brave little men.

“But Christmas passed, and he had not come;
Then we hoped at New Year’s to have him home,
But out in the storm that very night
My father was lost to sound and sight.

“And though many a year since then has rolled
And for many a friend the knell hath tolled,
Oft’ do I hear in the midnight calm
Those words come back like a solemn psalm.

“‘I’m going boys now, goodbye,’ he said,
And father bent low to our warm cot-bed;
‘Be good to your mother,’ I heard him say,
Then he kissed us again, and he sailed away.”

The weather was admittedly threatening when he started but he hoped to make port before the height of the storm. Unfortunately the good freighter was an unwieldy, slow sailer. The storm soon had it at its mercy. The rudder was carried away by the seas. The vessel, helpless, was driven on Sand Hale Flat at the mouth of the Humber almost within a haven. There she broke up.

I have now before me a “memorial,” queer mixture of medieval and Victorian design. Angels weep and church spires surround the inscription. “In affectionate remembrance of Mr. Thomas Wickenden.” It states that he perished with all his crew on Tuesday, January 1, 1861, aged 34 years. “His body was washed on shore, 17 days after and was buried at Marsh Chapel, near Great Grimsby.” It was a matter of speculation

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

as to why his body was found quite some distance from those of the other members of the crew. Some say he was a vigorous man and a good swimmer. The theory was advanced that he may have tried to swim ashore for help, to save his crew, but since there were no survivors none could tell for sure what had happened.

A lock of his hair was cut off and returned with his watch to his wife (my grandmother). The hair is in a medallion with his picture, which I own. As my own Father pointed out to me a few grains of sand cling to the hair after all these years, the sand of Sand Hale Flat. I also have the watch.

THE STRUGGLES OF A FATHERLESS FAMILY

My grandmother Wickenden, the former “careless child,” Charlotte Quaife, had now plenty of cares on hand with her boys still children, the oldest being only eleven, the other seven and one still unborn. I understand that she had trained as a nurse which enabled her to obtain work from a charitable or social institution, visiting the poor. Thus she made both ends meet.

On July 8, 1861, a little over six months after the disaster, Robert John was born. He became my Father. The birth certificate states, under No. 263, that Eighth July, 1861, at Hooper’s Place, Rochester, District of Medway, County of Kent, was born Robert John, a boy, son of Thomas Wickenden, deceased master-mariner, and Charlotte Wickenden formerly Quaife. This declaration was made by my grandmother on August 10, 1861. What effect all these emotions had on him pre-natally, I could but surmise, but no physical ill effects resulted.

It must have been most difficult for Mrs. Thomas Wickenden to care for the child. It is not surprising therefore that, at an early age, he was sent to Sir Joseph Williamson’s Mathematical School to which he was admissible, free of charge. This school is mentioned in “The Great Schools of England,” by Howard Stinton, (1869): “Mathematical School (Semi-classical) Founded by Sir Jos. Williamson, 1701, as a free school for education of sons of freemen of Rochester towards the mathematics and other things to fit them for sea service, etc. Instructs now sixty boys, sons of freemen of the town, free, in Latin, French, Mathematics and English. Income: £548, with houses; Head master Rev. Thomas Cobb, M.A.”

As a child I have heard Father often mention these early years of his at Rochester. The Rev. Thomas Cobb was an old-fashioned school master. He insisted on using quill pens. He took great pains in showing his scholars how to sharpen them with a pen knife. He was also adept with the cane which he drummed plentifully on fractious boys. Aside from these accomplishments he was quite a classical scholar and a thorough teacher. He believed in memorizing. At the age of ten Father knew a complete book of Paradise Lost by heart and passed successfully the local examinations for Oxford University.

Physical education was not neglected for the future sailors. It was taught under the charge of a retired army sergeant-major who instructed his pupils in “single sticks, and dancing.” Single-sticks consisted of hazel sticks with panier sword handles. This exercise, carried on without masks, was a preliminary to cutlass drill. The old sergeant-major made it very realistic by engaging his pupils in turn to enthusiastically slash their posteriors, after wily feints. On one occasion however the feints became mixed and young Robert John got the stick in one of his eyes. This gave him a magnificent shiner which he paraded proudly around school and home.

The Crimean War had taken place scarcely a decade before, thus inspiring martial exercises. Soldiers would be out daily for tactical problems about the town, in trenches, recoubts and what not. The youngsters followed enthusiastically. At that time lines of infantry fired their ball-loaded guns simultaneously. The volley or salvoes of black powder blanks made a frightful roar and a wonderful smoke screen wherein showed red stabs of fire. What a sight for the boys! After these volleys the “thin red line of heroes” would advance leaving the field to the gamins who rushed forward like a flight of sparrows looking for the odd unfired blank cartridge, dropped in the confusion. The powder in these provided an inexpensive form of fireworks.

The interest in fireworks soon outran the supply of ammunition inspiring Father with the idea of making gunpowder from some current formula. He succeeded therein to the joy of his friends and the distress of older neighbors. In the enthusiasm he conceived a taste for chemistry which helped him to obtain a job with

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

a local druggist after his final examinations. There he invested in a brass mortar and pestle which he kept all his life. John has it now. His interest in chemistry led him into the new art of photography which he was to further develop in America.

Snowball fights provided entertainment in winter. We can gather how these were carried out from a school friend of his, Ernest Alfred Moore, who wrote on March 18, 1874: "a regular battle took place, first the Grammars drove our school down to the posts on the Maidstone Road side of the Vines, but when they had no more snowballs we drove them into their play-ground... etc." So went the fortunes of the day. In the same letter he refers to Father's success in the Oxford examination, having fears he may not be so successful.

During this period Father's older brothers were not idle. James William had become a printer. At the age of 19 he collected sufficient funds to cross the Ocean to America and to pay his fare to Toledo, Ohio, in, 1869. He was soon followed by Thomas Rogers in 1870. This latter was only seventeen.

The move of these two boys showed unusual enterprise but was influenced by an unpromising outlook in England and by the fact that their uncle, Robert Quaiife, had become minister of the Congregational Church at Toledo.

Grandmother Wickenden was left in Rochester with young Robert John, but not for long. In September, 1873, they crossed to join Jim and Tom.

The boats at that time were part sail and part steam and Father had ample opportunity to learn the chanteys of the sailors, which he used to sing to me as a child:

A Yankee brig sailed down the river
Row! boys, Row!
A Yankee brig sailed down the river
Row! boys, Row!
What do you think they had for dinner?
Row! boys, Row!
What do you think they had for dinner?
Row, my bully boys, Row!
The larboard side of an old sou wester
Row! boys, Row!
The larboard side of an old sou wester,
Row, my bully boys, row!

There was also the one sung when decks were scrubbed:

The rai-ail-road, the rai-ail-road
Poo-----oor Pa-----addy scrubs the railroad.

Those elemental days cannot have been so hard when tasks of drudgery could be done with song. There is no such thing with our machines.

Father was in his 13th year when he arrived at Toledo. His first impressions were vivid. The odd Indian could still be seen on the banks of the Maumee. Civil War soldiers were everywhere, working in faded uniforms. The woods, the streams were almost virgin forest full of wonders for the English boy.

Of these adventures he would often tell me the story of his fight, with the help of a friend, against a

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

large snake locally known as a "blue racer." He and his friend finally cornered the reptile and tried to shoot its head off with some more or less reliable pistol: "His eye was on the trigger finger" said Father, "As I pressed it, he dodged and we missed him so many times that we finally had to kill him with a stick." He never thought of questioning his marksmanship. They placed the dead snake across the road where it extended to such length that it exceeded the wagon ruts by eighteen inches on each side.

Schooling was of course in order. As soon as it could be arranged he was admitted to the Franklin School. Later he did a year or so at the High School (1874-75). He often expressed disappointment at the amount he learned there after his training at the Rochester School.

He felt his time was being wasted so that at the age of fifteen, he became apprenticed to North and Oswald, photographers. There his ideas of chemistry evolved from lost cartridges at Rochester, stood him in good stead. He startled his masters by making his own wet plates and printing paper to replace the still in vogue daguerreotype. After about a year or more of this, at the age of 16, he conceived the idea of going on his own. The execution of this project was of the simplest: he erected a tent at the corner of Front and Main Streets, Toledo and patrons came. After a few months he moved to another town, Dundee, Michigan where he opened and operated a new gallery for about two years.

All this work did not prevent him from taking the odd vacation, or from pursuing his study of art. I find from a letter dated Sept. 24, 1877, from an artist in Galveston, Texas, that Father took a trip down the St. Lawrence and Thousand Islands. In the same letter his friend urged him to continue his art studies and gave instructions regarding the delivery of one of his own oil paintings. I take it that about this period his natural ability for drawing was most useful in retouching photographs. The contact of his artist friend had another result, it made him realize the much higher value of paintings.

An old bill against H. Ezabroad covers a period of three years. The total comes to \$9.95 - among the items I find 3 - 4 x 4 (presumably) photographs, billed at \$2.00; 6 cards \$1.25, or about 20¢ a piece. It took a lot of "cards" and 4 x 4's to make a living. On the other hand, a picture, little more work than retouching a negative, and a good deal pleasanter to make, would bring 10, 20, sometimes hundreds of dollars. This led him to practice drawing all the harder.

While in Michigan Father became acquainted with an ex-officer of the U.S. Army, named Sam Coyl and his wife, Mary. Mr. Coyl had served in the Indian campaigns against the Sioux during which he had become blinded by the alkali dust of the desert. His wife had followed his fortunes and among other episodes, she related to me her ride in an old fashioned frontier mail coach, to join Lieutenant Sam Coyl at his fort. They were pursued by Indians. When she alighted at the Fort she saw two arrows stuck in the back of the vehicle.

The blinded officer went to Detroit. He dealt so successfully in real estate that he became quite rich. His pastime was art. Although he could not see, he could feel pictures. I do not know by what freak of fortune Mr. and Mrs. Coyl met Father. But I do know that they, childless, became extremely fond of him and encouraged him in his studies.

Thus, there seemed to be a unanimous urge from within himself along with that of friends and acquaintances to follow the career of a painter. He did not lack the energy to achieve this purpose. His drawing at first had been done without instruction, so that he felt the lack of training seriously. Using his savings made from photography, he went to Detroit, then to New York where he enrolled as art student under Chase and J. Carroll Beckwith during the years 1880, 1881, 1882.

Certainly all was not smooth for the boy. But he bore up courageously as in the lines written in 1882

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

at New York:

“Then let us bravely bear what comes
To bow us down with grief and pain...”¹

Early in his stay at Detroit he rented a studio and became member of an Art faculty. This is evidenced in a descriptive card of the Detroit Sketching Club advertising classes for those wishing to acquire the art of drawing. These classes were under teachers “who had had the benefit of working under acknowledged masters.”

Into this faculty, mostly composed of ladies, came Father just turned twenty “an acknowledged master.” He taught “Drawing and Painting, Landscape and Composition” on Tuesdays 2-4 and Thursdays 10-12. The charges were \$6.00 for 10 lessons of the first term, \$5.00 for succeeding terms of 10 lessons. The classes began October 2nd 1881. It is easy to imagine that the group was prominently feminine. Then as now the pursuit of esthetic things in America was indulged in more by women than by men.

Father often remarked to me on the nerve he must have had, fresh from Dundee, Michigan, to teach others what he scarcely knew himself. I can also imagine that many of the young ladies hoped to make impressions; that matrons would not have been averse to have him for a son-in-law. However he managed to remain discreetly aloof. His residence, studio and office were in room 9 1/2, Mechanics' Block, Detroit. Among his pupils I traced the names of Amy Winty, Ada L. Wilcox and Tillie K. Grant. These two latter, from the tone of their letters, were really interested in the young artist who apparently kept them guessing as to his intentions under the benevolent eyes of their parents.

At this period he did not neglect making other contacts. I find several letters from Horatio Harper of “Harper's Magazine” referring first to inquiries “regarding an article on E London poor and London Labor” and regarding art work he commissioned Father to do. This shows definitely the diverse interest the young artist had in social and intellectual matters as well as his ability to gain a new patron.

¹ From *Consolation*” (Poems of Nature and Sentiment, by R.J. Wickenden)

STUDENT YEARS

The records of 1882 are very scant. Perhaps this makes it simpler to analyse the movements of young Robert Wickenden at that time. He was in Detroit in the early part of the year. A bill from Thomas McGraw, dated February 15, for \$12.50 is for "rent of Office at Mechanics' Block for January 1881." A list of names of pupils at Detroit about that time (late 1881) is also found, all ladies. Later, a bill for cards from North and Oswald, his old employers is dated April 3, 1882. Dated May 22, 1882, appears a bill from the Art Students' League, New York, for \$6.00. I could not make out the abbreviations. It is apparent that all this time he was thinking of starting his art studies in New York. He probably kept his headquarters in Detroit right through November, for there is a fragment of letter from some unknown person, presumably an artist, who urges R. J. Wickenden to come to New York "with ten mile boots as quickly as possible as anyone who, short of starving, can be supremely happy studying art, must succeed in New York, and eventually make more money than in Detroit."

After courses in New York he decided to broaden his knowledge by going to Paris. I find a letter from Miss Amy Minty asking for art goods and stating that "Mamma joins me in hoping that you may have a very pleasant trip to Europe" showing he had acquainted her with his plans. I can easily judge that this was a young girl perhaps 17 or 18. It is a cold impersonal letter but there seems to be no attachment in it although I can read a vague sense of curiosity, if not of fear, in writing to this bold young man going to Europe. But Mamma is near and will protect her baby. And baby will lose the chance of a nice husband - - there are other girls in Europe.

At that time French art was in one of its best periods. The Barbizon School, particularly, was very popular and in great demand in America, where business flourished and where wealthy patrons indulged in cultivating the arts. It is not surprising therefore that many young men adopted the profession of painters under the direction of excellent masters. Nevertheless they all felt that the New World Schools were nothing as compared to Paris. Father became thoroughly imbued with this idea and decided to go over there to complete his studies. Late in 1882 he bought a bill of exchange on Paris, at Detroit, for 2600.00 francs or roughly 20 dollars. In those days one franc would go further than a dollar today, money being exchangeable for hard gold, on demand. This sum therefore would be ample to pay his expenses for many months.

In the year 1883 he began a diary of this momentous trip. The first entry refers to his taking leave of brothers and friends after obtaining his papers at Toledo. After these adieus he took train to New York. On the train he studied French. I may state here that his command of the language, self-taught, became remarkable and his accent nearly perfect, the odd grammatical error only betraying that it was not his native tongue.

At New York he lost no time in going the rounds of friends and patrons and secured another commission from Mr. Harper, the publisher. Just before sailing there was a "banquet" at the Y.M.C.A. What they ate or drank I could not say, as he stated he was "sick all night" and part of the day following but felt better in the evening when he went "to Mr. Taylor's to dinner" and studied more French.

The "City of Richmond" of the Inman Line sailed from New York on Saturday 13th January in the early morning with twenty-five passengers both ladies and gentlemen. The ship was a steamer with auxiliary sail. Her best run was 356 miles and her worst 245. The weather was rough: snow-squalls, rain and gales. On Saturday, 20th January, there is an entry "smashed boat, broke in smoke-room skylight. Gale again at night. Chain of main mast gave way."

In spite of all this, paniered ladies and frock coated gentlemen played quoits and shuffle-board on the

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

rear deck between storms. He showed his sketches to the Ladies, much impressed by his genteel ways. He also sketched, studied more French and read Tennyson. No wonder that he became a scholar of knowledge far greater than could be obtained by mere college degrees. He loved these things all his life. On Tuesday 23rd January, he arrived at Liverpool, thence took train to London and on to Rochester, left ten years before. There he visited relatives, much impressed by his personality and rapid rise in life. He took this occasion to visit the National Gallery: "Wonderful things" says the diary of this youth of 22, "Turner, Landseer, Rembrandt, great treat...Vandyke...Rossetti's works."

He crossed the channel on 30th of January to arrive at Calais the 1st February 1883. After so much planning and anticipation he was at last in the country of the Capital of Art, the country of the famed Barbizon painters. The Paris train left at 5 a.m. I can picture with what eagerness he watched the French country-side. The Seine had overflowed its banks, fields were flooded, but he noted the French peasants early at work among the picturesque landscape. His fingers itched for crayon and brush to depict the wonder of it all.

On his arrival in Paris it can be imagined what excitement it was to apply his studies in earnest by trying his book French on the Parisians. What a thrill to be understood once in a while but what helplessness when torrents of words came pouring out of some waiter, cabby or "sargent de ville"!!

Nevertheless he found his friends, old pals from New York: Denman, Lamb, Smith, Gordon, Spencer, Scott, Wiles, Parker, Rice, Colarossis -- Probably he refers to them in the entry "up to see boys in Rue St. Jacques" which he further spells St. Jacques, without the s. Together they celebrated Mardi Gras which fell on the 6th February: "out with the boys. Sing English and American songs on Boulevard St. Michel." This was the Bohemian Paris of Murger. Songs were to be sung and hearts were light. One was expected to sing with joy, with enthusiasm, without restraint. To have done otherwise would have seemed abnormal. Even foreign languages went unnoticed -- each was too intent upon his own "chanson."

Having found a room he immediately went to work to enter École des Beaux Arts by obtaining introductions from the American Consulate. His friend Spencer saw to it that he should enter M. Hébert's studio. This was settled by an interview on the 4th of March, a Sunday, where the diary reads "over to see M. Hébert, in bed; he admits me to his atelier." This cost him 52 francs 70 centimes, (\$10.54), a far cry from the huge fees we pay nowadays for college education. With alacrity he went to the Bureau of the Beaux Arts and got his ticket on the 5th. He and the boys celebrated in the evening, "jolly evening with them all..."

But he was a "nouveau," a freshman. His initiation was simple enough. The "anciens" were ready to admit with full privileges anyone who paid for drinks. The diary reads "give twenty francs to fellows for the drinks. Then have to go to dejeuner with them and pay 3 francs 75 centimes more. Lot of cheats."

He thought he was through but the thirsty throats of the Beaux Arts Students were made but thirstier at the remembrance of the previous day's celebration. The fact that anyone could pay his way without debt made him appear a millionaire from "Amérique." Their ideas of thrift consisted in getting rid of their francs as soon as they had them and to help any one else in possession of funds to follow this principle. So the "anciens" said it was very well but what about the mass? The mass cost another twenty francs. Wine being cheap in those days, you could get almost a barrel of it for that sum. I understand that some third celebration was attempted but Father was firm this time and there are no more entries about "masses" nor references to "anciens," the priests who officiated at these "religious" ceremonies. All in all these formalities had cost him nearly as much as Hébert's fee, making him keenly feel the limitations of his resources.

The group at the atelier consisted of some fifty or sixty young men dressed in all ways and fashions according to the part of France or the country they came from. Fifty or sixty easels, were scattered at all angles to get a view of the model on a slightly raised platform. The class began at 7 a.m. in summer and 7.30

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

in winter. Training for art was no career of ease. To obtain a place near the model it was a case of first come, first served. The result was that few students were late. They generally got there before 7. As to the Master who headed the studio he came when he felt like it. No monitors, no assistants were provided to maintain discipline, nor for roll calls. You were there to paint, you had paid for it, you took full advantage of the precious hours so obtained.

When the model came silence prevailed. The earnest crowd of young artists worked hard. When everything was well under way the Master would stroll in. He looked over each student's shoulder, made suggestions, sometimes a remark on the quality of the work. The student practically hung on every word as if his fate depended on it. The slightest word was picked like a precious gift. The old master would be economical of praise -- "pas mal" -- "pretty good" -- was a mark of high achievement carrying the student to a high heaven of joy. This might be followed by many days of odd grunts the meaning of which depended on the proper translation of subtle tones according to how the Master felt.

Outside the classes, no more than in, there was no restraint. Your individual conduct was your own affair. You ate or slept where you could afford. Father, like the others, had a cheap garret to live in. He ate at Creameries for breakfast, a roll and a bowl of milk. He lunched or dined for a few cents at various cheap restaurants sampling the food here and there as well as the "eau d'acajou," mahogany water so called, because it was thought that wine was adulterated or imitated by coloring water in this manner. Compared to the average run of students, Father was well-off. He had not only a room but a stove and more important still, fuel. The result was the impecunious, chilly students flocked to his garret on cold nights. They all smoked of course, the wretched "caporal" tobacco of the French Government monopoly. To have aired the place would have been criminal as it would have chilled the comfortably thawing young men. The air under the circumstances became thicker and thicker so that one could hardly breathe. Under the principle that like cures like, Father began himself to smoke. Of course all "rolled their own." This was his introduction to the Bohemian world of Paris. He had, of course, his codes and conventions but these to his companions were only part of the fripperies of life, a mild form of eccentricity he could have if he felt like it, just as others had theirs. Naturally these codes and conventions could be discarded at any time without the slightest attention being paid to their disappearance any more than to their presence. You could be a seventh day Baptist avoiding wine, woman and song or you could be the opposite. Personal preference reigned supreme and was respected among these individualists of individualists. Only in one thing were they on common ground, that was an unquenchable desire, overpowering all else, to appreciate and to cultivate the beautiful.

Having found friends, an atelier, a master, he had practically attained all the attributes of a true Bohemian. One element was still lacking, a girl to love, but this was not to be for long.

From then on matters proceeded smoothly enough. There was painting at the atelier -- concerts and reading of various authors, Wordsworth, Tennyson, lives of painters. There were also letters to and from home. Communists furnished a show on the 11th March: "Commune meeting dispersed by military."

He was very chummy with "Spencer, a right sociable fellow." This lasted till 22nd March when he and the sociable fellow had a "tiff," but on the 23rd it was all over and they had déjeuner together. On the 28th he went to the Louver to make a copy of Rembrandt's "Portrait of a young man" which I now own. It is a very remarkable piece of work. At that time, Father was 21 years and nine months old.

Mardi Gras over, Lent began. He took occasion to listen to the sermons of a celebrated preacher of that day, the "Père Montsabré" who, besides his religious exhortations, helped him in grasping the meaning of spoken French sentences.

There were many things to see. The Louvre, the Luxembourg, the Bibliothèque Nationale. He went to

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

the Catacombs “terrible dark dingy halls, all bones and skulls...” Happily he immediately changed these impressions by going to the Gobelins, tapestry manufacture, and back via the Tuileries Gardens. The conclusion of that day was attending a show, “Fedora,” with “Miss Hattie.” He saw her again a few days later. She was the daughter of a Mr. Geo. F. Moore of Detroit, a very wealthy man. Unfortunately she was to suffer a premature death as I noted that he painted her portrait from photographs one or two years later. He also went to the Théâtre Français where he saw “Le Feu Couvert,” “L’école des Maris” by Molière, “Nuit d’Octobre” by Alfred de Musset.

In the meantime the work at the Atelier progressed. He got a criticism of “Pas Mal” from Hébert a few weeks after entering, then “Bien Fait.” He was more than encouraged by these marks of recognition from the Jovian and jovial Master.

All these occupations culminated to the Artists’ great day, the “Vernissage” or “Varnishing Day,” at the Salon, on April 30, 1884. Nominally this ceremony meant the opportunity for painters to retouch their canvases with varnish after hanging. Actually it was the preview of the year’s accepted pictures. It may be assumed that many gentlemen with sideburns, high hats and thin-legged checked pantaloons, attended with their ladies, these latter in wide high-hipped and arching skirts sweeping the floor. In those days ladies had neither feet nor legs and conversation was maintained on a high scholarly, stately plane. Nevertheless the salon was a meeting place for the glamour youth of that day as well as for the intellectual elite.

About this time his love of music led Father to study the guitar, in order to accompany his own songs of which he had quite a repertory. This, and arguments on religion and philosophy, as well as reading, provided him with relaxation when not out “with the boys.” The Beaux Arts “Ateliers” in themselves were not gloomy places. The students were a happy good-humoured crowd, only watching for a chance to laugh, sing or celebrate with Nouveaux providing the odd drink.

On May 8, Father had the chance of assisting at the “mass” of new comers, thus getting back some of the wine he had furnished two months before. He was already an “ancien.” It was quite natural that in this short time most of his associates should have been American or British, and possibly other foreigners in France, seeking and finding company for their loneliness, as the French students kept more or less to themselves. I find only one allusion of Father trying to chum up with a French artist. He was Gastaing, Prix de Rome, 1883.

Nevertheless he consistently tried to broaden into the closely guarded French circles possibly in order to improve his French, perhaps to “chercher la femme.” His nearest approach was on rue Roquépine where he went for the first time with his friend Spencer on March 18, 1883, as entered in the diary, seven weeks after his landing in France. The next entry referring to this address is on April 29, “in eve, to rue Roquépine.”

What was there to attract him at rue Roquépine? At rue Roquépine Mme. de Maulpied held a salon for the intelligentsia of the neighborhood. Fred Spencer brought Father there for some “soirée,” knowing that he would appreciate becoming acquainted with people of similar tastes. The slender blond young man was duly introduced in the elegant circle -- probably in a general way, for it turns out that two lovely brunettes inquired particularly about him. What was his name? his occupation? tastes? One of the young ladies’ names was Alice, the other was Ada, they were the Misses Ahier.

Spencer was courting Alice -- he had done so for some time -- Logically enough, at subsequent meetings Father paid attention to the dark Ada. In spite of his start Spencer never married Alice. Father, the late comer, fared better as we shall see. Under May 13th I note in the diary “In evening to rue Roquépine long walk with Miss Ahier.” My Mother was then 18, having come from Jersey (Channel Islands) with her sister Alice about 25, to perfect their French at a pension run by a Mademoiselle Jonte.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Nevertheless he was not jumping at conclusions. He looked other girls over. He tried flirtation. On May 27, he met a young woman, Miss Egsley, at the Louvre. "Hope to see again" says the diary. His wish was gratified on May 31st, but this second meeting was less impressive than the first though he wrote "meet the young lady -- saw in Louvre-again. Miss Egsley, very pleasant time." This pleasant time over he went that evening to rue Roquépine to check things over.

On June 3rd "walk with Miss Hattie," daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Moore. The parents were perhaps hopeful of a possible match but Father was indifferent. Among all these young figures which played in his mind there stayed the impression of a dark, gentle girl, petite, yet of haunting beauty, who had cast a spell on him. A spell from one of these islands of Sorcery in the Channel, Jersey.

Nevertheless he was not one to let this interfere with his chosen profession. He had several orders to paint pictures for Mr. Coyl, Mr. Frank Bradley and Geo. F. Moore. Along with his academic work he painted ideas of his own. He refers to them as "design," "illustration," or by title "Evening in Afternoon." He also studied the masters and, as I remember, he always did. No painting was too insignificant but it would arrest the attention of his critical and classifying eye, if but to be put at the bottom of the "amateur" group.

On June 4 he took what seemed to him a plunge. He bought a Corot for 100 francs. He showed it subsequently to the Moores who did not like it at first but, on the 6th, "Mr. Moore's people want Corot." He brought it over to them in the evening of the 11th. Nevertheless when they decided to take it, it was too late, it was already sold to Mr. Coyl. I infer he made a good profit which probably gave him a taste for speculating in pictures enjoyed the rest of his life.

What with painting, attending the Beaux-Arts, frequenting museums and libraries, going out with "the boys" to "brasseries" and plays, or hearing sermons by preachers of that day, and seeing "young ladies" his was a busy life. We find him celebrating his twenty-second birthday on July 8, 1883 by dining with a friend, Schutze, going to the Louvre, then to Church. The evening was spent with Kenyon and they had "limonade." The next day he bought himself a new easel for twenty francs, feeling entitled to a birthday present.

A few days later he shipped all the pictures ordered by Messrs. Coyl, Bradley and Moore, to their American addresses.

References to Kenyon have appeared for some time in the diary. I gathered from letters that he was related to a firm of druggist of Providence, Rhode Island; he and Father became close friends; so close indeed that it was a shock for him on July 17 to find Kenyon quite sick². It was some intestinal trouble which became worse, even under the doctor's treatment. This latter advised the hospital so, on July 25th, Kenyon entered the "Maison Municipale de Santé" where Father faithfully attended him until he came out on August 14.

During this illness it is quite probable that the oppressiveness of a Paris summer as well as the danger of illness caused Father and Henry Kenyon to discuss the desirability of going to the country. As soon as Kenyon was out of danger, therefore, Father went on a scouting expedition in the direction of Fontainebleau which he found rather expensive. As he studied his map, he saw the name of Brolles which rather appealed to him; so he went there. There was only one inn, the Maison Deligant; its few rooms were occupied. He slept on the billiard table for two nights. After this there is no mention as to where he slept so I presume he soon returned to a more conventional if not more comfortable bed.

² Alice Wickenden Phelan ("AWP") notes that Kenyon was sick with typhoid.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

There was no hesitancy on his part. Several months in the city, among which the hottest, had starved him for country nights and air. On the morning of August 20, 1883, he set out with paint box, easel and canvas to paint a study by the banks of the Seine. When this was completed it was followed by studies of an apple tree, of a haystack, of a wood interior and others. In the meantime he wrote to Kenyon to come having secured "a room at Begent's at 30 francs per month and moved in." Kenyon came to join the colony amongst whom I note the name of Pinto, a Portuguese artist who specialized in pastels. There were excursions to the Forest of Fontainebleau and to nearby Barbizon where he visited Millet's house, Rousseau's studio. August ended. The regular entries stop on Sept. 5: "Wet cold morning, write up diary." He was apparently too absorbed in his work to bother making many entries. On October 4th he mentioned a trip to Paris for material and on October 15th to take over a studio, from H.H. Kitson, art student, who gave it up because of money matters; as he put it "I am busted." Kitson gave him as a bonus "three tables, wash bowl, jug, slop pail and all the necessaries of a 'Bachelor's Hall' also casts and marbles." The stove pipes were to be paid for separately, 25 francs. The total bill was 111 francs 30 centimes. This being settled he left Brolles for Paris on the 31st October.

"Up early, finish packing, Pinto helps me to Station, off for Paris." There he slept in his studio and "began to straighten up." He had long before discovered it takes very little to make a home. A roof to ward off the rain, a few bedcovers, a stove, a kettle and pan, a box to sit on -- his beloved canvases, paints, brushes and easels. He was supremely happy. Here was a centre in which to work at his art, in the capital of art.

A series of entries from November 11 to 15 refer to his work on cattle pictures. Perhaps the stories of Miss Alice Ahier about the beautiful prize stock of Jersey were inspirational. On December 10 he mentioned receiving 2064 francs from Mr. Stinchfield "to buy bric-à-brac with." The interest of Americans in art and antiques reached a zenith at this time and money was abundant. The last entry of the 1883 diary was made on December 23rd, its last line read: "To Rue Roquépine in evening."

Throughout early 1884 he kept up his studies and painting and submitted his first picture to the Salon, "The Gleaner of the Forest," Fontainebleau. It was accepted. This was indeed a triumph. I find his exultation reflected in a letter from Tillie H. Grant, a former Detroit pupil, dated May 15, 1884. "Oh, if we could only see the painting!" This picture brought him an early piece of publicity in the Morning News of Paris which mentioned it along with the work of American artists of whom it stated that "they quite hold their own with the triumphs of French art exhibited at the Salon held at the Palais de l'Industrie."

Henry Kenyon, his old friend, went to Pont Aven in Brittany in the early spring and urged Father to come; as he put it "The grub is very good, beats Deligants; I pay fifty five francs a month and, for my room, larger than our old one, twenty a month." In other words good living for 75 francs or \$15.00 a month. Henry Kenyon was not going to wait for Paris summer with its deadly illnesses.

He was right. Cholera was coming.

Before it broke Father had gone from Paris but Rue Roquépine had left its subtle little thorn in his heart which prompted him perhaps to paint cattle in Jersey. He arrived there July 14, 1884 accompanied by Spencer. They boarded at Mr. F.E. Luce.

He must have written to his friends in Detroit because about this time the Detroit Free Press mentioned his remarkable progress stating how he had come to Detroit at 19 "and had quickly become known to art connoisseurs and patrons" and his class room soon contained a number of very successful pupils, "from the best families;" he had met with ready recognition for his own works sent from abroad. The Chief prize being a copy of Murillo's "Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception," the only copy in America, bought by a banker of Detroit who saw it at Hanna and Ives. Mr. Wickenden's forte is figure painting...Other works: 'The Trysting

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Oak;’ the scene being the Forest of Fontainebleau. A peasant girl is waiting for her lover as the shades of twilight envelop the surrounding forest and the dense foliage whose richness does not lose its effect despite the dense shadows. The maiden is clad in the varied colored and simple costume of the peasant women of France, luxuriant brown hair tied in a graceful knot. The whole painting is full of thought and reality. ‘Autumn Day,’ study of a French farm after the wheat has been garnered full of sunshine. Study in water color of Mr. Wickenden’s studio in Paris. Mr. Wickenden is now in Jersey engaged in an elaborate cattle scene to be sent to the New York Spring exhibition, for which he has at his disposal the magnificent herd of cattle owned by Mr. Le Brocq which contains the challenge pair of Jerseys of the world. He is destined to attain a high place for thoughtful study and deep originality. Mr. Wickenden will be remembered in Detroit as a finely educated young man. He already derives a handsome income from his works.”

Elsewhere the Detroit Free Press, 1885, referring to a loan exhibition at Detroit mentioned “a splendid example of work by that poetical artist R. J. Wickenden. It is a forest interior with a single figure and is replete with soft color.”

ENGAGEMENT AND MARRIAGE

The young lady of 18 was not in Jersey at the time of Father's first visit but had stayed in Paris. Friends sent their comments on this voyage of the young artists. Kenyon from Pont Aven addressed a rollicking letter mentioning the young ladies to "Wickenden, Spencer & Co." Another friend, an Irishman also wrote to Father "That bull may finish you off or you it, so be cairful of yourself." I do not know whether Miss Ada Ahier came to Jersey later on during that season, but, desiring to make an impression he decided to dress the part of an artist; this is indicated by a receipted bill for £2.-10 or \$12.50 for a velveteen Jacket. I remember it distinctly. It was of dark blue material, soft and shimmery. A real sports Jacket, certainly very sporty for that period. The records at this time are scarce. I can only infer that love absorbed him deeply, yet scared him as may be implied in two poems of that time:³

They say that all love is illusion,
O then is illusion most sweet.
When our souls melt is blissful confusion
'Tis heaven draws nigh as we meet.

But when he woke from "blissful confusion" he became frightened. The Old Puritan streak came to the surface. Such bliss was too enjoyable, there must have been something wrong with it. Hence in "The Siren" he wrote:

Now sailor beware
Dire Danger lurks there
Fly fast from her lair.

The Coyls, who considered him almost as a son, felt something was up. A letter from Geo. Hodges stated that Mrs. Coyl expected him back in the Fall. Indeed something was up. Having alternated between "soul meltings and fears of sirens," instead of flying from "her lair," he came back more ardent than ever to listen to "The Milkmaid's Song:"

What need have I of gold and pearl
To wreathe within my tresses?

In reply to this question he attempted a Byronesque attitude, he boasted that:

My heart is hard and cold.

but each verse finished with the plea:

Teach me to love...

The milkmaid succeeded very creditably in this sweet instruction but instead of enjoying the blissful passion he still had misgivings, he wrote in "My Heart is Thine:"

Would I could stifle my deep love for thee,

³ All quotations that follow are from "Poems of Nature and Sentiment" by R.J. Wickenden, 1894.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Would I could burst from its bonds and be free!

It was too late. He could not do it:

But here I surrender my all to the flame,
Though it burn and consume me, leave nought but a name
All, all, I'm thine.

The coup de grace is related in "At Mont Orgueil," the best of these poems, to my mind:

At Mont Orgueil

There Mont Orgueil's towers rise proudly from sea,
Of Jersey's fair island the guard and the key
In a fort built by Caesar or some of his race
Sweet Ada sat sewing, I, watching her face.

"I believe," said sweet Ada, "your heart is as cold
As these rocks, and as hard at the battlements old."
She dared not look up with her modest brown eyes,
Yet I scarce could help hearing the deeply drawn sighs.

In cigarette smoke I assumed nonchalance
And appeared to be scanning the fair coast of France,
Yet oft I confess the horizon was broken,
As a kindlier word than was wont would be spoken.

The sun, with a bounty of gold richly blest,
In opulent glory sank down to his rest,
And when Dian was rising through silvery mist,
Was it strange, or a wonder, if Ada I kissed?

What a picture of courtly wooing. Even at such a time must she appear busy with needle on some handwork. Clever little milkmaid, dear little milkmaid, whose attractiveness had thus settled their fate at Mont Orgueil! She was indeed bewitching. Father painted her at that time, black hair over red cheeks, sun-bonnet, rose colored cotton dress, carrying two huge brass pails -- one daisy in waistband, another at her feet. Of course he was being symbolical: "She loves me -- She loves me not --" Yet he, still feeling the Byronesque tradition, must play nonchalance and smoke, of all things, at that time, a wicked cigarette. The sun went, but the moon came, it was all up.

"Ada I kissed!" The wonder of it, there, above mortal earth scanning, through battlements where archers had looked, last flashes of light on purple waves; conscious of the sombre eerie keep so near the clouds, conscious of the tumbled rocks masking its dungeons Mont Orgueil! Wafts of perfume come from the fields, new mown hay, grain, fresh scythed, aromatic yarrow, wild thyme. When the wind veered from fields to sea, salt fishy smells came of crab and wreck and tar and instead of lowing cattle the swish of distant waves, the creak of gulls -- reminding of other lands far, far gone. Sweet Ada! Romance! Romance!

Ada I kissed!

This poem is dated Beaumont, Isle of Jersey, 1884. Thus and then he became engaged to my Mother,

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Ada Louise Ahier.

Nevertheless the idea of marriage stirred up a lot of thinking on his part, religious, philosophical and practical. As a matter of fact he wavered between a blue funk and the greatest happiness. On the whole his ideas on the subject of marriage were distinctly gloomy; an entry on January 28, 1885, reveals "Sombre thoughts," a state of mind not lightened by the rapidly adverse attitude of the Coyls, who felt they should have a say in the selection of a wife for Father. As a matter of fact they already had their eye on one or two possibilities, young daughters of millionaires. Whatever the result, Father stuck to his Ada which so angered the old Indian fighter that he refused a shipment of pictures made on January 6th on the "good Steamship called the Necker," as entered on a bill of lading. Among these pictures was one entitled "Jerseys at Home" which had cost both money and labor to paint. It was almost a disaster. To make matters worse Sam Coyl wrote him he had decided to have nothing to do with any artist who chose to follow "The Cattle Business" an insult to Father and his prospective bride. But far from dissuading Father, these threats settled the matter. Angry through and through, he would marry whom he pleased, come Hell, come high water. The blow of the refusal of pictures came on February 1st; two sleepless nights followed on February 3 and 4 but on February 5th my future Father received a letter from Ada which made him very happy: "a sublime moment for me," he noted. On February 7 he mentioned that, being about to leave for Paris; he cleaned his brushes. There is something final about this cleaning of brushes. Handling his loved tools he knew he could stand on his own feet and the die being cast, he would wed Ada, whatever the Coyls thought or spelled. As a matter of fact, Ada Ahier, my Mother, was a genteel person very superior to the possible lady candidates for the young artist's choice. Her people were substantial and possessed all the pride of old Norman families. Their culture was superior to that of the mid-western girls he knew, if I may infer from the drab little letters he received from them. I am not surprised he was charmed by this young girl of nineteen who combined a quiet modesty with a spirited temperament, free from the inhibited starchiness and money consciousness of "nouveau riches."

In spite of the shock of Coyl's let-down he kept at his work and preparations for wedding. He was paid 388.10 francs by H. R. Harper for a picture "A Song on the Adriatic." He also sent a picture to the New York Art Academy which was accepted. Meanwhile, wedding and housekeeping preparations went on. I found old receipted bills for all sorts of purchases for the new home. Most of them were made at Abraham de Gruchy & Co., St. Hélier, Jersey. Also a bill from G.J. Bowyer for curtains, paper, etc. Dated April 28, 1885, there is a bill for a wedding ring and, dated April 29, bills for carriages for the ceremony.

"At home" cards announcing their wedding on April 29, 1885 were followed by enthusiastic congratulations from old friends: Henry Kenyon, King, Schultze, etc. Among those to answer the announcement I find letters from "A. A. Wickenden of Farquhar Road, Upper Norwood S.C. England, a distant cousin.

The young couple took rooms at the house of F. E. Luce, Les Augerez, St. Pierre, Jersey. There they spent their honeymoon. This did not interrupt Father's painting as Mr. Luce lived near owners of prize cattle to be used as models. With the added responsibilities Father had to exert himself. One of his first attempts to stir up business was to send pictures to the Toledo Loan Exhibition held June 23-27, 1885. In the catalogue under No.44, "Jersey at Home," Isle of Jersey, are the following explanations:

"Mr. Le Brocq placed his celebrated herd at the disposal of the artist, among which were the prime bull and cow of the Island whose portraits are in the foreground." This was priced \$800.

There was also No.45 "The Gleaner of the Forest of Fontainebleau," exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1884, priced \$225.00, No.46, "November on the Seine" \$75.00, No.47 "Landscape with Cattle, Isle of Jersey" \$60.00, "Deery« Pride of Jersey," depicting the champion cow of the Island, \$500.00 and No.49, "Where the Lilies Grow, American Scenery" \$85.00.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

All in all, these paintings, the result of his first year or two of study, were the work of a youngster of 23 or 24 who did not hesitate to price his work well. There were practically no sales. Thus his happiness was not unmixed with anxiety. The silence of his former warm supporters, the Coyls became very hard to bear. His letter to them, dated Sept. 14 is one long question why? what have I done? Of course he knew he had braved the wrath of his old patron, yet the actual estrangement was harder to bear than he had thought.

He decided to go and find if he could not overcome this spite. With his bride he sailed for New York on the same SS. "City of Richmond" by which he had crossed from New York in 1883. They arrived there October 16, 1885, as I found in letters from my grandmother, Marianne LeNeveu Ahier to Mother, mentioning with concern the condition of my grandfather Ahier's leg which was very painful.

My uncle Tom met the bride and groom as the ship docked. It would appear that Father had some immediate success, as he sold several pictures, which brightened matters.

Mother went to Toledo with Uncle Tom in 1886. She was hardly twenty, dark, wore funny little hats and dresses in the mode of the day, with raised hips and ruffles. It was difficult for Father to part with her in her state, but times were certainly hard and it was not easy to replace the patronage of his former friend, S. Coyl. Nevertheless I find bills of sale for the old⁴ picture: "Sunset in Jersey," "Jerseys at Home" \$125.00.

Mother accommodated herself somehow to Toledo which she found very cold. On March 7, 1886, I was born at Uncle Tom's. The news was sent around. In reply my grandmother Ahier sent congratulations dated March 21, adding that Grandfather Ahier was not well, weak and emaciated.

Father returned to Toledo to see his first-born. I understand that Uncle Tom played him a trick on this occasion. A few days before my arrival his daughter Ida had come into the world. So they conceived the idea of having both babies on the same bed. Father was told to pick his son. It was a mean prank for father of course chose the wrong baby, a matter at which my Uncle Tom never ceased to laugh every time he saw me. In the meantime overtures from Father to Mr. Coyl were still being turned down and Father was having a harder and harder time. Letters show that my Uncle Tom had become City engineer for Toledo. He most kindly loaned money to Father to tide things over, remarking "pay when you can." This help was later reciprocated when Uncle Tom needed money. In this way these brothers kept closely connected in their struggles for their families.

Matters became worse by June 1886, for Father had to give up his studio at the Sherwood in New York. He tried to sell his modest furnishings with it, to his sub-tenant named Scott who, in reply, complained of poor light and refused to buy Father's portable bath tub. Plumbing in those days had not progressed to the extent it has to-day and anyone who wished to bathe carried an enlarged tin basin about one yard in diameter with rim turned inward to prevent splashing. A jug-like lip was provided for pouring out the water. The whole affair was painted yellow outside and white inside. Evidently the tub referred to was eventually kept by Father. It followed our fortunes hither and yon, bathing Father, Mother, myself and most brothers and sisters. It travelled everywhere with us. Somehow it found a place in cases along with pictures and easels. On Saturday nights came the ceremony, each in turn being dipped in the soapy warm suds, a little warm water being added as it cooled off.

As Father used to put it, "wind" had to be raised, somehow; he now had two dependents, yet half his patronage had gone with Mr. Coyl. Nevertheless he bearded the lion in his den by exhibiting in Detroit to brave the old Indian fighter's wrath. Five hundred programmes were printed. This venture had no success.

⁴ odd?

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

His friend Carroll Beckwith wrote on June 20 about a possible pupil in Toledo which gave him the idea of organizing an exhibition there, preceded by a reception at Williams' Art Rooms, July 7 to 10th inclusive, 1886.

The catalogue explains: "In view of Mr. Wickenden's immediate return to Europe an exceptional opportunity will be afforded to collectors and lovers of pictures to possess themselves of an example by this artist the merit of whose work has been recognized at the principal exhibitions of Paris, London and New York.

Sixteen oils and twelve water colours were included giving us a glimpse of the nature of his subjects at that time. "A Jersey Milkmaid" had been exhibited at the Autumn Academy of New York, 1885. This picture of my Mother is now in the hands of my brother John. It is a very stylish milkmaid, this beautiful young lady of nineteen, in pink frock and sunbonnet carrying large brass pails. As a piece of reductive painting it is perfect showing that Father had reached complete command over his hand and eye. I have already referred to it in the relation of their courtship.

Other titles were "Field Flowers," "In the Fields at Evening, Isle of Jersey," "Picking Violets," "Bois de Neudon near Paris," "A Grey Day at Brolles," "On Board the 'City of Richmond« in Mid-Ocean," "A Corner of the Lake, Central Park in New York" from the American Water-color Society's Exhibition, New York, 1886, "An Albanian Guitarist," and "Head of a Roman Girl."

There was also "Study of a Head" after the original by Rembrandt at the Louvre. It is in the dark tones of that period and shows good command over drawing and brushwork. From other sketches I can easily see that it was one of his best periods showing definitely that, with his passionate love of art, he had made a good choice of vocation.

Furthermore his great ability is manifested when it is realized that on one of his paintings his signature was changed to that of Inness. Subsequently this picture was sold to the Pittsfield museum for some \$15,000 where it hung unchallenged for a number of years until discovered by Father himself. He was no more conscious of painting like Inness than Inness of painting like him. The established school of painting of that time all painted alike. They were not innovators: having followed the lead of the Barbizon or the English school entirely, with few variations. The innovators, Van Gogh for instance, were scoffed at, starving in garrets. As to value, names, like fashions, carry their prices, evidently.

Be that as it may the Toledo exhibition was not a financial success.

Whatever the outcome of these efforts, news from Jersey was steadily worse, Grandfather Ahier was dying. Mother, scarcely twenty, was frantic. Already homesick in a strange country, the fact that she might never see her beloved father alive was more than she could stand. Her anguish carried the day aided by the overpowering desire of Father to return to Europe. They sailed in July. Father's resources, as I can find from a deposit at Munroe & Co. on August 16, amounted to 2,051.50 francs or about \$400. Mother won her race with death. She was with her very dear Father during the last few weeks of his life. He died about November 22, 1886, aged 63, at his home and farm at Longueville, Jersey.

GRANDFATHER AHIER

It may not be amiss here to relate a sketch of Mother's family as I remember it.

To begin with, Jersey, along with the other Channel Islands is in the peculiar position of being between England and France. According to legend it was once part of the mainland, the present sea arms that separate it from the French coast now covering a sunken country where populations once flourished. There are picturesque variations to these stories of which the best known is that of the belfry under the waves, whose bells are heard in stormy weather.

Druidic remains are numerous, showing that the rites of this religion lingered long in these islands, off the main traffic of invasion and conquest. Perhaps this isolation accounts for the mystic belief of many of the islanders in magic and witchcraft and in their visions of an occult nature. The basic race is probably Celtic. Tradition has it that Caesar had troops there who started the foundations of what was to become the lofty and eerie Castle of Mont-Orgueil, (castle of Pride-Mountain). Whatever Roman occupation took place, traces of it may be found in the features of some of the people of which my Mother was an example. I remember her distinctly in her youthful years, a perfect oval face, high color, dark eyes and raven black hair. She was very pretty, and her voice was exquisite when she sang the earliest song I remember, "Connais-tu le pays où fleurit l'oranger?" (Knowest thou the land where orange blossoms flower?) from the then popular opera Mignon. After the Romans came the Normans. Their imprint is the strongest on the inhabitants. Although hard, their rule was popular among this race of sailors and yeomen. It continued till recently as the Islands were not comprised within the United Kingdom. They are part of the ancient Duchy of Normandy and their ruler was the Duke of Normandy, personified by the King of England. Their law was Norman and their rule autonomous. They clung to their rights, among which the right of coinage and taxation. Their pennies and silver bore the imprint of the three leopards of Normandy.

Their own local rule was voluntarily carried out by elected representatives. It was scrupulously honest and economical. There was no debt, all improvements were paid out of taxation. Grandfather Ahier had a post in the administration. He was "Commissaire du Bien Public" which may be translated "Welfare Commissioner." They were not backward in social matters. They remained loyal to the Crown but felt superior to the English. They said "We conquered England in 1066. We rule England, not England us." Nevertheless they felt alien to the French whose tongue, or a dialect thereof, remained their official language. Most of their transient help came from Brittany. They called this help "La Bretonnerie," Breton rabble. In the same way as the imprint of the Celt and the Roman is seen in the physical appearance of the people so is the Norman's. My grandfather Ahier was dark and very tall, so was my great-grandfather, though grey-eyed. They all have the racial characteristics of the Normans, a hard head for bargains, shrewdness, closeness and love of money, but above all an intense love of land, of growth, of cultivation, of gardens.

To make matters more complicated their comparative isolation and yet proximity to France made them time and again the refuge of persecuted people of the mainland -- Huguenots fleeing Richelieu and Louis XIV, aristocrats fleeing Robespierre and the Terror, Napoleon's henchmen or their families fleeing the restored Bourbons. Flight -- flight -- flight -- at all times and all ages. Down to Napoleon III we find the great name of Victor Hugo added to the list of those who had to leave hurriedly the perennial continental disturbances. All very good blood, whose descendants carry names found in history.⁵

⁵ The following was crossed out either by the author or AWP in the belief that the de Montbrun referred to was not in fact a relative: "As an example my grandmother Ahier's grandfather was one of Napoleon's cavalry generals, de Montbrun killed at the Moskowe River while charging the Russian redoubts of Borodino, at the head of the Second Corps of French Cavalry. When Napoleon fell, de Montbrun's widow and children ran away to Jersey. Tragic fate overcame those of

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

To Jerseymen these people were but “refugees,” shed of all, if any, glory. To them this glory was the shabby pretense of the dictator of that day, reverted to obscurity. Their suspicion of the French and independence of Britain did not prevent them from getting what they could from either or both.

Somehow the old French names blended well with native ones. For instance the French de Montbrun could easily stand beside Jersey’s de Carteret; de Gruchy with de Jersey or with the long string of Lemprières, LeNeveu’s, L’Arbalestrier’s. This latter has a particularly medieval flavour, meaning the “cross-bowman.”

With this background in view I revert to the Ahier tales told me by my young mother, then so near to her childhood days in Jersey.

So few are the traditions of a man, once dead, that the only allusion I had of her great-grandfather, whose Christian name I do not know, was that he was one of the watchers of the coast of France, in the early 1800’s, at the time when Napoleon was threatening to raid England. The Martello towers of Jersey were manned by militia guards to give warning of the coming of hostile ships from France. For many months they watched across the misty sea. Sometimes his little son, Abraham, my great-grandfather to be, accompanied him. From these towers, as a child, I was shown the low grey horizon, of Grandville and St. Malo towards which my great-great-grandfather had steadfastly gazed during those troubled days. This horizon had also been looked at by my Father during his courtship days.

Later on my great-grandfather whose holding was the prosperous farm of Longueville, married his “cousine” Marguerite. He had learned cabinet-making in keeping with the Norman custom regarding young men of comfortable means. In order that they might have something to fall back upon, in case of losses of fortune, they were all taught some manual trade. As proof of his ability he made several pieces from tropical woods brought by sea clippers. Among them was a four-poster bed, empire style, carved out of solid mahogany from South America. It is a beautiful piece of work. There were no springs, laced sail-cloth was used instead. This finally having given way, I replaced it by springs. In it slept my great-grandfather, grandfather, my own father, myself, my son and daughter, five generations.

As time goes his picture emerges clearly. A man of character, hard, grey-eyed who became and stayed the master of his family. He had two sons. One was Gédéon, the other Abraham, named after him, became my grandfather. Both grew up into young manhood; Abraham was docile and kindly. Gédéon loved sport, frequently neglecting his work to go hunting. He did this once too many and, on his return from shooting rabbits one day, he was met by his father. There was a terrific scene. The older man’s fury culminated in breaking the gun on Gédéon’s back, so the story goes. Gédéon fled, took to ship and was traced but once after this episode, in Australia, where the meeting between Abraham (the brother)⁶ and Gédéon was violent, without any explanations.

Old Great-grandfather Abraham was indeed an old tyrant, his wife Marguerite was often in tears. My Mother relates that he was a fussy old soul. When kerosene lamps came into use he was very particular about their being well trimmed, frequently calling to my great-grandmother.

“Marguerite, ta lampe a des coins!” (Marguerite, your lamp has corners)

This meant that he objected to the projecting angles of flame caused by an unevenly trimmed wick.

Napoleon’s henchmen who had stayed. Besides the illustrious Marshal Ney, many were shot whose execution is lost to history.”

⁶ His Brother

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

This saying became a byword with his grand-children; I heard my own Father laughingly quote it to my Mother. His whims and humors were almost worshipped by his family. All were frightfully afraid of him⁷.

Another saying which became legendary was his ukase to children at table. "Mange, b'as, t'as," for Mange (eat), bois (drink), tais-toi (do not speak).

Perhaps this rigid discipline, perhaps the incoming and outgoing of ships influenced his son, my grandfather, to emigrate to Australia. Whatever were the reasons, Grandfather Ahier left the island by sailing ship bound for Australia with his wife and two children, May and Henri in the early 1860's^{8,9}.

My Aunt May told me the voyage lasted several months. They touched Bahia, Rio, Pernambuco, and sailed around Cape Horn. They established themselves in Melbourne where my grandfather became a building contractor, there being a great demand for such work. He did well and liked the place when an event occurred which was a turning point in his life.

One day, on the street, he suddenly came face to face with Gédéon, his brother, who had run away after the gun episode mentioned before. He was overjoyed but Gédéon sulked at his advances.

"Come home with me, see my wife -- see the children..." but Gédéon was stubborn. Slowly, anger came into my grandfather's cordial tones. He was mild up to a certain point. When that was passed he justified the saying around Jersey which my own Father quoted to me, "Les Ahier sont prompts..." meaning "The Ahiers are quick-tempered."

"You're going to come, I'll make you."

He seized his brother by the waist to carry him bodily along. They were both strong and over six feet tall. Gédéon kicked and kicked the legs of his brother Abraham. A bruise became a broken wound on Grandfather Ahier's leg in which were ground fragments of cloth. Gédéon tore free, Abraham fell exhausted and was helped home by onlookers.

The leg gave him a terrible time. Gangrene set in. It was all but amputated and never healed completely. The wound became a more or less permanent sore.

At the same time great-grandfather Ahier, from Jersey, clamored for his eldest son's return under threat of disinheriting him. A miserable state of health hastened his decision to return to Jersey with his family, after a few years in Australia. The return journey was made by the same route, South America and the Horn.

My grandfather resumed his stay at Longueville on his Father's beautiful farm, more a garden than a farm, with wonderful fruit, exotic trees, green houses and a market for all they could raise of early vegetables, fetching top prices on the London Market.

Longueville was an estate of some 15 acres about 5 of which were tilled as a garden such as exist only

⁷ Here AWP inserts the following: Another story told by my Mother, also by my Aunt May (Marianne de Montbrun Ahier) was: if when out walking some child or person addressed him and [indecipherable] to him, he would growl "Who are you that you dare address me?"

⁸ AWP notes that it was actually 1853.

⁹ KWW notes that the immigration index for Victoria, Australia shows Henry (age 3), arriving with his sister Marianne (age 5), and mother Marriane (age 30), aboard the ship 'Evening Star' on January 3, 1855. Abraham is not shown on this list.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

on the Isle of Jersey. Rich loam, rich cattle to fertilize it¹⁰, a climate which matured two crops of potatoes a year. Other crops grew nearly all the year round, always a month or two ahead of those on the nearby British Isles. London was ready to pay prime prices for these early fruits and vegetables. To these favorable conditions add husbandmen with the intelligence and knack for making things grow and loving to see them grow and it is not surprising that, in quality as well as in quantity, the soil paid its tillers bountifully.

Besides this the Island originated a breed of cows which has made the name Jersey famous all over the world. No estate but had some pasture land with a head or two of pedigreed cattle. Longueville's pasture covered some ten acres.

The whole estate was part of an old Seigniorship or Fief, the Fief de la Reine. Its principal dues were to furnish two fully equipped soldiers -- two muskets. In addition to his income from the estate, Grandfather Ahier had certain revenues from "rentes" the capital of which amounted to perhaps \$1500.00 added to the valuation of the house and farm as noted in the estate settlement. The total value was some \$2500.00. This was reckoned to be a "rich estate" in those days -- which it was, for a whole family had lived well off it, even taking the odd trip abroad. Over and above the material security was the rich satisfying growth, development, fruition and beauty of plant, flower and crop.

The rumblings of a turbulent continent scarcely came to it -- twenty miles of sea was as good as two thousand miles to-day. The horse and buggy days, the days of sail on wooden ships slowed down the rate of travel of the powers of evil -- which modern inventions seem to hasten.

Soon after the return of my grandfather and family my Aunt Alice was born followed by my Mother, Ada Louise.

Glimpses of life on the island are remembered by me from the many tales Mother told me. Of the mild climate tempered by the Gulf Stream, of snow's rarity in winter, of palms left outside but not growing very tall as further south, of mimosas blossoming in the open, of fig trees thriving everywhere. At Longueville there was a particularly fine one -- huge and fruitful. Its branches formed beautiful seats into which my imaginative Mother would sit for hours reading and perhaps even escaping old "Poupa," the grandfather of whom all were so scared. This fig tree was a landmark, the pride of the neighborhood. Even Victor Hugo came to sit under it¹¹ during his short refuge in Jersey, before he was chased on to Guernsey.

There was a huge fireplace at Longueville. Blazes of seaweed were made and the ashes carefully saved to be sold for extracting iodine salts. There were fishing parties in which she took part, the fish being netted off the rocky coast. There was a beloved dog named "Watch." There were many other stories of people I did not know.

Of these there comes to my mind the tale of the old Jersey retired sea Captain who owned a large monkey which imitated everything anyone did. As it became older it grew stronger and showed signs of becoming dangerous. The captain was wondering how he could dispose of it when one day his misgiving became too real as he caught sight of the monkey in his bedroom with an open razor in its hand. What to do? A strong ape with a razor could cause incalculable damage in a short time. Thinking quickly the old skipper made a few gestures which the monkey followed as was its habit. By this time the captain had extracted a knife from his pocket. The monkey observed closely. Having brought the knife to his own throat and having observed that the ape had done the same thing, the skipper pressed and drew the blade horizontally. The monkey repeated the motion and fell over in its last spasm, it had not observed that its master had used the

¹⁰ AWP inserts: also the ashes of sea weed. Every year it was gathered and burned on the beach, the precious ashes gathered and spread on the fields.

¹¹ AWP inserts: "... with my grandparents ..."

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

back of the knife instead of the sharp edge.

There was also a story connected with Harro "Clameur de Harro," (Clamor of Harro), an old Norman law going back a thousand years or more. This appeal could be made by any one, at any time, to stop the performance of acts prejudicial to his property pending legal proceedings. Mother related how one of her cousins (that meant any one of the islanders) had used this method to stop the widening of a road on his land. This gentleman, with great misgivings, had observed for days the gradual approach of the road gang towards his property.

Finally they arrived in front of his house. A fence separated his lot from the road. The workmen started to remove this impediment. Our cousin was just waiting for this. Bare-headed, with great dignity, he marched to the centre of operations among the staring wielders of pick and shovel. There, one knee on the newly upturned dirt, the other bent in front of him, with indignant dark face tilted to heaven, eyes flashing all the anger of molested Noirmandy, restraining his voice to a vibrating call, he shouted three times: "Harro! Harro! Harro! laide mon Prince, l'on me fait tort!" (Harro! Harro! Harro! my Prince, someone harms me!) the repetition was but to fulfill the letter of the law, for the effect at the first enunciation of the dread word "Harro!" could not have been greater. Indeed, the Harro Law was so strict that people were not sure as to whether craftsmen and laborers, as well as tools, were not included in this mandate of immobility. As a result all concerned with destruction or construction, fearing that they themselves might be petrified by this appeal to the Duke of Normandy, successor of the still dreaded William, of Conqueror fame, dropped tools, supplies, and what not and rushed off as if pursued by the very devil himself to hide trembling in their cots or fields, not daring to admit they had had anything to do with the job.

Assisted by a friend my cousin got to his feet, draped himself in his black cape and put on his tall beaver hat. Silver headed cane in hand he surveyed the utter confusion of the abandoned field of battle littered with tools and one or two odd bits of poor workmen's clothes, forgotten in the confusion. Flaunting bits of cut harness the shafts of a tumbrel pointed to the calm blue sky, as its body rested on its back. Thus, by quick resolute action and a sharp knife, had the horse been saved to its owner. Picks, shovels, mattocks, crowbars were scattered hither and yon.

Not a soul was to be seen except the author of this mess and his friend -- both tall, dignified, formal, standing as if attending a duel to the death, of which the outcome had been most satisfactory. "Pistols for two coffee for one..." My unknown cousin was the one.

The purpose of Harro was accomplished. It had frozen everything tight. In days, following, the delays of Norman Law proved too intricate to get things under way again and the road was never widened. For all I know the tools used on this occasion may still be rusting on the site of the unconstructed road, so dread was the power of this pronouncement "Harro!"

Relating to feudal tradition she proudly told me of the Lemprière's (other cousins) whose head had followed the rigid homage custom of their family which obliged them to ride, full-armed, to meet the sovereign Duke or Duchess whenever they visited the Island. As the royal barge approached shore the charger was urged into the sea by its rider until the waves touched the horse's belly. Lemprière did this on the occasion of Queen Victoria's visit in the middle of last century. At this visit also both my great-grandfather and grandfather attended as grenadiers of the special body-guard formed to protect Victoria, Queen and Empress, but to them above all things, Duchess of Normandy ...

The daughters of Abraham Ahier had no illusions. According to Norman law the whole estate went to the eldest son. Whatever portion was left for the others was small indeed. As a result younger sons and daughters left the islands for other parts. Distance did not deter them: Channel Islanders are found all over the

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

world. Literally speaking a Jerseyman has relatives on all continents. In our own case I can mention Australia, New Zealand, Gaspé. The American state of New Jersey was named after the little island. The family of my mother was no exception to this aptitude for travel. One of her old Aunts had gone to Russia and amassed a tidy fortune there at some risk and peril. At least it was sufficient to keep her in very comfortable circumstances after some peculiar adventures. She would relate them occasionally and give us vivid descriptions of the abject servitude of the lowest classes some of which were used as draft animals, mounts, or litter bearers.

When their turn came, Alice and Ada, my future mother, went to Paris. There they lived at a pension run by Mlle. Jonte where they helped coach English¹² girls in conversational French. My mother related some of the comical efforts of these girls as they used English words with a French flavoring. Such was for instance this young lady who, seeing a spider, cried out “Oh! une spidre!” which became a standing joke between the sisters. It was at this pension that Father and his friend Spencer met the girls.

As already told, Father later married Ada, Spencer not being so fortunate with Alice, and my Mother’s married life having begun with a trip to America, followed by the birth of a son she returned to Jersey to find her father’s life ebbing away. With his death came the final separation from the Island.

¹² AWP inserts: “ ... and German ...”

EARLY YEARS AT AUVERS

Soon after the old man had been buried, Father, Mother and the Baby boy who was myself went on to France in late 1886 or early 1887.

During this time of turmoil, Father had not been idle. He could not be for, by March 24, 1887, his account had gone down considerably owing to traveling expenses, etc. He had held an exhibition at Hanna & Ives, Detroit. But the support of Sam Coyl being gone he tasted the bitterness of adverse criticism. A Detroit paper wrote: "Mr. R. Wickenden has returned from Paris to fill the Hanna & Ives galleries of paintings and water colors with some of the fruits of his labor. Mr. Wickenden is an Idealist set down in the midst of a surging multitude of realists. It is hard to persuade this perverse generation that a young woman ever sat under the spreading branches of the oak and touched the lyre while her sheep browsed over the broad fields. Such a scene seems as unreal to us as the pastoral picture in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* or in Virgil's *Eclogues*. It is our fault that this is so; but that does not change the fact."

This was a hard blow for one who needed helpful patronage. As never before the receipts were not large. A bill of sale dated July 1st, 1886 to a Mr. Pingree, Mayor of Detroit, discloses that this gentleman bought "Summer afternoon, Isle of Jersey," for \$150.00. Other notes show that money had been borrowed from his sister-in-law, Alice, and from his brother, Thomas. He was very hard up.

Perhaps to encourage himself at this critical time he listed and set prices upon the pictures he had available for sale. This gave him a cheering though unfulfilled confidence, the aggregate total being some \$2000.00 albeit in paint and canvases. The corner stone of the lot was "An Arcadian Shepherdess," exhibited at the American Art Galleries, New York, in the fall of 1887, which he valued at \$1000.00. This was probably the young woman above referred in the Detroit paper. I also note as exhibited "When the Kye came home," valued \$100.00

From the lot four water-colors were sent to Cousin William Phillips, Toronto on the chance of a possible buyer. The price mentioned is "\$60.00 to him, \$80.00 to outsiders." Other titles also suggest Neo-classical influences "Autumn" "Iris" or romanticism à la *Graziella*, "A daughter of Italy." Barbizon School influences are found in the titles "Noontide," "Plain of Auvers," ; "Noonrise on the Oise." We also find the delicate tinge of American sentimentality of that period in "The Lost Child," "A light of Laughing Flowers," "Awaiting the milkmaid."

Notwithstanding all these inventories sales were few but he submitted two pictures to the Salon of 1888, "Souvenir d'Automne" and "Fileuse," an aquarelle, both being accepted. He made a lithograph of the "Fileuse" some few years after. I gather that when he arrived at Paris he was upset and fell ill from the effects of the nervous strain on his digestive system. How he ever heard of Auvers, I do not know but he decided to go there in 1887.

Auvers-sur-Oise was then a little village somewhere North of Paris, on the Oise, in the Department of Seine-et-Oise. Its population, most agricultural, was some 3000 people in a straggling village divided into Hamlets: Butry, Chaponval, which almost touched the small city Pontoise, some four miles away. Its chief distinction in the past was a disputed one based on verse attributed to the great poet, François Villon, wherein he stated that he was born there "Né à Auvers, auprès Pointoise." Such distinction made other nearby municipalities frightfully jealous and they did their best to undermine this claim. Even Paris could hardly allow it, their scholars frowned on it, so the local intelligentsia could not overcome such odds. Nevertheless it could not be disputed that this little pastoral place had sheltered several high lights of art in the recent past,

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Charles François Daubigny, Jean Camille Corot, Van Gogh, Cézanne and lesser lights.

The three of us boarded at Mr. Tahon's just below the old church where we stayed from July to December. Naturally I do not remember a thing about this trip.

Since business was his greatest necessity, he realized, during this country interlude, that he should not only try to dispose of his own paintings but also of those of other painters on a commission basis which would lead to various prospects on one side or the other. At that time Mr. J. E. Scripps of the Detroit Evening News was building up the Detroit Museum. He hinted at various purchases in which he might be interested and requested Father to be on the lookout for promising works, Dutch masterpieces for instance. A French artist, A. Dumont, wanted him to sell a picture "Les Abeilles" to a Mrs. Stevens. Souza Pinto, a Portuguese pastellist, also wanted to sell some of his works to Mrs. Stevens who was building up a collection of "moderns."

The necessity to get friends made him most active in searching out bargains among the classics of that day, though the time thus spent was at the cost of his own painting. He left no stone unturned; he assisted Mr. Scripps in making purchases amounting to \$7000 in sixty days, at Bourgeois Frères, Paris art dealers. He also became acquainted with Mme. Karl Daubigny, wife of Karl, son of Charles François Daubigny. Madam had lately become a widow and the huge studio of her husband and father-in-law contained many works of value which she desired to turn into cash, so she was glad of the acquaintance of Father who could give a market to these paintings.

In July, Carroll Beckwith came to France with his wife. She was a society lady and Beckwith had a hard time to keep up with social demands on time and purse. These he might dodge occasionally but not Paris couturières, so he did not come to Auvers.

At any rate living went on, though not without worry. I gather that he shared his anxieties with friends; a letter from a Mr. Sephton, however, envied his having a wife and baby, "You must n't knock yourself up, leave that sort of thing to poor D's of bachelors like me..."

In December Father and family returned to Paris and took an apartment at Neuilly.

In spite of efforts to sell his own pictures and those of others, results were very meager and money, much money, was needed. A letter from Beckwith, returned to New York, (Dated Jan. 23, 1888), shows that Father made desperate efforts to raise funds there. Beckwith had seen a dealer Wilmurt "overloaded with pictures." He counseled that a man like Father who has a child and wife should remain "quiet" and that poetic art was unsaleable.

Money was getting so low that both he and Mother made an appeal to Aunt Alice, Tantante, who sent a money order from New York in late February, 1887. And yet, he was quite active, perhaps too active in connection with an International Exhibition to be held at Munich for which he attended committees and juries -- wrote for pictures and sent his own "Study of Oaks, Isle of Jersey." To paint in the midst of all this correspondence carried out long hand was a heavy struggle. Nevertheless he managed to get four pictures accepted for the International Exhibition of Black and White: "Off Jersey, Stormy weather," "An Autumn impression," "Twixt Night and Day" and "Sunset." These last titles suggest the very favorite mental attitude of those days: it was fashionable to dwell on Sunset, Autumn, somewhat like Edgar Allen Poe:

"The days they were ashen and sober
The leaves they were withered and sere..."

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

All this brought no money and he was broke worse than ever in March, with a wife, a baby boy, and another baby on the way. He wracked his brains in the studio at Neuilly. Remembering that Mother had money willed her by her late Father he applied to her brother, Henry, for a loan.

Uncle Henry had already sent £50, followed by another £30, which total of £80 was all he advanced until final settlement of the estate by which Mother received about £120, total. At any rate that \$400, two thousand francs, thus advanced plugged the gap. The family again went to Auvers with the coming of Spring - 1888.

I was then just over two years old. Pending our going to Delépine's farm in les Vallées we stayed at a Mr. Tahon who took boarders. Opposite the narrow paved lane were grey stone houses below the ancient church, started about 1100 A.D. I can recollect how the breeze of sunny days called me out yet I was compelled to wait in the rooms with Mother, while the old thatched farm was being made ready.

I spent my time at the window watching a parrot in his cage across the road. This parrot kept shouting all day "parrtez a r r r mes! ran planplan, planplan, planplan...ran planplan" (French order for "Slope -- arms -- ran planplan" etc., imitating the roll of drums) This military parrot is probably one of my earliest recollections.

We moved to the old farm on the side of the hill of "les Vallées" where Alice was born on May 9, 1888.

I can still see it with the distorted eye of an infant. Steps seemed walls and walls were mountains. The old thatched roof disappeared in the clouds. Most mysterious was the pump. It was situated against the house. Its heavy iron handle ornamented with primitive curved designs seemed beyond all power to lift. Men could only work it with two hands. Most appropriately it stood near the kitchen door. The long spout was made of lead and out of it poured a stream of cool water, into a trough about four feet long by two and half wide and two feet in depth. This trough was dug out of the soft limestone peculiar to this part of the country. It could be filled with water for washing or watering. In this latter case we would pump it full in the afternoon to warm the water so it would not chill the plants. This pump and trough were the sum total of plumbing in this cottage.

At the end of the trough, opposite the pump, was a large Gloire de Dijon rose. It flourished in this spot. It derived warmth from the wall of the house and was well moistened by splashings from the pump. Its blossoms, pearly pink, were fully five inches across. During the flowering season the yard would be filled with fragrant petals. I used to gather them to put in small bottles with water, thinking I was manufacturing perfume. This rose bush and others in full bloom, the old stone trough are shown in one of Father's pictures painted a couple of years later. It shows Mother nursing sister Yvonne at the door of the room we used as parlor. I am offering her a bouquet while Fifille¹³ looks on approvingly.

Father and Mother had a grand time of it in this old barn of a place. Talk about love in a Cottage! He was 27, she was 22. A baby boy and a baby girl. They were supremely happy. Nevermind the leaky roof! It could be stuffed with more straw! The stove did not work? Why not use the huge fireplace where one could stand erect and look up the chimney shaft at blue skies and stars, even at noon day?

The rats did prove an annoyance. Mother would faint at the sight of a mouse. She would become petrified by the presence of a rat. Father chased them all over the roof of an old wagon shed firing a little bull dog revolver at them. "Bang, bang!" went the pistol. As in former relations he did not blame his

¹³ Alice

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

marksmanship when he missed the rats.

“I could see a pair of eyes gleaming -- aimed straight between them but as I pulled the trigger the rat dodged -- just as I pulled the trigger!” In later years I examined this firearm. It had a barrel only two inches long and was of the self cocking type. All told it was a miracle that he did not shoot one of us, or himself with such a dangerous toy. He had plenty of excitement, so did the rats; not one did he get. All he succeeded in doing was scaring me to death and arousing the somewhat fearful admiration of his delightful bride.

I don't know whether we ever got rid of those rats. When tired of jumping on rickety roofs and risking his neck and limbs by possible falls, he would drop rats, bride, baby son and baby daughter to settle to the business of painting some diffuse Arcadian Shepherdess playing the lyre in a décolleté pink night gown against a pinker sky or some Virgilian swain tooting a flute under a willow tree among reclining goats.

All this was great fun but admittedly difficult to sell. Nevertheless in spite of restricted revenues he was not going to surrender to “realism rampant.” In this he was as stubborn and as convinced as in his preliminary skirmishes with General Coyl, U.S.A. regarding his marriage to Mother.

Our diet was extremely simple. A bowl of milk and a piece of bread was our breakfast, some stew or other for lunch and a salad for supper. This combined with the soothing country air and quiet was enough to restore taut nerves and upset stomachs.

Nevertheless he had his gloomy fits. Poor Mother would then be completely upset as she adored him. I am afraid that these temperamental upsets were perhaps encouraged by Mother's fear of them, or pity, or her own self-examinations regarding something she might have said to hurt his feelings. When he was thus upset his command of English made his remarks the more cutting. My tender childish soul was made desolate by these whimsical quarrels. On the other hand I was most happy when reconciliation threw them again adoringly into each other's arms.

The terrific lot of administrative work on the Munich Exhibition brought no funds although one of Father's pictures was exhibited there, “Study of Oaks.” I still have the preparatory sketches of this picture. His signature was subsequently changed to “Inness” and it was sold for a high figure to the Pittsfield Museum many years later. Among new acquaintances at this time I note the name of Charles Sprague Pearce a Philadelphia painter who lived in a studio formerly owned by an etcher named Rajon. This was a fine place and where any compatriot artists received much encouragement from the hospitable owner.

At this time his American connections again saved the day. He again sold pictures to his old friends Mr. Pingree and Mr. G. Moore of Detroit each for \$150.00, a small fortune for one so hard up. In a letter from Detroit, Mr. Moore referred to the old Indian soldier, Mr. Coyl. “Sam” wrote he “is not very well, but he will outlive his wife -- She has not had a very pleasant life.” Actually the contrary happened as Mrs. Coyl outlived her husband by some thirty years.

Other news about the state of business in America came from his old instructor Carroll Beckwith. Business was uncertain in New York wrote he, owing to a poor Stock Market. He envied Father's family in the “thatched cottage” as “the extravagance of my home tires me.”

Nevertheless the slight encouragement derived from one or two sales, the quiet country life, wholesome food and good air were inspiring this young man of twenty seven to further artistic effort. As a result two entries of his work were accepted at the Salon of 1888, “Souvenir d'Automne” and “Fileuse.”

This latter was an aquarelle of an old peasant woman, a widow of some 77 years, whom my Mother

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

hired as nurse for a few francs a month. I know her age because she told us that she was four when the Cossacks overran France after the battle of Waterloo. One of these bandits, looting Auvers, had picked and carried her off for diversion, apparently. Some few kilometers away he dropped her unharmed to find her way back to her despairing parents, with the help of friends. Later she had married happily, had a grown son who in turn married. The daughter-in-law hated her mother-in-law so that at 77, the poor old creature was nearly destitute when she was hired by my Mother. Father immediately recognized the possibility of that lined face. He drew and painted her for various black and whites, pictures and lithographs. At the same time as La Mère Panneçaye modeled, she was a doting nurse for myself during the few weeks which preceded the birth of my sister Alice. Then, as the saying goes, my nose “was broken.” Alice became a “*petit n’ange*” and I, I suppose, was classified as all fallen angels are¹⁴. This was one of the first unintelligible events in my life. Nevertheless I got over it and promptly nicknamed Alice “Fifille.”

Late 1888 brought the family back to Paris, at Neuilly and 235 Faubourg St. Honoré where we stayed till early 1889. Of Neuilly, at three years of age, I remember very little save that I wore dresses, like a girl and was very much confined. At 235 Faubourg St. Honoré, however, there was a yard. I enjoyed that so much that one evening I got mixed up with naughty boys up to mischief. I did not realize the mischief but I realized the whipping which the Janitor gave me. He was an old soldier and his roar was worse than his cuffs; I was scared stiff yet managed to get home. Another memorable occasion was when a general of the French army had his picture taken full dress, on horseback. As he sat his steed, feathered cocked hat and all, I was quite overcome as everyone else witnessing this ceremony. The silence was overpowering. It was then I chose to break it with my high piping voice: “A king! it’s a king!” Of course everyone stared but most tittered, a thing I could not understand before such majesty.

I note in Father’s correspondence of that time that Mr. Sephton referred to a projected trip by Father to America and wished him the lavish sum of one thousand francs a year to live on. Two hundred dollars a year seems almost ridiculous now but it was a tidy sum then. One could be comfortably off on it in Auvers, with a rent of 100 francs a year and food unbelievably cheap. It was a wonderland for children, and artists. One hour’s ride and you were in Paris, the art capital of the world. In reverse, one hour’s ride, and you were clean out of city streets in the lush countryside of France.

Another new friend appeared, Sheridan Ford, a writer, who also dabbled in buying and selling pictures amongst which a Diaz for which purpose he tried to enlist Father’s help.

During the early part of the year 1889 Father submitted pictures to various exhibitions. The principal one was the Universal Exposition to commemorate the centenary of the French Revolution of 1789. I have vague memories of it, mostly of orange paper lanterns which looked like huge pumpkins or accordions suspended vertically, some were red, white and blue. They were frightfully inflammable and were lighted by candles. Needless to say many went up in smoke. Heaps of them could be had for the picking up, after the Exposition was over. I had a delightful time with these remnants, which I salvaged for Auvers. Another exhibition was one at New York. He was refused at this latter place but, of far greater importance, his picture “Midi,” was accepted for the Universal Exhibition. This picture, showed a reaper, back turned to the looker, scything his crop mixed with red poppies. It feels as if the spectator could join the reaper in embracing the vast plain stretching before him. It is the high tide of day, of season and of life. Father loved symbolism. “Côtes Fleuries” was also accepted for this important exhibition which I heard had the nerve to turn down James McNeil Whistler. The facts of the matter are elaborated in “The Gentle Art of making Enemies” by Sheridan Ford. It appears that the Jury of the American Art Department of this Exhibition, at Paris, refused several of Whistler’s etchings. General Hawkins, a cavalry officer, who presided over the destinies of this Department, wrote a letter requesting removal by the artist of the refused works. This note appeared militarily

¹⁴ AWP’s comment: “*petit diable*”

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

cut to Whistler, already provoked by the refusal. He at once made the unfortunate General the butt of his well known irony. The opening was too good to be missed. In his letters to the press he gives the impression that the General ran his Art Department as if it were so many soldiers implying¹⁵ he had been the victim of a “raid” or of a “drum head court martial” which had sealed his fate with a “Warrant.” In short the unfortunate general must have realized eventually that the pen had certain advantages over the sword.

However much of Father’s success with the Exhibition encouraged him, money was needed to help the pot boil. Sheridan Ford had secured for him an order for an article on Daubigny. As Ford lived in London, Father went there to see him and took me along.

What a trip that was! We rode all night in the little packet, sitting on a bench next to the engines, for warmth probably. The racket was dreadful and to this day I can smell the oil of this noisy room. I can also hear the endless noise “-- Coo -- whee -- poor -- room -- poot -- toom --o poor -- room -- poot -- toom --” “*toujours en avant!*” said Father as I sat sleepless, tired out, miserable. I do not remember our landing, nor our arrival in London. My recollections of Ford’s household were of a family crowded in an apartment. We also saw relatives among whom one called Frank who proudly showed me a large silver piece, probably a half crown. More interesting was the Sudanese exhibition with the two little negroes beating out barbaric tunes on a wooden xylophone. But more than anything else I recollect a dreadful thirst. Father kept buying me lemondade. The more I drank the more I got rid of it, then more thirst, more stops, I was only four. When we finally returned to Paris I was delighted to be with Mother again. Father was careful not to take me on such trips for a long, long, time.

In spite of a discouraging letter from his old friend and instructor, Carroll Beckwith, who had thought fit to criticize the picture refused at New York, his comparative success at the 1889 Exhibition was a great tonic. He multiplied his activities in painting and in purchasing masters of the old schools as well as of the Barbizon School. He also worked up outlets for these pictures in Detroit, Toledo, and New York. He kept in touch with friends everywhere and had a measure of publicity. An article entitled “Recent ideals of American Art” reproduced his “*l’Approche du soir.*” In this connection and to show the thought that impelled this picture I quote his poem of the same title:

The grain that is ready to fall,
The day that is ready to die,
The valley that soon must be passed,
And the cross ever lifted on high:

Let me patiently wait by the cross,
The end of my journey is near;
Though night with its darkness surround,
God is nigh, and no evil I fear.

It seems indeed strange that he should have been so imbued with such a morbid trend of thought. It was quite prevalent at that period, though for the life of me I cannot see the reason of it. Nations were at peace and, barring minor wars, were to be at peace for some twenty years more. Business was on the ascendant, everyone should have been most happy, yet all wrapped themselves up in dismal ideas of shadows and falling leaves. Perhaps it takes wars to shake these out of us. We become grateful for a day’s, an hour’s, a minute’s respite and let the morrow take care of itself.

¹⁵ “inferring” in original

EARLY TRIPS

Father's friends were forging ahead; Horace Bradley with his illustrations, Ulpiano Checa, the Spanish painter of horses. Souza Pinto the Portuguese pastellist, all active, trying anything, and, in the aggregate making sales.

Having managed to gather in a few dollars from commissions, Father decided to make a trip to America and sell either his own or his collected pictures. With 85 of these he sailed on the Inman line SS. City of Chicago, which docked in New York early in October, 1889. His arrival was opportune. J. E. Scripps of Detroit was expecting his help to make selections for the Detroit Museum of Art. Someway or other things were patched up with the Coys who were glad to see him. With their backing, he exhibited again at Hanna and Ives. The press was better. Regarding this exhibition the Detroit Evening News of November 12, 1889 remarked on his evident gain in technique. It noted that he did not fall in line with the demands of the Paris Salon which seemed to be for "realism rampant." A statement that "the most perfect exercise in color or music never satisfied the soul" was apparently quoted from him. It praised particularly "The Return of the Flock" a picture of a winding country road down which sheep were passing with a plodding peasant at their head with a background of twilight mists, "all tending in one direction, over the hill down into the valley of quiet and rest." Again the morbid trend.

Other pictures were mentioned in the same article as showing how well he could handle intense sunshine in contrast with the above pictures. "Café au lait" depicted a strong head of a peasant woman, old "but not uncompromisingly ugly." We were yet impressed by the advisability of painting peasants "à la Watteau."

In the Detroit Journal -- the same exhibition was reviewed but not so flatteringly. After praising his "Jersey Cow" and "Sun on Ripe Grain," it said that the "Angel of the Rain" and "Sea in Motion" were poorly painted and that some of the pictures ought to be eliminated speedily because they killed his good work; "on the whole, however, a dozen pictures in the collection were gems."

At any rate there was sufficient praise to overcome the criticism. As a matter of fact this was more helpful than otherwise since criticism made the praise stand out all the more. Besides, the knowing public frequently discounts criticism of an adverse nature which is often wrong and is thrown in to impress the rank and file with the expert knowledge of the newspaper reporter. Nothing but praise might indicate a lack of discrimination. He must pick faults, and, in so doing, more often than not he actually succeeds in exposing his own ignorance. Too frequently the Arts page is handled by the Sport Editor. It must be indeed difficult to jump from a boxing match to a fine arts exhibition.

Other activities also claimed his attention: selection of pictures with John Ward Dunsmore for the Detroit Museum, a Daubigny article for the Century Company to be illustrated by Horace Bradley, release of copyrights from Mme. Daubigny, a picture: "A Cup of Cold Water," painted for a Mr. Chandler of Coldwater, Michigan for \$500.00, (sketches for it had been made, Mère Panneçaye and I being models. Thus early I did my bit for the family's fortunes). Of this picture, with others, The Evening News of December 3, 1889 remarked that the Lewis Gallery at Coldwater had evinced a love of Art, pleasantly illustrated when R. J. Wickenden sold four of his best pictures to R. G. Chandler, Hardware merchant of that place. They were "The Arcadian Shepherdess," "A Cup of Cold Water," "A Twilight Pastoral" and "The Village Gossips." Besides this there was an exhibition of works held at the Hotel Ryan, St. Paul, Minn., December 18 to 28, 1889. This comprised oils and watercolors from Auvers and Jersey and imaginative "genre" compositions: L'Approche du Soir" (Paris Salon of 1889) "In Springtime," (Prime fund exhibition American Art Association, 1889)

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

“Queen of Sleep,” “Iris,” “The Spirit of the Shower,” along with “Court of Madame Aubert” and “The Cottage of Père Ferdinand.”

The Press was good: The St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer Press stated: “R. J. Wickenden, an artist of prominence, has issued invitations for a private view of his works on Monday December 9, 1889.” A similar item also appeared in the Saint Paul Daily Globe. Thirty- four pieces in all -- many of which were sold at prices ranging from one hundred dollars to seven hundred and fifty. In all he cleared several thousand dollars. The hotel bill at Hotel Ryan, including room and dinners was \$41.75. The net profit was therefore ample and the year 1889 ended on this note of prosperity to usher in 1890. Thus was the pessimistic Carroll confounded.

As further encouragement a post was offered him by the St. Francisco Art School for \$2400.00 a year. In spite of its claim of only three or four days a week he did not accept it. He was not the type to live by a salary. He preferred the stimulation and uncertainty of being his own master. When things went badly and the last franc was fast coming to the top he would pray for a steady income, but one good sale, even a prospect, would put him in the heights again; he loved too much his comparative liberty to accept to be tied to some superior, or “boss.”

It is not surprising that this financial success gave great encouragement to the young artist. Not only had new connections been formed but old ones were renewed. Best of all Sam Coyl showed signs of reawakening interest and made discreet inquiries from a mutual friend, Geo. F. Moore, regarding the amount paid for certain pictures.

Father returned to France in February. With what joy we received him, Mother, Fiffle and I, is easy to understand. Naturally enough he was tired out by this nerve wracking trip which had turned poverty into comparative affluence, but as U. Checa stated in a letter, how happy he must have been to see spring coming with his “petite famille” around him.

His rest was short. Orders poured in for works of himself, friends and “old masters.” James S. Moulton of St. Paul, Minnesota, wanted pictures by C.S. Pearce for the Boston and Chicago Art Clubs, “as fine as could be obtained for \$350.00.” They were to be framed “in splendid shape.” Two Checa sketches for \$200.00 were also ordered with instructions for shipment.

Besides this order, Father bought pictures to the amount of \$4,690.00 for Hazen Pingree, Mayor of Detroit: Rousseaus, Corots, Millets. Geo. F. Moore wished to have the portrait of his late daughter painted from documentary photographs. This was Hattie -- whom he had cautiously mentioned in his diary of 1883¹⁶.

There were reverses. The new York Academy refused “Noontide” which had been hung in the 1889 exhibition at Paris! This shows how much one can depend on judgments of Art Juries. The Paris Salon however accepted “l'Approche du Soir” which was well criticized by the Parisian Press, which more than compensated the New York refusals.

On April 18th, 1890 Sister Yvonne was born at Auvers thus enlarging the “petite famille” and making it necessary for the head to be more active than ever. Happily more orders came in. Mr. Hodges, Mr. Stevens, Mr. Moulton wanted more Rousseaus, Diazes, Millets. He dealt for these pictures with a Mme. Bourdeil and purchased some on his own account. He had Sheridan Ford the writer and connoisseur make an appraisal of his collection. The total was £3000, a most encouraging figure. At the same time Sheridan Ford had a dispute with James McNeil Whistler. He had written a little book entitled “The Gentle Art of making Enemies,”

¹⁶ Page 12, above.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

quoting and misquoting James McNeil Whistler. This latter was furious and tried to have the edition stopped. In panic Ford sent boxes of his book right and left. Father got one hundred copies which turned up mysteriously and more mysteriously were hidden in the attic of the old wagon shed of our house. There they were ultimately forgotten and furnished many a happy moment to my illiterate self, then four or five. I am sure that Whistler would have been overjoyed watching me, a curly headed youngster, industriously tearing the hated book into many pieces. What I missed the rats finished up¹⁷.

One copy was saved; I have it.

It was about this time that I was hauled out of my nefarious occupations to sit for my portrait. Evidently Father wanted to catch me in my laughing mood. After I had sat down opposite him he started off on a string of Uncle Remus stories. The laughing of a then fair-haired boy was caught in this picture the painting of which is one of my earlier memorable experiences.

The large amount of American business made it necessary for Father to go to the States again. He sailed from Antwerp early in October, 1890, after a short trip via Brussels. On arrival he took a room in the Hazeltine Building, Philadelphia and plunged into business. He approached James Scripps of Detroit with a Rembrandt. Scripps' letter acknowledged this offer and praised Father for his efforts to obtain good pictures for America. He sold pictures to J.G. Moulton, Hanna & Ives and many others. In this connection it is interesting to note that R.G. Chandler felt some disappointment over his picture "A Cup of Cold Water" not having been exhibited at the Salon. Father had written him before his departure:

Auvers-sur-Oise
(Seine et Oise) France
28 July 1890

My dear Mr. Chandler,

Your interesting letter from Long Beach, California was received this morning and I am glad to know you have been enjoying yourselves so much on the Pacific Coast with its gigantic wonders. I enjoyed your description of the Yosemite and should much like to see it when I can spare the time, though I can imagine somewhat of its grandeur: -- As to business matters -- I do not quite understand what you say about having "lost control" of financial affairs, I was sure there was some special reason for your failure to remit at the time promised. Happily however, my affairs have been moving along quite successfully since my letters to you in the Spring and I have been enabled to meet every demand. Having put off till the coming year the buying of this property I have placed my money in pictures of standard value by the best artists of our century, some of which I shall probably bring to America this Autumn. So that while the money for the "Cup of Cold Water" would have been useful, its non-receipt at the time expected did not cause any great inconvenience. I regret that you should be so disappointed at my not exhibiting the "Cup of Cold Water" at this year's Salon. I had expected to show it there or you may be sure I should not have brought it back and spent so much time and thought on its improvement. This year however was a terribly mixed-up one in Parisian Art Circles. The awards of the Universal Exhibition caused great dissatisfaction with the result that the Artists split up into two factions, one exhibiting at the Champs-Élysées and the other at the Champs de Mars, with open war declared, and those who exhibited at one not being allowed to show at the other. In Art as in politics there are many parties. That of "Realism Rampant" and which makes technical skill its chief object, having the present balance of power in its hands at Paris. My ideas are more ideal and poetic, painting what I think and feel in opposition to the general tendency to paint simply anything one may see. My conscience tells me I am right and that these principles will finally triumph! Well to return to the matter at hand, when I saw that the Jury of the Champs Elysées Salon which is the old one, and to which I remained true was, by the split and a new

¹⁷ AWP comment: "I remember a bonfire in which these books were burned."

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

method of election, composed for the majority of men with whom I have no artistic sympathy whatever who were almost wholly realistic or academic and from whom I could expect no quarter in the case of a picture so purely of the ideal and poetic kind, and opposing all their theories -- I concluded to send "Thoughts of the Absent"¹⁸ which was merely a thoroughly realistic and Academic portrait of my wife. Without any particular story to tell and which could not clash so painfully with their ideas. It was happily very nicely hung and noticed. Of course I could not foresee last Autumn how the politics of the Art World, in which chance presided at the selection of the Jury would turn out until this spring and while I brought back the picture in good faith, I could not guarantee its exhibition at the Salon or keep myself from working towards its improvement as long as desirable. The picture should mean just as much to you as ever, and if it cannot triumph or its reproduction prove a success on the internal strength of the idea and its expression, then I am sorry for the American public who will not believe their own eyes and hearts about anything unless it has just been publicly shown to Frenchmen. With myself, while I have shown by successive exhibitions, that my technique can pass muster at any Salon of Paris, except for the assurance which any fellow countrymen demand, of French Official sanction. I do not care a snap of my fingers for the whole thing, and my best things have not been shown at the Salon -- on the principle that it does not do to cast the pearls of the ideally beautiful before the modern swine of the really low and common. In the meantime with brush, voice and pen, I use my influence to restore the "Ideal" to its rightful place of Authority in the world's art. You may not fully understand all my moves, but do not lose faith, and I trust sooner or later you will rejoice at having allowed your native good sense and judgement to guide you to invest in my work.

Of course the etching by Mercier was a purely business arrangement and setting aside sentiment it should be faithfully kept to. I am coming over early in fall, and shall personally take off my coat to assure its success, for I believe the subject itself will be a popular one and will touch people's hearts and thereby their pockets, without the aid of any other influence than it possesses in itself and through the skillful interpretation of so famous an etcher as Mercier. But unless you have full faith in the matter and are ready to share promptly in the necessary out-put when due to assure its success, as well as in the final profits I should prefer to take the things entirely into my own hands in this case, as you have not remitted at the date promised or made any clear explanation for the delay. I should also prefer the privilege of keeping the picture for myself unless you particularly want it. Kindly let me have a definite answer on this matter at once, so that I may make my arrangements accordingly. We are all well and the new baby coming on finely. Hoping both Mrs. Chandler and yourself, and all the family keep well, with regards to Mr. Weber, believe me,

Sincerely yours,

(signed) Robert J. Wickenden..

To. Mr. R.G. Chandler,
Coldwater, Mich.

On his arrival in America he took back "A Cup of Cold Water" but this was too much, for his patron, Mr. Chandler who prized it more than anything he owned among pictures and wrote in reply:

¹⁸ Filfille ultimately received this beautiful portrait of Mother, then 25.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Coldwater, Mich. 10/16, 1890

My dear Wickenden,
City of Brotherly Love,

Your receipt and letter come to hand this a.m. and I am glad to know you are so favorably and pleasantly located, you could not have found a better place in this country than Philadelphia.

As to my "Cup of Coldwater" I prize it more than anything I own in the art line and money would not tempt me to sell it, as from the first moment I put my eyes upon it I was taken. As to finance I am for a few days pressed a little for money but nothing that would interfere with my raising any consistent amount if necessity required at any moment. I am building a Block and taken quite a block of stock in a new Branch Co. Savings Bank which for a few days makes ready money scarce but you can rest assured that should your necessities require you can call upon me at any time for the balance due you. When will you send the "Cup of Cold Water" home? I am quite anxious to have you see the Water Drawing, I purchased in Sou. California by I. Ivey an English artist from the west of England. I have much interesting matter for your consideration and some curios that we are intending to share with you to take back to finance¹⁹.

I will write Bro. Weber to-day and send you address as he takes his rest Mondays and if he gets time will call upon you. I see by yours of the 9th you want to exhibit "Cup of Coldwater" in Philadelphia. I have no objection, anything to further your interest, you can command me. Have you sold the "L'Approche du Soir."

Mrs. C. is well and join me in love as do all your Coldwater friends, as you have many here already and all are interested in you and expect large results from your efforts.

May God bless your efforts, is my prayer.

Yours very truly,

(signed) R.G. Chandler.

Thus, after getting the picture back from Mr. Chandler, Father returned it to him.

On this trip he made a sale at Hanna & Ives of Detroit which was very successful and a final one at the Hazeltine Galleries at Philadelphia of which a pre-notice appeared in the Detroit Free Press mentioning his having gained a fair share of fame and fortune. It also stated that Mayor Pingree, James E. Scripp, Mrs. W. H. Stevens, Geo. F. Moore etc., had bought his works. His purpose was to hold an exhibit at the Hazeltine Galleries, Philadelphia. This item also mentioned U. Checa's fame, particularly the "Chariot Race" by this artist

. In connection with this trip he had the pleasure of repaying a loan made by an old friend who had been rather hard on him at the time of his marriage some years before. This gentleman was touched to the quick and wrote he was sorry he had felt hard towards Father "but it was inspired by some one else" meaning apparently Mr. Coyl whose fury at Father's marriage had known no bounds.

A Philadelphia paper of November 22, 1890, remarked on R. J. Wickenden's exhibition at the Hazeltine Galleries "that his residence of late years has been in the country of Daubigny on the Oise where he has studied with noticeable effect the Barbizon painters. He looks at nature, however, with his own eyes and

¹⁹ Without the original letter to decipher, it is impossible to know whether typist misread and "finance" should actually be "France".

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

has painted many charming bits of landscape of the country near his home with sensitive appreciation and much skill, going straight to his point that gives his work a pristine purity. His figure subjects will repay the heedful attention which his works deserve.”

He returned to Auvers for Christmas, after this very successful trip. It was indeed the prosperous ending of a busy year. He had a goodly balance of funds to his credit at the bank and many pictures in stock.

However, he was seriously preoccupied by several problems. The appraisal of his collection at £3000 had raised one: How to cash in on this potential capital? Indeed it was a great temptation to see all these pictures turned into money. They had only cost a fraction of \$15,000 and he could repeat this venture. He knew the market and could pick up hundreds of good canvases for a song. But -- between the appraisal and the realization -- there was a tremendous gulf. He sensed that, for all their flattering and encouraging remarks, his friend had not shown definitely how to turn these values into dollars and cents. Ford suggested Christie's, the famous auction rooms at London. Father looked into it but did not feel entirely sure of success. Certainly he was doing better with his patrons in America, which fact proved to him definitely that his best market lay there.

But these constant trips separated him from wife and family to the detriment of both. There was always a great gap in our little circle when he departed. The fact that his studio was at home made it the more felt. He was around at all times during the day except when he went out to paint studies on the plain of Auvers, or in the “Vallées,” or on the Oise. Once in a while he would go to Paris perhaps for a day or two. On these occasions he would drop the rough tweeds of the country-side to don the striped trousers and black frock coat of that time, shiny topper on his head and “congress” boots, with side elastics, on his feet. Nothing was thought of it, it was the business dress of that time.

Then the big separation would come, a trip to America. The place would seem most empty for some time and his absence created a big void. Conversely he missed wife, babies and home. This desire to be home fitted in with the possibility of making good business deals and of being nearer his patrons. The odd trip to Paris from America seemed less trouble than long trips from Paris to America. The only thing in the way was his home at les Vallées which he had leased from Louis Delépine, of Méry. He got in touch with Mrs. Ford who was a very enterprising person. Rent was arranged for at the rate 250 francs a year -- about 21 francs, -- four dollars and twenty cents -- per month. Living was cheap then and pictures sold well. Mrs. Ford and Mother corresponded. Mother gave her the addresses of trades people and where to go for milk, eggs and supplies.

WE LEAVE AUVERS

The time came to leave Auvers in the Fall of 1890. Then it was that I suffered the terrific sorrow of giving away our dog Coco. Coco was a huge Newfoundland dog, gentle, affectionate and playful. I had romped with him for months. It felt as if he had always been my companion. A farmer took him and he was led away with a cord tied to his collar. I went to the empty shelter of Coco under the stairs leading to the attic of the wagon shed and would not leave the place, crying disconsolately all the while. Sleep got the better of my grief in Coco's kennel and I was removed to bed. I was not quite five years old then but I can never forget this early sorrow.

The next morning there was a great bustle. I was dressed in my Sunday best, stiff and uncomfortable, and we soon were on board the train to Paris, where we moved into an apartment at 74 Boulevard Montparnasse. I felt dreadfully oppressed by restricted space and restricted action. Happily our dining room windows looked upon a school yard where I could watch the boys playing at recess. Between recesses, however, time was dull indeed. Somehow, there was no fun in this after the freedom of Auvers with its wonderful yard and walks on the plain. Occasionally troops would go past, off on some route²⁰ march: cavalry, artillery, infantry. We were near a barracks of the latter and my wonder never ceased at the sight of a few *piou-pious* buckling on belt and pack while running after the column. Some always had to be late for the assembly.

Spring returned. With its flowering horse chestnuts filling the air with fragrance and white blossoms, the Luxembourg almost reconciled Fiffille and myself to Paris. Spring was also felt in our menu. Fresh peas came from Clamart, asparagus appeared from Argenteuil. One day Maman bought a live lobster and I teased it with an asparagus stem. It jumped and frightened me. Mother chased me out of the kitchen.

Business was excellent. Father's balance at the Credit Lyonnais Bank on June 30 was 23,742 francs, a considerable sum for that time. It is not surprising that, with this sum back of him, he felt he could afford a trip to Italy. He went to Florence, Rome, Venice, climbed Vesuvius and returned with endless stories of Italy and the Italians.

A new trip to America was necessary. This time Father decided to cross with us all -- a project he had long studied as I stated before. Everything was packed, pictures and all, and early in October 1891, we sailed on a German packet from Cherbourg. My Aunt Alice was traveling with us. She was very subject to seasickness. The feel of the ship was sufficient to upset her completely even when tied to the dock. She just went to bed on coming aboard and never got up until we reached New York.

I also was ill for two or three days. Father, Mother, Fiffille and Baby Yvonne were all right. When I began to feel well I asked for an egg. This was a scarce commodity on board but they managed to scare one up for me. It was a bantam's egg, scarcely larger than a pigeon's, but it tasted delicious and I was soon on deck looking over the boat.

In those days sail was still used to help the engines. The wind was favorable and the masts were covered with bulging canvas, pink in the setting sun; it was a beautiful sight. After supper an accordion played polkas, or waltzes and all would start to dance on deck in the afterglow. Captain Kaempff, the bearded skipper glowed over it all. He was a kindly man and sent us greetings the following Christmas. In spite of these entertaining features I did not like this ship nor its personnel and was glad when we arrived at New York. From there we went on to Toledo.

²⁰ Sic ["routine"?]

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

At Toledo we first became consciously acquainted with our Grandmother Wickenden, Uncle Tom and Aunt Ida. Most interesting to us were cousins Lottie, Will and Tom. Homer was yet a baby. Will took me places: an oak grove with many acorns and a hickory tree, bombarded by many youngsters for lone nuts. One nut finally came down and I was given a scrap of the kernel, being a guest.

Uncle Tom was City Engineer. With his horse and buggy he drove us to see a bridge he had planned and built. We were very proud of him.

From Toledo we went to Detroit where we stayed at Mr. Coyl's apparently reconciled to Father. Mrs. Coyl fell in love with us children and spoilt us thoroughly. Her cook, Beckie did nobly with all kinds of rich food; it is a wonder we were not sick. Mrs. Coyl bought me an express wagon and would give me rides on it before breakfast. It was indeed a wonderful visit but a terrific exercise for Auntie Coyl as I called her.

From there we went on to Chicago to live in a huge house on Michigan Avenue. It was getting late fall and the warmth and comfort of the house with its furnace astonished me. Father in the meantime cast about for business. C. Beckwith was not very encouraging. From New York he wrote on November 15 that Chicago was no place for Father and urged him to write for the newspapers as he said it was well nigh impossible to support oneself by painting. Beckwith said that, without his teaching, he could not do it. This was scarcely encouraging to a man tired after a long journey with his young family, but Father was never idle long. He had published a pamphlet "On the Real and Ideal in Art" which gave him some publicity. He also contacted Mercier the engraver for reproduction of some of his works. Checa wrote him regarding the sale of pictures on commission and also regarding a Spanish artist named Seiquer who specialized in drawing cats, "avec ses chats et toutes ses petites bêtes."

On December 2nd, 1891, Father was admitted to the Chicago Society of Artists with privilege of using their galleries, but money was going out fast. Cancelled cheques from the Chicago Bank show a total of \$1252.88 spent from Oct. 7th to Dec. 24; this was besides other expenses incurred, and no money was coming in. This outflow of funds, after Auvers was terrific. The Credit Lyonnais' 5 or \$6000.00 was being broken up fast.

Personally Fiffle and I thought it was a grand place. Just back of our house were tracks with freight trains. I would climb on the board fence to watch them. The yard, a nondescript, unkempt place full of dried grass, was a paradise after Paris.

Mother got a colored girl named Fanny who could cook the most wonderful desserts. We bought a whole barrel of apples. I had never seen so many apples in all my life. Christmas came. We were overloaded with toys and presents from Auntie Coyl and others. This rather muddled my ideas about Santa Claus and I asked pointed questions. Father finally broke up the myth as it must be done ultimately for each child. I was very disappointed at the dispelling of this marvellous illusion.

Other matters soon claimed my attention however. A little girl lived across the street, a little blondie with long curls. I soon learned her name was Beatrice and fell quite hard for her. Fanny taught me to make signs by crooking in my index finger for her to come over. I did this again and again with slight results. My sister Fiffle was more successful and secured several invitations to play in Beatrice's home; I spent several wonderful afternoons there.

Snow came. I had a sled and built a slide on one of the mounds of our yard. Other children shared it, mostly little girls. I was most happy except that Beatrice did not join us when the other girls turned up, a matter which puzzled me very much.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

When the weather was bad Fanny told us wonderful stories of Memphis, Tennessee from whence she came. She would receive papers from there with dreadful illustrated stories of lynchings. I was puzzled and she explained to me the barriers of color. I was quite shocked, as I loved Fanny. I was sure that her color could be scrubbed off and urged her to follow a scheme of baths by which this could be done. Fanny would only nod and say "Yes, chile..."

Meantime expenses kept high. Cancelled cheques show that these ran around \$300. per month and practically no money coming in. The art developments predicated by the Chicago World's Fair of 1892, celebrating the fourth centenary of Columbus' discovery of America did not materialize to an extent sufficient to overcome these heavy disbursements and Father saw only too clearly that his resources were dwindling fast. He exhibited "The Approach of Evening" and the "Queen of Sleep" at the Fourth Annual Exhibition of the Art Institute of Chicago. The results were null. The pictures were far too poetic for such a realistic place. Another exhibition by the Chicago Society of Artists was more successful. In the catalogue, dated Feb. 22, 1892, I find a list of his lithographs. The most appreciated piece however was a "Study of Oaks" made at Jersey, years before. In April 1892 he exhibited other water colors from Jersey and Auvers. The results were mediocre; there were no sales and Father became more and more depressed. His state of mind was well illustrated by a caricature he drew of Chicago at that time, a monstrous old ogre with carving knife and fork devouring art, a helpless roasted human being. The truth of it was that the roast was Father's bank account. He was in this mood when, early in April, there arrived a letter from Louis Délépine, of Méry, Seine et Oise, stating that his offer, made just a year before, to sell "les Vallées" for 4000 francs, still held good. Father weighed the chances. Here in Chicago he was spending \$300 a month. For less than three times that sum in Auvers, he would own the house he and Mother loved. Living was cheap, besides, and he had done his best business from it as a centre. The hardship of separation for odd trips to America was indeed better than the anguish of penury. Father and Mother just ached to be in France again. The decision was quickly made. When they told us children we were going back to Auvers we were simply overjoyed.

RETURN TO AUVERS

The swiftness of the move was remarkable. D el epine’s letter arrived about April 2nd or 3rd. On April 14 we were aboard the Gascogne of the French line. Our Havre Bill of Lading called for five cases of clothing, “ballots, objets de m enage.” On board ship everything seemed familiar as everyone talked French. Our eagerness to return to France facilitated reacquiring sea legs. We were not sick a single day of the whole trip even when stormy seas struck us. I soon made friends with a little boy called Patrice with whom I played for hours. As to Fifille, she made quite a hit with some baron or other. One day when it was blowing hard and the ship was rolling considerably we spent our time sliding without a qualm on the carpet of the deserted saloon, as the floor tilted this way and that.

Fran ois, our cabin steward, brought us hot chocolate every morning in our berths; once I spilled some on the canvas cover of a copy of a book “Pepper and Salt” by Howard Pyle given us before we started. The cup’s imprint which remained, reminded us of this happy trip for many years. Two Frenchmen also made friends with Fifille and myself, carrying us on their shoulders. One of them was a most unassuming man named Delcass e. Little I suspected, neither did he perhaps, that he was to become a historical figure in France²¹. Too soon, it seemed we arrived at Le Havre and were whisked to Paris, then to Auvers.

By May 1st we were installed at “les Vall ees” as if we had never left it. Everything throbbed with spring. Wild flowers were in full bloom. The air was bright with the petals of plum, cherry, apple blossoms falling like snow or confetti. Their perfume was everywhere. And everywhere quiet, only broken by the sough of wind in the elms, or in the ivy covered locust trees, and by the crowing of cocks in the neighboring farm yards, the Auberts, the Dubac’s and many others. If ever profound contentment had been ours, we had it now.

I never felt such happiness being able to roam to my heart’s desire with Fifille “derri ere la maison” where we found fragrant grasses, violets and a small grove of trees. Where the hill sloped down to the house a deep trench had been dug both to permit access to the house’s back door and also to protect it from dampness. Over this trench, some eight or nine feet deep, leaned a plum tree in full blossom. In my new freedom I climbed it with a will, a branch broke and down I came. At least I suppose so, for, the next thing I knew I was lying on the old four poster in Mother’s bedroom with a vinegar cloth across my forehead and a slight headache -- very little indeed to feel after a fall of some fifteen or twenty feet.

But this was a mere incident of our life in Eden. We went up the “chemin du Moutier,” the road which went up to the top of the hill, past our house -- where stood the old cross painted and lithographed by Father. This road had been named Moutier because it led in former days to an old abbey or moutier set on top of the hill. There was also the tradition that it had led to an old feudal castle. These structures had completely disappeared but the old road retained the name. Likely as not knights and robber barons had ridden on it. Traditions of underground passages to the razed castle still persisted in the country-side with rumored outlets near our place.

We picked flowers; Fifille and I put a bouquet of these at the foot of the cross as an offering so that we might have “a little brother.” Our prayer was answered. On June 2nd, 1892, after the usual pushing away of bewildered children to neighbors with mysterious airs, Henri Robert was born. We were overjoyed.

²¹ Th eophile Delcass e was born at Pamiers (1852 - 1923); several times Minister of Foreign Affairs of France; the “architect” of the “Entente cordiale” with England of 1904.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Ulpiano Checa came to visit us. He, Father, Fiffille and myself had a long walk over the Plain. Green peas for the Paris market were growing in large plots. Checa could not resist picking a pod here and there and eating the fresh raw peas. We had been told that these peas were other people's property so I reminded him of it. He replied that this did not apply to Parisians. There were allowed to pick peas as they saw fit. This answer broke down my scruples. Had I not stayed in Paris? I was as much a Parisian as Monsieur Checa. So, I proceeded to eat all the peas I could and to stuff my pockets with them.

That same evening, while we were enjoying the after glow in the old flagged yard, after Checa had gone, I proceeded to continue the feast. This was noticed by Father who investigated. A cascade of pods tumbled out of my little pockets. I was immediately put to the question. I said truly that I had picked them on the Plain, being a Parisian and as such allowed the free use of the products grown there. This argument failed to impress Father who ordered me to return the peas to each owner. I was quite at a loss to know who they were and, besides, the idea of going to these unknown people, at bed time, terrified me. At any rate I emptied my pockets and the trip was put off till the next day. I fully expected to start next morning and to make a frightful mental struggle in order to determine which peas belonged to which farmer. This unpleasant round of visits never took place.

Near the Cross at the top of the hill our neighbor, la Mère Marie Pique owned a row of cherry trees unprotected by any fence, the same as all holdings on the Plain. After blossom time they became covered with fruit, first green, then whitish, pink and finally red. One day Father, Fiffille and myself went up to the Plain, he to sketch, my sister and I to pick fragrant mint and wild thyme. As we emerged at the top of the Moutier Road what greeted us but a bevy of lovely girls all over the cherry trees and stuffing themselves gaily with the abandon of perfect freedom. They talked English and Father, coming close, gave them a bit of his mind regarding cherry stealing. These girls were scared. One or two mustered their wits sufficiently to reply that they were unaware of any stealing as these trees were unfenced. It appeared they were American art students. Promptly some of them arranged to take Art lessons from Father, which mollified him not a little. However he reported the matter to Madame Pique who thanked him effusively anent his efforts on her behalf, and there the incident ended.

Nevertheless I soon learned how far Madame Pique's property extended and, outside of that, helped myself to cherries, on the theory that Monsieur Checa was too good a man not to be correct in his view that Parisians were allowed to sample the fruits of the Plain, as well as its wild flowers, mostly the blue bachelor's buttons and red poppies. However in case of doubt, I took care to do this when no one was looking.

The flowers among the growing wheat, rye and barley, the poplars at the wood edges with their dark clumps of mistletoe, like black court plaster patches on the cheeks of ladies, the lovely sky, all inspired Father to paint. To do this he would carry a load fit to stagger the legionaries of ancient Rome and walk miles. I scarcely wondered at the assortment of things he carried yet now I realize it was no small feat to lug around paint box, easel, stool and umbrella, perhaps a canvas, perhaps a watercolor pad.

Being older I accompanied him frequently now. We would start off after lunch, head up "les Vallées" or up the "Moutier" Road, sunken between two banks dug by the erosion of thousands of farm carts, horses, cattle and sheep. When the local shepherd with his hundred or so head came down that way it seemed the Moutier Road was a stream flowing sheep through which the dogs seemed to swim their way rapidly to control the direction of bobbing heads of rams, ewes and lambs. Back of all moved slowly the shepherd in his cloak. No wonder this road was eroded. Under his paraphernalia Father followed the windings of the dirt roads with their two strips of grass between the ruts and the hollow dug by the horses' hooves. Being small I got the full fragrance of the grass, well fertilized by the dropping of generations of horses, sheep and odd heads of cattle. I could easily follow Father, for his stops were frequent, to look over the innumerable subjects unfolded at each step. As I grew older he would call me to exclaim at the beauty of this and that and to discuss various features

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

of beautiful vistas.

Reaching the place where the study was to be made, he would unfold easel, and stool, place his canvas, open his paintbox. A first calculating glance would be given to the subject, singling it out of the maze of fields, trees and skies, framing it in his mind as it were, before framing it in the canvas. He would start with a general lay-out in charcoal, following it with brush and paint, gradually building up the chosen scene. Birds twittered, breezes waved the grass and the green crops, hours slipped in Nirvana. Meanwhile, left to my devices I would explore, never far from the protecting shadow of my father and his easel. There were bugs, multicolored, long-whiskered, there was the grass, the dirt even. I generally managed to gather a fine bouquet. At four o'clock or so we would have a bite to eat, a bit of bread and chocolate to tide us till supper. Afterwards, the brushes would go on, more vigorously than even, well into the afterglow. Frequently dusk would be settling before he would say "Well it's time to pack" or some such remark. The process followed on our arrival would be reversed -- everything was put away, brushes, paint, palette, easel, stool and umbrella. This was always done in a most methodical manner, with the fresh painted canvas resting face up on the grass. The last thing was to give one last searching look at the trampled place where he had sat so as not to miss some dropped brush or paint tube. This over, the wet canvas was picked up and we would tramp home in the gloaming. Mother would be waiting with a good supper to be partaken of after a copious wash up, of which the soiled brushes got their full share. These tools of his art were never neglected as long as he lived.

By eight I would be tucked in, my mind full of beautiful pictures, lulled by the sound of the voices of Father and Mother enjoying a moment's conversation. They never lingered very long and the house would soon become silent. As we drifted into sleep wafts of fragrance came from the woods laden with the message of violets, anemone, catkin from hazel or poplar, or the call of one of the many nightingales which dwelt in les Vallées. Perhaps also from across the opposite hill the notes of a distant French horn sounded tunes as old as Roncesvalles. The player chose the dark to perform. Perhaps he remembered de Vigny's lines:

"I love to hear the horn, at night,
in depth of woods..."

One of our old servants told me the words of one of the songs. It was entitled "The Chase of young Henry:"

"Would that I had many a jewel and crown
To place at your feet, I would cast them all down
Awaiting your pleasure upon bended knee
A kiss, but one kiss would you give it to me?
Sweetness

extreme,

Precious I deem
To love you for aye is my one, only dream.

Shades of Navarre! Dreams of Mont Orgueil!

BONANZA

No wonder his painting so excelled at this period. Even the Paris Press, cynical and blasé, had good words for his work. *Journal des Artistes* praised "L'Approche du Soir"; *Revue des Beaux Arts*, 1892, said "Applaudissements sans réserve aux deux œuvres de M. Wickenden: 'La Naiade' et 'Les Violettes,'" and praised also other works such as "La Rentrée du Troupeau" and "La Lune de la Moisson." Of "Le Soir de Dimanche" *l'Echo Pontoisien* said "Bonne toile." So the happy summer went until September when a fine lot of paintings was accumulated.

At this period Father did not limit his activities to painting only. As his brush followed the pattern of landscape and composition, his mind was planning the sale of his collection in New York. On odd trips to Paris he continued purchasing additional bargains expecting to make good, if not to improve, Mr. Ford's appraisal of his collection.

One day Mother told me he was going for a long voyage to America. I was only six but I knew what that meant, as I had just experienced the trip. Again we felt the anguish of coming separation. It was to heart-broken, weeping wife and children that Father bade good-bye before proceeding on his long sea voyage, an almost strange repetition of the episode when my grandfather had given his last farewell at Rochester.

He sailed on *La Bretagne*, Cie Générale Transatlantique, on Sept. 10, arriving in New York a week or so later. There, he busied himself at once with his plans. He wrote many letters and sent his pamphlet "On the Real and Ideal in Art" to friends and acquaintances. The theme of this article is a plea for more poetical painting and against "Realism Rampant" so dubbed by him and quoted by newspaper write-ups of former exhibitions. Meanwhile Mother forwarded a case of pictures insured for 6300 francs.

His Paris merchants sent him histories of pictures he had bought. It is not amiss here to say that pictures have pedigrees like thoroughbreds, or titles, like property. The ideal thing is to trace the work right back to the brush of the painter, a matter often difficult to prove, frequently resulting in a history with gaps more or less plausibly patched. This part of picture collecting is not its least fascinating feature. It was Father's good fortune, at this time of the great popularity of the Barbizon masters, that he could trace practically everything back to the originating painter's studio where he had frequently made his own purchases. All these compilations were preparatory to negotiations for a sale to be handled by the American Art Association of New York.

In the middle of February 1893 all was complete. He mailed a catalogue to Mother with a letter stating he hoped to sail back to France on *La Gascogne*, on March 4th. The catalogue was entitled "Collection of Mr. Robert J. Wickenden -- Paintings and Studies by Masters of 1830 and the Barbizon School." His introduction is worth quoting:

Pictures to a painter are as books to a writer. In them is felt the impress of graphic thought and they become both guides and companions in following after that idea which is the beginning and end of an artist's life.

I have always been strongly attracted toward the masters of the school of 1830 and I believe them to be luminaries as fixed in the sky of art as the masters of the Italian Renaissance or of the Spanish or Flemish Schools.

My taste has followed this belief and for study and recreation I gathered round me the present

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

collection. Obligated to part with them now, I do so with regret, yet trusting that those into whose hands they may fall will enjoy them as much as I have done.

Pictures should be appreciated for what beauty they may inherently possess but a certain interest also attaches to the source from which they come. I have always endeavored to be well assured of their genuine quality first on their own merits and secondly in tracing them as near the painters as possible. In a number of instances they have come direct from the artists' studios, families or intimate friends.

These statements were reflected in press notices among which the Brooklyn Eagle said "The Collection of Robert J. Wickenden that is exposed to view at the rooms of the American Art Association, prior to sale in those galleries on Tuesday night, looks as if it had been gathered by someone who had the run of studios or was a watchful attendant on the auction sales that succeed to breaking up of studios on the death of French artists. It has a rather scrappy character and, some at least of the canvases are nothing more than studies and sketches."

The auction took place February 21, 22, 23 and 24. There were 63 oils and 53 watercolors and drawings -- Rousseaus, Millets, Corots, Daubignys, Duprés, etc. The top price went to a Troyon (no. 35) "Autumn Landscape" which fetched \$3500.00. One Rousseau, only 10 3/4" x 14 3/4", representing a roadway in the Forest of Fontainebleau, fetched \$3000.00, no. 63, "An Alpine Torrent" by Gustave Courbet 40" x 60", fetched \$3000.00. The New York public showed sidelights of sentiment if we can judge by the sale of Theo. Rousseau's "La petite blanchisseuse" measuring 6 3/4" x 8 1/2". Rousseau is known for his trees more than for his figures. Yet this painting fetched \$1500.00. It is interesting to note that the prices were high considering the size and importance of the pictures whose size averaged about 12" x 12".

Already the public considered Father as an authority but the fact that he had purchased these pictures from sources immediately connected with the artists held a great weight. For instance, several paintings had been bought directly from the studio of the Daubigny's, Father and son, from Mme. Daubigny herself. The men of 1830 and the Barbizon School were held in high regard at that time and continued to be right up to the great war. Since then their commercial value has taken a slump.

As usual in these sales the beginning was slow, the odd picture bringing one or two thousand dollars. The tempo increased at the half way mark and dwindled off for a while only to finish with a flourish. A priced catalogue gives a gross total of \$49,630.00. I am led to believe that among the pictures were one or two introduced from the R. I. Stevens' collection. At any rate the sale was a rare success financially. Father had struck it just right. On the 4th of March, as planned, with substantial credit letters in his pocket book, he took the packet for France.

A day or two after this sale the panic of 1893 was in full swing, but its effects had been avoided by a very close piece of luck if not of good timing.

In the meantime the little family spent the winter at Auvers. Christmas came with plenty of snow. Its preparations had been closely watched by us children. A Christmas-tree, a juniper, had been hauled in by our maid from the bare leafless woods. It was trimmed in mystery, to be divulged on the great day. Jules the Chick, a local mason, paid us a preliminary visit. One morning, a day or two before the holiday, we were lingering after breakfast when the loud blast of someone blowing his nose, followed by the flourish of a large bandanna handkerchief apprised us of Jules' approach. These preliminaries scarcely over, we heard a rap on the door. Jules was admitted carrying a large mistletoe bush, perhaps a yard in diameter full of white translucent berries each with a little black speck. We were to hang it from the main beam in the centre of our dining room. Perhaps some Druidic tradition was connected with this custom, at any rate, for many years after, just before Christmas, Jules brought us a clump of mistletoe gathered from any likely tree not too hard to

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

climb. He was not so technical as to seek the rare oak mistletoe, nor did he insist on a golden sickle, his pocket knife sufficed for the job. After the inevitable glass of wine served on such occasion, Jules departed. A distant blast from his nose apprised us of his having reached the street. This was his delicate method of announcing his approach or departure.

For the first time I was allowed to attend midnight mass at the old church where were displayed the mysteries of the Nativity within a miniature Bethlehem, inside the stable's sheltering were Mary, Joseph, little Jesus, among cattle and sheep, all carved by innocent peasant lads. Over all a star, misty in the smoke of incense which added its quota of fragrance to the more and more diffuse perfume of other incenses of hundreds of past Christmasses. I felt as if I had been transported into a Paradise of the Middle Ages, literal, full of overwhelming joy.

After all were in bed, Mother went the rounds of each suspended stocking. A rustle, a faint light of flickering candle, then the soft sound of her step disappeared.

Morning was a riot. My sisters and I rushed from bedroom to bedroom in nighties, after emptying stockings of their orange, nuts, candies. These last mentioned are a poor appetizer for breakfast, especially with excited children. This meal was more or less sketchy perhaps the better to prepare us for the dinner to come. Presents were unpacked, dolls, stone blocks (which my Buddy²² has played with since). We took the greatest delight in a box of beads. Stringing them in various combinations we would break the threads to try new ones.

Time for dinner came, all minds focused on the dessert. Mother had mixed the usual Christmas pudding a process which called for many mysterious rituals and even more ingredients. Each member of the household had taken a turn at stirring the mixture. After which the puddings were packed in linen bags giving them literally the shape of a geode, or sphere flattened at both poles, when served on the platter. Decorated with mistletoe, drenched in cognac, fire was set to this pudding on the great day after the curtains had been drawn. Possibly some pagan rite is connected with this ceremony symbolizing the passing of the winter solstice, the new lighting of the life giving sun. When the spirits' blue flame had died out the curtains were reopened giving us the daylight of the sun on its new upward course towards the celestial equator. The ambition of each child, was to get as many plums as possible out of his or her portion, the stones on one's plate witnessing one's standing with Lady Luck. Yvonne was generally the favorite.

Snow was on the ground everywhere. My Chicago memories urged me to try to slide. I had no sled so I made what I thought was one. It was shaped like a sled but lacked one great essential, metal runners. The next thing was to find a hill to slide on. I went back of our house without any success. This gave me the idea of trying hills beyond our enclosure. I opened the little gate and slipped out followed by Fifille²³. We tried one place, then another, the snow was wet²⁴ and without runners my sled would not work; the sliding was wretched. We were soaked and tired. Returning to the little gate, I pushed it. It resisted my efforts. It was bolted from the inside. My heart stopped beating. Never had I imagined the tall elms, the high walls, and the grey sky could look so tall, so forbidding. Fifille chilled and damp, began to cry at first softly then more and more loudly, to my great alarm. I was on the point of bursting out too when a window, away up in the sky it seemed, opened upon the scene. It was mother.

“Who are you, little stranger children?” she asked.²⁵

²² The author's son who was killed in action in France during World War II.

²³ "... and Yvonne." lined out by AWP

²⁴ AWP inserts "... and so deep!"

²⁵ AWP inserts "You are little beggars! Go away."

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

“But we are your little children, Mother! We are...”

“I don’t know who you are...”

This was too much for me. I joined the tearful chorus whose volume became so loud that I am certain Mother felt quite alarmed. In another instant we heard the welcome sound of a rusty bolt sliding...; we rushed in, wet and cold, to find the warm shelter of home.²⁶

Mother did not worry very long over this escapade for she soon received the welcome news of Father’s projected return. By mid-March he was back with us, spring before him, and his pockets full of money. Needless to say he was welcomed uproariously by us all.

²⁶ AWP adds: We were both put to bed. Alfred was the bad boy who had led his little sister astray, so his supper consisted of bread and water, while I being innocent had delicious apricot jam. I wondered at this, feeling that Alfred was not guiltier than I; to me it was an injustice and I too should have had bread and water

CASTLE IN BOHEMIA

Lent waned into Holy Week. The bells of the Church ceased to ring, calls for prayers being made by choir boys wandering the highways and byways with loud rattles which buzzed at every corner morning and evening in lieu of the absent bells, gone to Rome, so they said. Then came Easter Sunday bursting on us with all the bells returned, pealing their souls to high heaven; with leaves breaking out like tiny flags all over the trees; with birds everywhere flying with long straws, strings, bits of rag to build their nests. Fiffille, Yvonne and I tried to imitate their structures with grass into which we put our chocolate or candied Easter eggs provided by Father and Mother, trying to imagine what sort of chicks might hatch from these gifts.

This was indeed a season and a place for anyone to dream of making his own nest, especially as the means were available.

Father and Mother were not immune to this Leaven which aroused the whole Earth. They also planned and plotted, measured and marked, from breakfast to bed-time, inserting here and there trips to hardware dealers, to look over materials.

There was no reason for a hasty return to business. Father became engrossed with his plans to remodel the old stone house consisting of two main buildings more or less connected.

It was centuries old, I am sure. I kept discovering pennies under tiles, floors, in the yard, dating back one century or more, mostly coins from the reign of Louis XVI. In Marie Pique's old house, we found one copper dated in the 1400's with the Stamp of Charles VIII of France. The roof, as I stated previously, was thatch, a very great fire risk during dry spells, though immeasurably picturesque.

When Father had advanced his plans sufficiently he hired Jules Poussin²⁷, the mason, to carry them out. This tall, blond, bearded Gaul had blue eyes, sharp as bayonets, yet full of sunshine.

He was the merriest soul imaginable. Everywhere he went he was followed by a grotesque simian figure, faced like a gargoyle whose name was Désiré. Whose desire he had been was more than I could comprehend. At least he had the virtue of fidelity to his master, Jules the Chick.

With an impediment of ladders, wheel-barrows, hods, trowels, hatchets, etc., carried by Désiré, Jules invaded our yard one morning and to my young eyes seemed to install himself there forever, performing his acrobatics to follow the vagaries of plans made from day to day according to Father's whims and fancies. The first thing I knew, Jules and his shadow were on the roof. To my delight, straw, musty with age, sharp sticks, twisted osier cords, began to rain in the yard, sometimes a few handfuls, sometimes in regular avalanches. Above this confusion floated a cloud of ancient dust, chaff, debris, and spores of whole generations of musty flavors. Up in the heavens, it seemed to me, stood Jules, like a bearded Titan assaulting Olympus, singing his head off. His songs consisted of bits gathered from his campaigns with the Zouaves, in Africa. One of these, particularly, was full of flavor. Its time rapped out in toccata tempo, gave you the rapid shuffle of French riflemen, some of whom were nicknamed "Les Joyeux" the "Joyful;" typically enough its burden was grouching about everything, the normal state of mind of soldiers at all times, in all lands. Here it is:

I'm quite fed up

²⁷ Jules the Chick previously referred to.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

There's no let up
To war in Africker
This cannot last
We march too fast
In camp there's no licker
Pound the sand
You bloody band
And rot in Africker.

A Berber wench
Who loves the French
Way down in Africker
She knifed me well
Oh, war is hell
I learned in a flicker
Take the witch
She's yours to snitch
And all of Africker.

Spellbound I listened. The tough language seemed perfectly natural to my young ears. Occasionally I would join the chorus, to Jules' delight, carried away by the wild ballads of desert fight, Tuareg charge, thundering squares of infantry, nigger wenches and Berber light -- o' loves...

They came pouring out of Monsieur Jules' lungs, gay, devil-may-care, full of nostalgia, lust, hate, love, passion.

There was a fascinating attraction to the man and his songs. It was like the Steersman of Longfellow's poem who:

“Sang a song so wild and clear
That the sailing seabird, slowly,
Poised upon the mast to hear...”

Our maid, Jeanne, could not resist the handsome mason, who would come out and call:

“Again, Monsieur Jules, again...”

Jules would blush...stop a while, then continue more merrily than ever.

Father would suddenly pop out, leaving nymphs, naiads, dryads, fauns and shepherdesses to communicate some new brain wave to Jules listening absentmindedly, one eye on the kitchen door by the pump where Jeanne had disappeared.

“Decidedly,” Jules thought, “this girl is handsome...I...”

Indeed, Jeanne, from Boulogne, petite, prim, lively, was an attractive little thing, especially on Sundays, when she wore her starched wide bonnet, with flute-like frills radiating from her fresh colored face, draped in her shawl, of the pattern worn by the fisher-girls of the Channel Ports.

So handsome was she, that Mother always had her serve in this dress when guests came, particularly

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

artists. It would create a sensation every time, to Jeanne's flattered delight. She was so willing and capable that Mother thought her quite a gem.

So thought Jules who, by this time, had erected scaffolding cunningly planked to give a sound footing and connected with the ground by tall ladders. Desire furnished the maestro of this turmoil with supplies carried in a hod scarcely larger than his own voluminous head, slowly moving up and down with almost prehensile feet.

The work progressed with odd interruptions. One day the choir boys of the village church paid their annual collection visit. They walked in the yard singing the old Easter canticle:

O Filii et Filiae
Rex celestis, rex Glorïae
Christo resurrexit hodie
Alleluia!

The object was to get a few cents contribution from the various villagers. Monsieur Jules gave them a copper with the imprint of Napoleon III, Father a silver dime and Désiré a horrible grimace. This combination of generosity and insult was too much for the boys. The sprinkle of holy water usually bestowed upon those making gifts was enlarged to the whole pot full being emptied on Désiré's head. After which unholy use of the holy liquid the group retired in haste before Désiré's slow wits could emerge from the cascade. Father was in fits of laughter, which he repeated when he learnt that the boys had replenished their supply of water from a public pump without benefit of clergy. It was not holy of course but who could tell the difference?

Another day as the work was proceeding aloft we heard clarion blares in the distance punctuated by booming explosions. It might have been a battle. Father stuck his head out of the windows. Mother called to him:

"What is it?"

"Fête Dieu..."

someone replied. It was the Corpus Christi procession. Again work stopped. We all tumbled out to witness this strange scene. At first it seemed a medley of white and red. When we came nearer we could distinguish Choir boys with white lace over red skirts, incense-smoke, a guard, more or less²⁸ smart and, in the midst of this, slowly moving, a canopy under which shuffled a priest laden with gold braided ornaments staring through a round glass surrounded by rays of gold. This canopy was followed by endless groups of girls with V shaped sky blue collars, men's association, boys, women all in a mist of dust, with banners on which were depicted saints kneeling in adoration upon pink clouds.

The Mass was told at the corner near Madame Dutertre at a leaf and flower-decorated repository. We edged around gossiping while the priest mumbled. The host went up. Instead of the bells ringing, a clarion blared above bowed shoulders.

Irreverent, Voltairian wits had words to the tune:

"La procession qui passe
P'tit bossu

²⁸ "less" inserted

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

P'tit tordu..."

The rest escapes me save that when the mass had been completed the whole show moved off to the banging of martial fireworks, sounding of trumpets, and wailing canticles sang in several keys and twice as many variations in time.

On this occasion we watched the procession and ceremony with our good neighbor Madame Dutertre. As she talked with Father and Mother, she invited me to act as godfather at a doll's christening to be held the following Sunday. The Godmother was to be her little niece, Genevieve. Oh! that would suit me wonderfully. Genevieve was dark, her eyes were a delightful brown surrounded by long spreading lashes. My heart missed a couple of beats while I awaited for the answer, though Mother assented quickly enough. This ceremony was held in Mme. Dutertre's yard. What the formal function consisted of, I do not remember, although I was one of the principal performers. All is obliterated by the memory of a tremendous banquet for some fifty children and young people. Among the latter were two cadets from St. Cyr and their girls. After dinner we had a ride in the country. There were two conveyances. A bus for the crowd and a large go-cart for selected guests.

My role, being purely a puppet one, was to furnish entertainment for grown ups; when this was over my utility ceased and I was not given a place in the go-cart. This was commandeered by the army and their girls. It was somewhat upsetting to me that, after being the centre of attraction, I should now be shoved in the background, even though it was with Genevieve. I suppose I sulked, for Genevieve gave me up. At any rate, I was a very deflated figure-head when I got back home.

The next day I was glad to resume play in the yard among the straws and sticks and hear Jules the Chick sing about Africa while Jeanne responded with folksongs from the Channel. Though, on the surface, there appeared no intimacies I presume that by some code of songs Jules and the pretty Boulonnaise managed to meet.

The summer waned, yet on the dry earth beneath the elms little accumulations of yellow leaves began to appear. One day Mother observed some subtle difference in Jeanne.

Could it be that something had been going on under her very nose, unobserved? Désiré? No, Jeanne was too handsome and too discriminating for that near-ape. Jules? ah...that was another matter. She watched him more closely but all she could observe were a pair of delphinium blue eyes peering over tanned cheeks as Jeanne's supple hips swayed through the yard carrying a basket.

Mother after a day or two's reflection called Jeanne to her for questioning. Jeanne replied impudently, hinting that she had as much right to her love-life as any of her mistresses. Both were thoroughly angry and Jeanne was discharged.

One afternoon in late September I was making a hut out of dirty old straw. Up, on the top of the house, Jules the Chick was building mansard windows into the new hipped roof assisted by his silent monkey-Friday. Jules was not silent as the fresh air filled his lungs. Oh the air of France! It took the sand storms of Algeria to make one appreciate it! He sang with fervor, I, adding my treble to his baritone. No one paid attention.

"I'm quite fed up
There's no let up
To war in Africker
This cannot last

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

We march too fast
In camp there's no licker
Pound the sand
You bloody band
And rot in Africker

A Berber wench
Who loved the French..."

His voice trailed off unaccountably. I went on alone --

"Way down in Africker..."

but looking up to the scaffolding I saw no Jules -- no Désiré.

Someone stood near me; Jeanne, smiling, pretty, unconcerned.

One jump and I hugged her as high as my arms could reach. She had been gone only a couple of months but she said:

"How you have grown!"

I looked myself up and down seeing but little difference, but Jeanne had said so, therefore I must have grown.

"How would you like to be godfather to my little boy, Alfred?"

"Could Genevieve be godmother?"

"Of course..."

"And would there be candied almonds to throw to the children and to eat ourselves..."

"Yes, yes, all that..."

Just then Mother appeared on the scene. The yard was very quiet for an instant. Jules and Désiré had not returned. Mother nodded to Jeanne, perhaps a little stiffly. Jeanne went to her somewhat sheepishly. I do not know what they talked about. I was hoping Mother would consent to the delightful experience of the real christening of a real baby, with Genevieve and myself throwing candies to scrambling urchins, as was the custom, and stuffing ourselves to boot. Perhaps I might marry Genevieve some day and march in wedding procession through the streets headed by the village fiddlers playing "Au bois de ma blonde." Nevertheless with a sigh I resumed work on my Crusoe structure and never saw Jeanne slip out.

A cautious head peeped over the ridge. It was Désiré. Having ascertained the coast was clear he was soon followed by Jules. Hammering started again.

Day by day, in spite of these interruptions, they went on with their work until the thatch was replaced by scarlet tile, new partitions; new stairways were erected with barn transformed into studio and library. It was a most extraordinary maze. The outer walls were splashed in pink stucco with white trimmings and, to complete the picture, a turret was stuck at one of the corners over the gate. In the centre of the main wall Father had an oval frame made of white plaster inside which he painted a toga clad artist seated at an easel

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

with the motto, “Ars et Natura.” To my childish mind it seemed a very chilly garb.

SUPPLIES

Long after our stay at Auvers I read about Brook Farm, a New England Colony which tried to make itself self-sufficient in material ways by raising their own food and making their own raiment. At the same time they cultivated the arts at which I believe they were more successful than in their farming experiment. Perhaps it was with this example in mind that Father developed our surrounding land to at least furnish us a good part of our food. In later times of crisis it did indeed save us from near starvation.

For, if he depicted on the main house wall a painter of uncertain nationality, dressed in a kirtle bordered with ancient Greek design, seated at a modern easel with brush and palette much like his own, he also had pigeon coops placed high up on both sides of this picture. We could hear these birds cooing all day and I never tired watching the old cock's iridescent neck plumage as he arched about courting his hens at feed time. There was more than beauty in all this, for these dove-cots furnished us many a good pair of squab. The matter of squabs no doubt suggested chickens and rabbits, so Jules the Chick erected a hen house with hen-yard and hutches "derrière la maison." The hutches were made mostly of old picture boxes the doors being provided with hinges of leather, from old shoes. There the rabbits poked their constantly moving noses through the meshes of fence netting asking for bits of grass and leaves. Fifille could not resist these imploring noses. She would poke in choice tid-bits of dandelion or cabbage leaves. Her fingers would get too close to the eager mouths. Time and again she would withdraw a quick finger bleeding from bites and cry her heart out. But she could never learn; the appeal of bunny noses was too much for her. As to myself one bite was sufficient; I took care to poke in the provender but kept my fingers out of their reach.

We provided the fodder; one of the jobs of the maid was to go afield to get grass and weeds from the road sides. We accompanied her, gaily singing:

“When I was a little tot
Little in a tiny cot
We went out to gather grass
Little cress for little lass
Derry don, derry don,
Derry don, don, don.”

We soon learned about poisonous plants through the untimely death of several litters of young rabbits. We also learned, by the same method, that slightly wilted grass is better than grass fresh with dew. These rabbits came handy as a meat supply and we enjoyed many a meal of "Lapin au gratin" or "Sauté, Chasseur."

As to the chickens they were a mixed lot. We even had two high perched cocks of the fighting variety which evolved from innocent and fluffy chicken-hood. One soon went to the pot but the other was spared for many a year as he had become my special pet. I called him "Cocasse" from the word "Cock." He had a glorious white fluffy tail and waving plumes. Unfortunately there came a time of crisis when Cocasse could not be fed or spared any more. To fill our hungry little maws and craws Mother made a delicious chicken stew out of him. The secret as to which chicken furnished the feast had been kept from me and I was enjoying a delicious bit of white meat which had been served me instead of the usual neck. I was not suspicious of this bit of luck but Fifille suddenly exclaimed "Cocasse is delicious is it not?" The mouthful stuck in my throat. I felt like a cannibal eating a friend. I burst into tears and, still unbelieving, rushed to the coop. Fifille was right and I went without the rest of my lunch. Fifille appropriated my plate and finished it.

Many a pleasant afternoon I spent near the hen yard watching the chickens and bringing them worms.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

My greatest fun was to throw them lumps of bread too big to eat in one swallow to watch them run after each other. I naturally imitated all their calls and soon observed that roosters sang in turn from different barnyards. Therefore, when nothing better offered, I would sit under some tree to take my turn in this game of rooster calls. The funny part was that these distant birds acknowledged my right, waiting for my call before proceeding themselves, once I had placed myself in their round.

The chicken yard was my sole source of revenue. In it were thrown various kinds of kitchen refuse including soup bones. When these were picked clean I gathered them up into a hidden heap. When the rag and bones man went his rounds these bones were sold for a few cents. Mother at the time disposed of the rabbit skins for two cents a piece. No penny but was highly valued in an artist's household. Near the chicken yard were placed a couple of bee-hives. Father read up on them and bought quite a little equipment. They were not a success and ultimately either swarmed off or died out.

It took a lot of food to nourish us; groceries came from Pontoise once a week; the local butcher M. Ducheval, delivered twice a week. We did not then know about ice, so purchases had to be carefully timed. As to the baker he or she came every day. To insure good weight, a horse shoe shaped "croissant" or dough crescent was always added to the order. It was soon devoured by us children.

However, our mainstay of supplies was from the bits of garden land that went with the house. One piece was down in the valley. It was rich bottom land, well fertilized. There we raised vegetables, peas, beans, lettuce and various roots which helped garnish the table and made excellent stews and soups for, by now, we were increasing our circle at the table. Across the Moutier road at the top slope of the hill we also had bought Marie Pique's scrabby piece of land where she had grazed her goats. This became our potato field. They grew more or less well in an almost arid situation but we got enough for our needs winter and summer. Father called these potatoes "the rocks from the hill." The cherry trees Father had protected from the pretty raid of girl-artists were ours now. When the season came we gathered their cherries by the basketful. These were laboriously pitted for preserves by nimble fingers which were soon stained in the juice.

Then followed the rite of cooking in the large shallow red copper kettles, almost a yard in diameter. Granulated sugar being scarcely used then, Mother bought her preserving sugar in large conical loaves. These were broken in large chunks with a hammer. The mixture of sugar and cherries simmered on the range for hours, it seemed. The vapor arising from their stewing pervaded the whole yard where watching children sniffed expectantly. We never went very far away on jam making days. The reason was the hope of a spoonful of skimming which Mother industriously ladled off the top of the boiling scarlet mixture. The ladle could not shave off so close as not to catch a little syrup and the odd cherry to give us a pre-taste of the new jam. But the bulk of it was saved in paper-covered jars against the long months of winter when no fresh fruit was available.

At odd times Father took part in the work of hoeing, raking, spading energetically, getting sore muscles and making his hands too shaky for brush or pencil. More often he plunged into the theory of the thing: all about bees, vine trimming. His authors might be modern but he far preferred the ancient Greeks or Romans. He would quote long passages from Hesiod's "Days," Virgil's "Bucolics." From Montaigne he obtained much sound advice regarding enriching the soil. He kept urging us to give it plenty of "manurance and dungings..." I practised foraging to increase our sources of fertilizer and was somewhat inspired by the sample of our neighbor Mère Sophie who watched the road in front of her house for the passage of teams, rushing out with a short broom and shovel to gather the steaming droppings for the benefit of her manure pile.

Besides this we roamed afield for berries, or even for mushrooms which all went well to bolster a meal. It's a wonder we avoided being poisoned by the mushrooms, perhaps this was due to the fact that we only picked one kind which we knew thoroughly. Even in winter we walked the bare stubble fields looking

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

for the small corn-salad, called “mâche” in French. Two or three handfuls of these, a half onion, a few boiled potatoes, a spoonful or two of oil and vinegar and there you had a meal fit for a king.

I often spent hours attending to these cultivations and pickings, realizing they were the basis of my dinners and suppers. In times of stress they gave us a broad healthy base for our subsistence. Whatever food value they had, they gave us even more than that: a sense of confidence that no matter what happened we could always rely on the soil. In this respect Father, delving in his Classics, kept reminding us of the myth of Antaeus the Giant, who, wrestling with Hercules, always regained his full strength on touching the Earth.

With all the above supply arrangements at hand Father and Mother loved to entertain friends or acquaintances who came to visit us. Coops were visited for eggs or chickens, hutches for rabbits, fresh vegetables were picked in the garden, deficiencies being made up at the local dealers. Mother was most active preparing for these feasts yet somehow managed always to appear her best, when guests arrived. In her ruffled bronze and brown dress, with leg-o-mutton sleeves, raven-black hair done up in a large chignon at the top of her head, she received them. So gay was her welcome that all accepted whole-heartedly the happiness of the place, theirs for the day. Living as we did in this fairyland atmosphere we hardly realized its being, or why our visitors were so appreciative.

VISITORS

Among my early impressions outside of the beautiful country-side at Auvers were those made by guests and visitors at “Les Vallées,” mostly artists. Chief among these was Ulpiano Checa. He and Father shared a studio at 235 Faubourg St. Honoré. Checa was a Spaniard, dark, thick set, nearly stout. To me he seemed to have a perpetual smile, so engaging and so tender, that I can still see it plainly under his merry, luminous eyes. He claimed Arab descent from the ancient Moslems who had occupied Spain. This fact explained, he stated, his unusual command of brush and pencil in painting horses. In that period of superb draftsmen he was recognized as the painter par excellence of horses. Many of his paintings were purchased by the French Government and by museums of other nations. Of these the best known is the Roman Chariot race, which has been reproduced all over the world for many years. Lately I saw a copy of it in a restaurant at Bennington, Vermont.

Checa, the mild tempered, soft-mannered Spaniard, could paint unhesitatingly the wildest scenes of gore and sword. Father on the other hand with a streak of red in his hair could be, to say the least, formidably as resolute as any Englishman can be. Yet he painted soft lowing cattle, soft sunsets and soft ladies in soft tones. Perhaps that was why they got on so well.

Checa came frequently for lunch on Sundays. Customarily at about 11 a.m. we met his train at the station of Auvers. “There he is!” we would exclaim and rush towards him to be duly kissed in turn. The half mile or so to les Vallées was walked leisurely, he playing with us all the time and talking with Father about picturesque features along the route.

Among other peculiarities were caves or cellars dug out of the side hill sloping to the old road. These had been used from time immemorial for various purposes by the peasants of the countryside. Mr. Checa seemed to know all about them stating, among other bits of information, in tones so final that none would have dared contradict him, that the devil lived in them. “La diable,” he called this gentleman. Shivering with delectable apprehension we would follow him on tip-toe to the entrance of the man-made caves where he would call on “Monsieur la Diable” to come out and have a social talk. Of course nothing happened but we were breathless just the same and quite awed by the courage of M. Checa whose round eyes seemed larger than ever. After a few calls he would shake his head and say “No, he isn’t in just now -- too bad!” and walk off with a look of disappointment.

But one day things happened differently. Some enterprising farmer had ingeniously set a door into one of these caves.

“Hah! Hah!” says Checa “you see! the diable has installed a door...perhaps he is in.”

So we all tip-toed to the rustic door with due ceremony. Checa rapped and, to our amazement, the door opened, a peasant stood there blinking, grunting “Hah! what do you want?”

Quite undisturbed, Checa, with his best manners, explained himself.

“I am Checa, the artist and painter of Paris. I understand Monsieur la Diable lives here. Have you seen him by any chance?”

The peasant thought we were all mad and grunted again. Checa politely took off his hat in salute,

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

backing out therewith²⁹ with the rest of us. In all this absurd comedy he never cracked one smile. However the diable was left alone for some time after that.

These little diversions made the walk of ten minutes last an hour or so to make us arrive just about in time for lunch.

Maman, twenty-four or five, very pretty, would be all dolled up for the occasion. After a due welcome we would sit down vying with each other as to who might have the privilege of sitting besides M. Checa.

Simple fare from the neighboring gardens and poultry yards was served: asparagus, string beans, peas, anything in season. I remember particularly Mother's green peas, cooked with young onion and lettuce. Fresh boiled eggs were a favorite of Checa's. He could eat a dozen at a sitting without thinking anything of it. On top of this, generous slices, nay whole halves of chicken, backed by the typical French bread, washed down with red wine in pitchersful drawn from a barrel in the old cellar, followed each other in a smooth unhurried order.

After this somewhat gargantuan feast, cigarettes rolled by hand were smoked and coffee sipped until the sleepiness of digestion wore off. Then Father and Checa went to the studio to resume their talk on art which had continued steadily from the train's arrival, save for the odd interruption of "la diable," compliments to Mother and the business of eating.

Sometimes they went for a walk. While they talked or experimented with effects, we picked wild flowers. One of these experiments was carried out in our "cave," similar to those seen on the station road. This cave or grotto was situated a hundred yards or so, up hill, from the back of the house where was the studio. It faced the old road called the "Moutier Road." It had been dug out of the chalky rock to a depth of about one hundred paces. It formed a low arch about twenty feet wide, and eight or nine feet high. When you entered the light was good at first, but as you advanced it became darker and darker. After a midway twist it seemed as black as pitch. At the full depth a rude wall had been erected with a door. This had been used as a chamber by a shepherd who had kept his flock in the grotto, like the ancient Greeks. Its use as such was perhaps as ancient as the story of Polyphemus. There were no signs or tradition of anyone having dug there in recent centuries. Other similar caves existed not far away. One was used for growing mushrooms and the others were inhabited by the odd tramp or used for storage, being cool in summer and warm in winter.

One may wonder how the shepherd, separated from the outlet by scores of sheep, could breathe. The answer was a vent-hole, or crack in the roof which connected with the outside fresh air so that he could make a fire and sleep without discomfort.

Some said that this cave had been the outlet of a former Chateau's secret passage. It would have been a good one, its low entrance was already threatened with choking by brambles and vines and could have been easily obliterated from view after a year or two's neglect.

At any rate the whole set up as I look back on it was perfect to get caught in a cave-in. The fear we all felt was probably due to this. But, with Father and Monsieur Checa there, we had no uneasiness, just a thrill to penetrate this strange unknown. When we arrived at the full depth, our way lighted by the funny little wax matches of those days, a bonfire of straw and sticks was lighted. Our eager faces watching the fire were carefully studied for color and shadow. Checa was planning a picture. Whether it was to be of the evacuation of Pompeii at the time of Pliny, when Vesuvius erupted or whether it was to be used for a picture of the witches of Macbeth, I do not remember except that the first mentioned picture was actually painted by Checa

²⁹ "In the meantime; whilst. Obs." Webster's New International Dictionary (1922).

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

about that time. At any rate it was an excellent place for studying such effects and Checa's eyes were all artist and all attention. He absorbed the color which would come out true and brilliant on his canvas. These notes having been made, the whole thing wound up in a wild fandango around the fire; Checa, the wildest of all, leaping high over the flames. After this we had well earned our four o'clock "goûter" of bread and chocolate. As time went on I became less and less scared of our "cave." When we left in 1900 I was planning to demolish the old shepherd's wall at the bottom of it to see if it really led to an underground passage. Our move interfered with this project; perhaps it was just as well.

Other artists came. There was a group of young Dutchmen, Van Gogh among them. I was afraid of his somber, brooding appearance. But the fellow who scared me most was a madcap named Hirshwick. In the evening we accompanied this group to the train. In the waiting room of the little Auvers station there was a lamp hanging to a hook in the ceiling. Hirshwick used to scare me into fits by threatening to hang me to the hook by his watch chain. The utter impossibility of the whole thing was more than I could stand.

At any rate Van Gogh shot himself and was buried at Auvers.³⁰ Father pronounced the customary "few words" at the grave to the scant assembled friends, and we never were visited by the Dutch group again.

Another artist elsewhere referred to was Seiquer, a tall bearded Spaniard, grave as Checa was gay. Strange to say I was not afraid of him. His specialty was engraving and his pet subject, cats. He made a fair living out of this. Father sold one or two of his cats for him for good American dollars, prized as highly then as they are now.

Seiquer had been a soldier in the Carlist war in Spain, on which side, I know not. Suffice it to say that he told mighty good stories of his lootings and shootings in his colorful way though he talked French [^] l'Espagnole, that is with very plain expressions. This made it the more picturesque if not picaresque. He believed in calling a spade, a spade. Once during supper his insides happened to gurgle at the same time as someone asked, "I beg your pardon?" Quite at a loss to repeat the sound he exclaimed: ",a Madame? ,a? C'est mes tripes." ("Them, Madame? Them? Them was my guts, Madame.")

Among the many friends of Father none was more interested in his black and white work than Frederick Keppel of New York, connoisseur, writer and dealer in etchings. This gentleman had an unusual flair for finding good black and whites and recognizing coming artists in this line. Father was always ready to help him in this work so that, at one time, they contemplated forming some sort of partnership in which Father would take care of paintings, thus supplementing Mr. Keppel's colour blindness. I believe this had something to do with Mr. Keppel's visit to Auvers in the summer of 1893.

He came with his family -- the charming Mrs. Keppel and two sons, Frederick and David. They stayed for one month at the Café de la Gare where we visited and returned visits at our own home. Mr. Keppel was a keen, witty man and, in spite of the short time he was there, his establishment at the little estaminet³¹ had all the appearances of permanency. His squirrel and two ravens, which he called Diogenes and Plato were a great attraction to us children but, in addition, he and Mrs. Keppel did their utmost to spoil us with numerous boxes of candy. There were no conclusions to the negotiations with Father.

At the beginning of July 1894 Father made the acquaintance of P. G. Hamerton, eminent art critic who specialized principally in black and white, principally etchings. One of his books "Etching and Etchers" is recognized as an authority on the subject. Mr. Hamerton became interested in the process of lithography as exemplified by Father's work which led to a dignified friendship.

³⁰ Since van Gogh died July 29, 1890, the author is undoubtedly referring to the period the family lived in the house in "les Vallées" in Auvers prior to the move to the United States in 1891.

³¹ "petit café"

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

During summer he had dinner with us at Auvers. It was a solemn affair which so affected me that I gave an exhibition of tantrums. To me, visitors, either Frenchmen, Spaniards, Americans or others had hitherto always been gay or at least vivacious; even the Dutchman's threat to hang me by a watch chain had its thrills. I must admit however that my acquaintance with the pomp and presence of this great Englishman upset me completely. No matter how much my conscience pricked me, I could not reconcile myself to the lack of enthusiasm I felt for his visit. To make matters worse, when I could stand this solemnity no longer, I burst into tears. This exhibition of feeling was given a cold reception. It brought a fishy stare from Father and none at all from Mr. Hamerton. The day ended with mixed feelings; when tears are powerless to move a thing it must be granite, admirable, but scarcely amenable to love.³²

Father painted the portrait of P. G. Hamerton now possessed by Robert. He also made a lithograph of this portrait. The overwhelming lordliness of his subject so impressed Father that Mr. Hamerton found his portrait more dignified than he desired, and said so. He stated it made him look older than he was and did not resemble him. Apparently pomp and presence have their draw-backs. You cannot be a rollicking Frenchman and a solemn Englishman all at once. The problem remained unsolved. Perhaps Mr. Hamerton was older than he thought for he died suddenly a few weeks later and the portraits, both in oil and in black and white, kept their solemnity.

This sudden death of a noted author roused an added interest in him and his works so that Mr. F. Keppel sold many of the lithographs which Hamerton had not approved. Furthermore Harper's requested an article on him, which Father wrote for \$10.00, probably worth much more now. All in all it was the case of an ill wind which blew good to this extent.

So they came and went, those many summers ago enjoying the air, the quiet, the simple fare and the good company of a young couple hardly 30, who were my Father and Mother, still honeymooning at les Vallées...

³² Philip Gilbert Hamerton (1834-1894) According to The Encyclop³/₄dia Britannica (Eleventh Edition) "His mother died at his birth, and having lost his father ten years afterwards, he was educated privately under the direction of his guardians." He married a "French lady" and moved to France where he appears to have done most of his writing including "Etching and Etchers" (1866). "In 1891 he removed to the neighbourhood of Paris, and died suddenly on the 4th of November 1894, occupied to the last with his labours on *The Portfolio* and other writings on art."

THE STUDIO

Father has finished remodeling the house. The studio, flanked by its turret, is on the top floor. One of its ends fronts on the old Moutier Road. It is a large room, about thirty-six feet wide by twenty-four long. It covers over half of the area of the third floor which is on the same level as the land back of the house, from which it is separated by a deep corridor. This corridor was dug to eliminate dampness due to contact of the rear wall with the earth of the side hill. To permit access to the rear a bridge has been built from the studio to land across this moat-like excavation. On the bridge side, the roof is half glazed giving a magnificent North skylight.

With his turret at one end and his bridge at the other end of his studio Father feels like a lord in his castle. Yet the resemblance stops there for the inside is most un-castle like. A jumble of easels, canvases, casts, draperies, ill-hidden packing boxes, a small table serving as desk for his correspondence or verse writing are more or less grouped in intricate patterns yet not unpleasant to look at. There is no attempt at symmetry but rather towards something more subtle: harmonious asymmetry which, through the eye, inspires the brain to create beautiful things.

This is the place where he works at his compositions based on sketches, and studies made in the field or from models. As long as I am quiet I can move in or out as I please. It never seems to disturb him.

I am still a little fellow and want to be a painter like Daddy, so, having climbed laboriously the two flights of stairs, loaded with paper, pencil and watercolors, I emerge into the large rafted room. The blue sky shows through the skylight. The brightness almost dazzles me after the gloom of the winding stairway. I breathe with deep pleasure the marvelous perfume of a studio, a blend of aromatic oils, essences, paints, varnishes, dust of draperies from the orient, straws and weeds gleaned from fields and meadows.

I pause for an instant to see what is going on. Father is painting a figure study for his picture, "By the Ægean Sea." His eyes move from the canvas towards a platform about one foot high. On it a fair girl stands, her blond hair done up in a knot at the back of her head. In front of her she holds a lyre, or rather, a cardboard model of one, on which are strung rather loosely three or four pieces of fine twine. Her right hand fingers are plucking these soundless strings.

To get the final position of the model has been no little trouble, particularly in regard to the lyre. Father, to begin with, has never played a lyre. Neither for that matter has Mlle. Suzette who never suspected that there was such an instrument. For all she knew it might have been some kind of pitchfork, such as peasants use for haying. Nevertheless she accepts Monsieur's say-so. Her experiences have taught her that artists always get where they wish to go, though their methods may appear disconcerting. The gropings towards a satisfactory position of arms, fingers and breast is helped by a combination of dimly remembered pictures and by the odd suggestion from Mlle. Suzette who turns her intelligent hazel eyes towards Father seeming to ask "This way?" Finally, mostly by dint of imagination on Father's part and willingness on the part of his model, they have managed to strike what they think is the posture of a young lady walking and at the same time playing a lyre. Obviously, with my presently more mature outlook somewhat dispelling these youthful illusions, it would have been difficult for even an experienced shepherdess to have walked, chin in the air, at dusk, across rough pasture land, without tripping. To have attempted to play a lyre at the same time would have been to invite disaster, especially with a flock of silly sheep treading on one's heels.

After numberless trials, raising, lowering, arms fingers, legs, as if he were handling one of the large dolls one sees in display windows, Father makes tentative sketches of Mlle. Suzette, before deciding finally on

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

the main composition. When this is arrived at, he will paint her draped figure knowing where limbs and torso fit and articulate, thus giving the picture a structural foundation impossible to obtain otherwise. Of course Mlle. Suzette's slimness is somewhat of a problem. According to the standards of that period her figure leans to the scrawny. So Father has realized from the first. However he figures out that this can be remedied without too much difficulty in the final composition. A liberal use of draperies, a broader smear of the brush here and there will easily amplify body curves to comply with the exacting specifications of the last decade of the century.

None of these things interest me very much as I cross the floor. Mlle. Suzette, one leg forward, the other just lifting off the ground keeps staring ahead, her two arms extended with the cardboard lyre. Father, the remnant of a dead cigarette hanging from his mouth, does not see me. I do not give a second glance either way. The fact that this young woman is stripped like Eve before the fig-leaves episode makes absolutely no impression on me. Much more to my liking is the large book I am headed for, illustrating in color all periods of dress, utensils, armaments and armor from Nebuchadnezzar to Napoleon. With a sigh of content I open the volume and finger the leaves, pausing at choice morceaux of scenes of past ages, some pastoral, some violent.

On the walls, tacked insects, butterflies, gaudy and grotesquely shaped, prints from Japan or China, various black and whites. On a table are a jumble of casts including the famous flayed man, displaying muscles as he holds his agonized head. In a corner is a box containing a sheep's head obtained from the butcher; it is covered with coarse salt to prevent its too rapid decay. It is one of several that Father will sketch after Mlle. Suzette has gone. From Grecian Beauty to sheep's head, the artist moves his composition forward by various stages.

Rest. Father calls time for a few minutes. The model lays down the pasteboard lyre, stretches her arms, drapes herself in a kimono. Although it is summer a little clothing is comforting.

Father notices that his pendant cigarette is out; he rolls another from a yellow package of Government monopoly tobacco, a brand called Maryland. He passes package and papers to Mlle. Suzette; she deftly rolls her own with the same slim fingers which played the lyre.

All at once he notes my presence. He calls upon me for a criticism; I am obliged to say something: even my childish eyes may spot defects in the sketch. He draws me out while Suzette puffs her cigarette, politely indifferent to our conversation.

Time's up, the kimono slips off, Suzette's on the platform. Another go at the picture.

I decide to work too. My efforts consist in painting sail-boats on a blue sea whose shore is cluttered, with yellow irises. No sheep, no shepherdesses. They are quite beyond me. The sail-boats are those I saw on our travels, the iris were observed growing wild on the banks of the Oise. Their merit is that the leaves are easy to draw; so is the flower, with its three loops, one up, two hanging down. I do not bother copying one of the many pictures in the large studio, I just make up, out of my imagination.

I too must have a rest. I go to the little turret, hanging out, as it were, from the corner of the house, topped with its swinging weather vane. From there I see most of Les Vallées. Directly opposite is the rise from whence the horn player sends his notes to us at dusk; almost below is Daubigny's villa, Dubac's farm, Gilpin's two room cottage. The cocks are crowing each in turn, endlessly, systematically. I am tempted to join in with my own crow, taking turn after Dubac's big red and gold rooster, but I know it would disturb Father, so I forego this pleasure and return to books or to sketches.

Call for lunch. The little Hindu temple bell sounds from below. Father feverishly intensifies his rapid

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

strokes. As soon as he hears this sound he sees one little thing more, then another and another...a half hour goes. He has forgotten the first bell. But I have not missed its significance. My immediate departure has not been noticed any more than my arrival. The second bell goes without results. Mother sends me up with the message that everything is getting cold. Regretfully Father sets his brushes aside. Gladly, Mlle. Suzette steps off the posing platform. While Father fusses with his tools she assumes again her modesty and gets behind a screen to dress. In a trice she is ready, simply but stylishly, as Paris itself.

We all sit together at lunch. Father tries to furnish the conversation with classical allusions to the Ægean sea, lyres, philosophers, in fluent but garbled French. What if French genders are alternated and a few corners chipped off its grammar? Great thoughts are there, expressed in a limpid, fascinating language, the language of Art, whose grammar is Beauty. Mother is busy serving the children, however, and watching covertly blonde Suzette. Blonde Suzette doesn't give a damn and digs into the excellent country food and wine, thinking how good it will feel to be back on Boul' Mich sitting with her Pierre or Paul on the terrasse of some little café, when she gets away from all this unentertaining country atmosphere. As to myself I eat quietly without planning much except that I will not return to the studio this afternoon. I intend to go into the little grove at the back of the house to climb trees and, swaying in the wind, to join the rooster chorus of Les Vallées, which tempted me this morning when I leaned from the little turret. Lunch is over. Father looks at his model, fingers itching for the brush..."Bien," says he, "retournons à nos moutons."

CHEZ MADAME DAUBIGNY

A few weeks after our return to Auvers from Chicago, on a lovely, sunny day in May, Father, accompanied by Fifille, Yvonne and myself went down the Moutier road, turned to the left along the Vallées road and stopped at a little red door which was ensconced in a high stone wall covered with ivy. There he pulled a brass rod and the bell inside, motivated by a spiral of steel shaped like a watch-spring, but possibly ten inches in diameter, set up a diabolical din. A maid let us in.

We had never suspected that there could be such a beautiful place behind the old ivy covered stonewall. To the right, clumps of lilac bushes, ivy, bleeding hearts, greeted us. The walks were of clear gravel full of fossil shells and transparent moonstones. The low house was covered with Virginia creeper along its side wall up to the front which faced away from the street, where it was covered with climbing roses, pink and most fragrant. A high stone stairway led to a piazza from which we could see lawns, lilacs, tops of trees and Charles François Daubigny's old boat, the "Buttin," sat on the lawn opposite the house.

Madame Daubigny greeted us at the front door. She was a florid, buxom lady of some forty years who always seemed to smile and to breathe good humor. Most fond of children, she hugged us effusively. We adored her instantly. She took us in to the hall, or peristyle, a large room floored with large square tile, black and white, like a checker board. Around it, on the walls, were pictures of all sorts: Don Quichotte and Sancho Panza, landscapes which, I learned since, were painted by the old master's painter friends, masters themselves. Thence we went into the studio, a fairyland of curios placed by painters into a disordered yet harmonious heap. A stuffed crow hovered over all suspended by a wire. Two cabinets contained toys which Mme. Daubigny promptly showed us. Of these the Harlequin was a favorite. It worked like a jumping jack as Mme. Daubigny sang:

"Tiens, c't'arlequin,
Qui s'pique une têt'dans l'pot d'chambre,
Tiens c't'arlequin,
Le v'la qui s'y trempe les mains!"

With each beat she made Harlequin do its gestures as per the song; "le sale patissier!" she pouted. Father laughed hesitatingly, but we kids roared. This gallic humor was the real stuff and we enjoyed it thoroughly.

However, Father was here for business, so we were chased into the grounds in front and found plenty to amuse us. In order to prevent our going out of sight we were told to avoid the back of the house where dwelt a "serpent ^ sonnettes." We children had never heard of such a thing. Fifille and I tried in vain to imagine a reptile with a bell on its tail. Fear was mixed with curiosity. We did not then know about rattlesnakes or their habitat, except Mme. Daubigny's statement that there was one at the back of the house and another in the small marble pool beyond the "Bottin."

We decided to play safe and stuck around the front, which was just what the grown-ups desired. So we gathered shells and stones to play store while Father was inside discussing the purchase of pictures with Mme. Daubigny.

She practically gave him the run of the place. On subsequent visits I often accompanied him in his rummaging of dark corners, including a storage shed, where the most extraordinary heap of paintings, old canvas, stretchers and masses of junk were piled.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Among other things in this mess, Father discovered a human leg and foot wrapped in brownish cloth. Madame Daubigny said it was part of a mummy which her husband Karl had bought on a voyage in Egypt. She added that Karl played with this gruesome object and balanced it upright on the palm of his hand, in the studio, for the edification of his Bohemian friends. Poor Karl, his macabre fun did not last long; an early death took him off at his prime. Mme. Daubigny had discarded the mummy leg to this musty old shed. When Father showed interest in it, she was glad to give it to him. But I, in my insistent curiosity for this object which gave me the creeps, soon realized it was actually the leg of a corpse. The fact that it was two or three thousand years old had no meaning for me; there it was, the leg of someone, out of a grave, be it from here, Egypt or the moon for that matter. Father did not improve matters by giving a learned discussion of the process of mummification. I was terrified. I had nightmares. Father therefore, in the presence of Fifille and myself took the poor Egyptian leg and buried it near a rubbish heap "derrière la maison." We noted the hole was good and deep and soon had no more feeling for it than for the graves in the village cemetery. However Father kept a bit of the cloth which he had unwrapped from around this leg and tacked it on the studio wall. I shuddered every time I looked at it.

Apart from these business transactions and the digressions therefrom we found that Mme. Daubigny really had fallen for us. She insisted that we return that afternoon. We did; Fifille, Yvonne and I went across the road and rather timidly pulled the bell. Madame or her maid let us in. We scooted past the lair of the "serpent," went to the front of the house where Madame entertained us with song, toys or let us play.

She made us necklaces with the red berries of the woodbine; she even played "Guignol" (Punch and Judy) for us at one of the windows. Promptly at four we got a bite to eat: bread and chocolate, washed down with water in which licorice roots had soaked, giving it a fragrant taste.

In the late afternoon we went home. For several years we followed this routine, being sent home only when we were really naughty. I say "we" but I was the only one to whom this unpleasantness happened. Fifille and Yvonne were always good.

As time went on Mme. Daugigny took us in more and more. We saw the rest of the house, the dining room also decorated by well-known painters with fruit, fowl and a marvelous fishing scene showing the bottom of a pool with huge fish crowding around a hooked worm, but nary a one biting. Further along were the rooms of Henriette Daubigny, daughter of the artist. These were decorated with games, birds and fairy tale subjects such as Tom-o'my thumb, Red Riding Hood. The wall near her bed was painted into a huge hawthorn tree with a nest full of birds.

We would also go into the kitchen where Madame either supervised the cooking or cooked herself such meals as the French only can prepare. There, in a pail of water, was the bottle of wine cooling for the next meal, carefully chosen by Bernard Daubigny, brother-in-law of Madame Daubigny. He was a dark, bearded man, of rather delicate health in spite of his appearance. He seemed perpetually ailing of one thing or another. I suspect he smoked too many of the strong French cigarettes rolled by Mme. Daubigny -- this made him cough giving him the idea that he had chronic bronchitis. More probably Mme. Daubigny's excellent meals made him over indulge in gormandizing unrelieved by much exercise. The result was indigestion. And so the poor man went from bronchitis, to "palpitations" and "dilatations" according to seasons and vintages.

For Monsieur Bernard had a good "cave." His cellar consisted of several hundred, perhaps several thousand bottles of various wines chosen from regions where the year's vintage was best. Each year the consultations regarding the various spots of France favored by good wine crops took much absorbing thought and searchings. Eventually several casks of about forty gallons each would be delivered either at Les Vallées or at their other house near the station where Monsieur Bernard attended himself to the rites of bottling after

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

the wine had been given a chance to settle. He trusted no one else. First of all whites of eggs were beaten and introduced into the barrel through the bung. Then the wine was carefully stirred. This was called “coller le vin” or “making it sticky.” The object was to gather odd specks of suspended matter and clarify it. After more time had been allowed for settling the tap was introduced, corks were soaked, and Monsieur Bernard, dressed in a butler’s blue apron, appeared on the scene ready to officiate like a priest of the religion of good living. The long job of filling and corking proceeded until the lees were reached. The wine bottles were then stored away carefully after being labelled.

At the approach of lunch time Monsieur Bernard, held a serious conference with Mme. Daubigny. As a result of the decision arrived at he would rummage around in his wine cellar and emerge with a cobwebby bottle to be placed in a pail of cold water in the kitchen, where it would cool off while Madame either supervised or cooked herself --Têtes de veaux, Rosbif, Canneltons (ducklings), fromage de Port-Salut, Sauce remoulade, Pets-de-Nonnes and what not.

Monsieur Bernard occasionally did a little cooking himself: he had his specialties -- french fried potatoes, mayonnaise sauce, and “friture de Seine” which may be described as a “fry of minnow.” To our youthful nostrils it smelled delicious; Madame occasionally invited one of us to stay for lunch when good Bernard insisted on lecturing us on the vintages with practical demonstrations. The usual half-inch of wine at the bottom of our glasses, he insisted should be at least a full inch. The rest was, of course, water. I felt somewhat heavy after these meals but after playing quietly on the grass or in the sand for a while it wore off. I don’t believe these early partakings of the vintages of France ever did me any harm. As to drinking water alone, in France, it was scorned and suspected as being the evidence of a poor, diseased mind, if not a form of dangerous insanity. Few peasants were so poor that they could not afford at least cider. But water -- never. Alone it was shunned like poison, inwardly and outwardly.

Madame Daubigny held one organized celebration a year. It was on the occasion of St. Bernard’s day, at the end of August.³³ She outdid herself then in gathering friends around Bernard for a dinner held in his late Father’s studio. A large table was set upon trestles, chairs were brought from all parts of the house. Bottles from the cobwebbiest corners were sought out. Mlle. Bourges prepared place cards for the feast. I still have most of mine.

Mlle. Bourges also composed a song for the occasion of which the meaning runs somewhat like this:

“Of our kind friend Bernard
This is the Saint’s name day
To celebrate it now
We’ve gathered here so gay
Children are stuffing cake
And jam and candy too
And we’re most happy all
To toast our friend anew.”

Generally the dinner ended with all participants in a state of torpor from good eating and drinking.

On one occasion however things did not turn out so well. Bernard’s favorite dish was calf’s head. This delicacy was at first pickled by the butcher in brine, or some other liquid. How it was cooked I

³³ According to “Saints Preserve Us” by Sean Kelly & Rosemary Rogers (Random House, 1993), August 20 is the day for Bernard of Clairvaux, “...born in 1090, the scion of Burgundian nobility...” and patron of “bees, beekeepers, candle makers, Gibraltar, wax melting.” The book also lists a Bernard Tolomei whose day is August 21. He was born in Siena in 1272 and is the patron of olive growers.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

do not recollect, but I do know that it was borne into the feast carried high on a platter with nosegays in ears, nose and mouth, somewhat like a boar's head. On this occasion everything seemed in perfect order. The proud servant set the poor calf's headpiece in front of Bernard. It was the target of all eyes. He began to carve. So far, so good. One of the first helpings went to a Mr. B. Noses were already twitching so Bernard kindly waved ceremony and gave leave to start eating.

"Allons, attaquez..." said he.

Poor Mr. B! The mouthful was scarcely in his mouth when he erupted. "Pouh!" was all he could say. Everything stopped. Then all of a sudden the reason for nose twitchings was clear to everyone. The calf had his post-mortem revenge. The pickling had lasted too long or had been too weak. Dog-days heat had also done its work. There was an uproar. The offensive head was toted out amid the maledictions of all, not least of whom Bernard. The rest of the meal was a scrappy affair as tinned or preserved stuff provided an unsatisfactory filler.

The most comical part of it was the seriousness with which Mr. B. had anticipated eating calf's head. He kept repeating:

"And I who counted on regaling myself!"

But it was a case where the calf had turned the tables on us.

In this way the Daubigny's, with their artists gone, lived the life of "rentier-bourgeois."³⁴ The principal aim being good, solid, comfortable living. But as I haunted studio, rooms, gardens, I felt that something was missing. Perhaps it was the jolly souls of the two jovial painters, Father and son, who whispered their nostalgia into my little ears...

After I became proficient in reading, good Madame Daubigny suggested little volumes printed in the style of 1750 or so; s's were printed as f's, but I managed to decipher these, plunging unawares into the stories of the Thousand and One Nights, a land of make-believe that I had never suspected to exist. I may say it was almost a shock. Pleasures as great, but never greater have I had, than to sit under flowering Persian lilac trees in spring, accompanying Scheherazade and her heroes or heroines through their astounding adventures. The number of volumes was almost as endless as the nights themselves. They were handed to me one at a time, fairyland within fairyland. The only condition was that I could read them only at the Daubigny's Villa in the Vallées. I could not take them home.

In winter, Les Vallées being too extensive to be properly heated, M. and Mme. Daubigny occupied another house they owned near the station. The move was quite simple. A trunk or two, a few hand-bags were sent by some delivery wagon. Some day, when we were out of school, was chosen and we walked the odd half-mile to their winter home with their dog tagging along.

There also they had a large garden for us to play in, although it never seemed to me to breathe the freedom of Les Vallées. It contained one or two columns of white marble and a stone coffin of the Gallo Roman period which had contained the remains of a centurion or some other officer and which had been found during the excavation of the house foundations. All these relics were a never ceasing source of fearful wonder to me. I could not help but try in imagination to figure out the form of whomever this casket had enclosed. I even imagined myself in his place, attempting to relive his conscious self in retrograde movement of time. These day-dreams always came to an end there, at this stone coffin. The officer had lived on this pleasant bit

³⁴ "rentier" – someone whose income comes from rents.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

of land in some marble villa. The fragments of columns were all that was left. Sometimes I think that youth feels these things more than older folk. As we approach our fate we get more indifferent to it as if kindly nature anaesthetized our minds to facilitate our departure.

But at that time my desire of life was tremendous and these relics appeared like veiled threats two thousand years old.

There were other things to attract our interest. Vines on which golden grapes ripened were stretched on the walls. Mme. Daubigny occasionally gave us small clusters which we nibbled appreciatively. Shading the short columns were large apricot and plum trees visited in summer, for the crop. We were allowed to eat the windfalls, a great feast for us. On the whole I am surprised that we did not take more fruit without permission; the temptation was terrific.

Towards the front there was a bit of woodland; violets grew profusely there in early spring giving us many a pleasant hour gathering them into fragrant bouquets. They were mostly mauve colored, the violet colored ones being fewer in this place. As the reverse was the case in most woods, I think they had been planted and had spread around.

The front of the property was fenced by high steel pointed pickets through which we looked upon the railway station and the road leading to it. When we were tired of playing or gathering flowers we watched the traffic on this road for hours. Odd trains, freight and passenger, stopped, started or went by. Various wagons came to unload freight, consisting of everything from machinery to manure. The carters moving the latter commodity had the most profane line of swearing imaginable and little Robert Cossin, son of the Doctor next door, had their full vocabulary by heart. He used it at every opportunity to the great distress of all who heard him, including his mother. She was a young woman, proud, beautiful, reserved and always very stylishly dressed. She was a most devout church attendant and beautifully mannered so that her little boy's horrible bursts must have affected her most painfully. I must say that I did not like them either although I did not mind them on the part of the carters. It was natural to them.

Besides these entertainments we saw the first horseless carriages through this fence. Before our eyes they went, shaped like their horse-drawn predecessors as if, when the frequent stoppages occurred, the ghosts of shadowy horses might help. As a matter of fact this was probably the reason for these early designs, as they frequently ended by being restored to their old form of active power. Some of them were even provided with a whip socket, a feature showing a lamentable lack of faith in the future of the automobile.

Robert Cossin and his sister Suzanne often came to play with us. I used to bully Robert but liked Suzanne, although her cold little high-bred ways somewhat chilled my budding enthusiasm for her undeniable beauty.

Here also Monsieur Bernard had his little cellar of choice vintages. This was no doubt one incentive for the move from Summer to Fall. It permitted him to taste a different line of wines from those at Les Vallées. The food also changed with the seasons although we did not pay any attention to that when we were invited for lunch; we were too hungry.

This move provided a change in reading matter. The endless Thousand and One Nights having been left at Les Vallées. I looked for new books and Bernard Daubigny introduced me to Jules Verne's books. With this new wonderland opened, I could hardly be dragged outside. Monsieur Bernard, who liked to take his walks daily with us, soon dropped me for sister Fiffille who became his constant companion. Her beautiful golden hair arrested attention wherever they went and he felt flattered when folk thought she might be his daughter. At least he thought they did, though how such an idea ever entered his black-bearded head is more

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

than I can understand.

In spite of this I was still frequently a party to these walks. The hours fitted the objective, some café or other, where Monsieur Bernard could get his *apéritif* in the morning or his four o'clock snack in the afternoon.

The morning walk as a rule was headed towards a road house on the banks of the Oise run by a man named Firmin. Or we went to Butry, Valmondois, Chaponval, all on or near the Oise.

We followed the banks of this beautiful river, along the tow road, to reach these places. There were boats and tow-horses, sometimes tugs which the French call wasp-boats (*bateaux-guêpes*). Bernard had his stick, long stride and Dick, the shepherd-dog. Unlike Father, who stopped frequently to look for landscape subjects, Bernard kept going. This is probably one reason why I did not enjoy very much accompanying him. At the inn, wherever it was, he ordered his Malaga wine, if it was morning or his "ordinaire" red wine in the afternoon. For us children he ordered grenadine syrup and water. Then he gave us each half a bar of Menier's chocolate and a piece of bread, if it was afternoon. As likely as not he treated the owner. They gossiped endlessly, tiring me as I sat in the café waiting for the time to get back to Jules Verne's or Scheherazade's tales. My fidgeting must have become noticeable because I was urged less and less to go on these walks while Fiffille became more and more Bernard's companion.

As to Yvonne, she generally stayed with Mme. Bégon, Mme. Daubigny's mother who was crippled with "pains." I realize now that what she had was arthritis. Yvonne's unending good humor and patience gave the old bed-ridden lady much joy in her declining years.

Of course Mme. Daubigny's fine hospitality was much appreciated by us all, particularly by our Mother who was glad to have a few hour's quiet to go on errands or straighten out the house. Two babies (Henry and John) were plenty to handle anyway.

ESCAPADES

As I grew older I began to tire of the restrictions of Mme. Daubigny's beautiful gardens. Another annoyance to me was that Mme. Daubigny's neighbor called Appoline seemed to watch us without cease from her little house. I found this out one day when I slipped out of Les Vallées's back door into her garden, apparently unguarded. My objectives were pears, trellised on Appoline's wall. I never made a bigger mistake. My approach was cautious enough but I had no sooner reached for the luscious fruit when bedlam broke loose. Appoline was shouting "Help! murder! police!" as if my childish hands were at her throat instead of at the stems of a pear or two. At first I was paralyzed with fear and surprise but the very racket she made drew attention to her instead of to me. Neighbors rushed to their perches including Mme. Daubigny asking her what the trouble was. I made a dive for the hidden door which I had left cautiously ajar. Crawling and running I found my way to another part of the garden unobserved, though a slight time lag made my alibi a poor one. As no damage was done all went home somewhat unconvinced regarding Appoline's sanity or my pretended innocence.

This incident made me dislike the feeling of being constantly watched and, though I had less of interest in our own bit of garden, feeling more freedom there, I frequented it more and more. Sometimes even Fiffille and Yvonne stayed with me.

It was on one of these occasions that I conceived the plan of going to a certain sand pit two or three miles away from our house, which we called the Shell Quarry³⁵ and which contained many attractions for us.

To begin with the sand itself was full of fossil shells of many varieties. In the spring, lily of the valley and blue hyacinth grew there, wild, profuse and fragrant under the trees which surrounded the pit among which were wild chestnuts.

It was late summer, the chestnuts were at least formed and though rather acrid still perfectly edible for my sisters and myself. The more I thought of them the more I desired those chestnuts. I began to plot. Fiffille and Yvonne were all for it. The execution of the plan was simple enough. We usually were left alone back of the house from lunch to supper so that it was easy enough to slip out and come back in a few hours. But what to do with Henry who was only three? He could not walk that far and he would be sure to squall if we should leave him behind.

I could not solve this difficulty for a long time but luck helped me. Henry was invited to lunch at the Daubigny's. That was it! There he would be out of the way. Unfortunately he knew our plans so we made him swear by all that we could think of that he would tell no one about them. So organized, after our own lunch was over, we went behind the house thence to disappear into the ways and byways of Auvers' plain and meadows. I knew the road from a former expedition with Father. Without lingering we arrived at the pit perhaps three-quarters of an hour after leaving home. It was hardly after one; the girls proceeded to collect shells while I climbed the trees to pick prickly burrs and threw them down. We broke them open with stones to find the chestnuts inside. They were just turning brown but were mostly white or yellowish. To our joy this did not interfere particularly with their edibility and we enjoyed eating them thus, raw and unripe.

During this time Henry attended lunch at the Daubigny's but, as this affair became unduly extended, as was usual, Henry became restive. Finally he asked to return home. Mme. Daubigny became suspicious of this unusual hurry. She questioned him. Oh, he wanted to go with the others. "Go where?" persisted Mme.

³⁵ "Carrière Coquillage"

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Daubigny. "Why to the Shell Quarry, of course!" The fat was in the fire. Mme. Daubigny, alarmed, ran across the road to our place with Henry.

Mme. Daubigny could be dramatic. In a trice she had those woods full of robbers like the lament we knew:

"In Toulouse woods,
In Toulouse woods,
Robbers are there!"

The song related further that the young hero's throat was eventually heartlessly slit. Mother's heart stopped beating. She went to the back of the house. The groves and slopes of grass were empty of children, a swinging door showed their exit.

Without a word, clasping Baby Henry, she went on and on till she reached the sand pit. About at that time, we were absorbed in the feast of chestnuts. A shout greeted us. It was Mother and Henry. I was stunned. My chagrin was unbounded.

"Why did you come here?" asked Mother.

"To get chestnuts and shells."

"Don't you know there are tramps around these woods who would slit our throats for two cents?"

Having seen the lurid illustrations of crimes in the yellow newspapers of that time I was quite terrified and was all for decamping at once. This was what Mother wished, but she lingered nevertheless in the beautiful quiet place to gather a few ferns and bulbs -- oblivious of my real fright, thoroughly stirred up. Finally, to my relief she started for home; I only stopped looking over my shoulder for tramps who might kill us for two cents when we went through our gate though I suspect Mother probably had no money with her. It was most likely to be hidden in the house. I was not to escape unpunished. The day was beautiful, it was only four or so. I was sent to bed. For entertainment Maman gave me a new testament to read and I was soon absorbed in the wonderful story of Saul of Tarsus which reconciled me to my fate. I did not question Henry's part in this disastrous ending; he was after all a Baby; however I could not drive from my mind the suspicion that

Mme. Daubigny had given me away and I tended more and more to stay on our own grounds, though Mother gradually allowed me to roam outside these boundaries as I grew older.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

From the preceding relation of Jules the Chick's construction and of visits by interesting people it may be gathered that our summer of 1893 was a busy one. Nevertheless, in between all this excitement, I managed to sandwich a trip to Jersey with Mother's sister, Aunt Alice, whom I called Tantante. She was a year or two more than thirty, dark, pretty, vivacious and most attractive. As related before she had been courted by a Mr. Spencer, artist-friend of Father's, but had refused his proposals.

She spoilt me, and I loved her nearly as much as Mother. On this trip she outdid herself in showing me all the beautiful spots of Jersey. I became acquainted with Uncle Henry, Mother's brother, at whose house we stayed. There were also his wife Esther, and my cousins Cecile and Marguerite, two fascinating little girls. We played on the sands of St. Helier's. We visited all sort of relatives among who were my grand uncle, Philippe le Neveu, brother of my grandmother, "Mémère." There were also the Mourants who owned a large garden full of pear trees bearing delicious pears. We went to the old castle "Mont-Orgueil," scene of Father and Mother's courtship, at the foot of which my uncle's partner had rented a martello tower, where we boiled shrimps caught on the low, tidal flats. After the picnic cards were played. It was a very fatigued boy who got on board the toy train for our journey back to St. Helier's.

This heavenly holiday ended; we returned by way of St. Malo. I was a good sailor by then and enjoyed the trip and its conclusion, with all the bells of the St. Malo Churches ringing for some religious festival as we made port.

We returned very happy but found Mother quite ill. She had contracted an inflammation of the liver and pleurisy. Under Tantante's nursing she soon recovered, however.

In the meantime Father was most busy with his lithographs. He had drawn Mr. Keppel's portrait in this medium during the latter's stay at Auvers. It is an excellent and very realistic likeness showing this gentleman holding a portfolio of prints. Mr. Keppel was very pleased with this portrait according to his letters at that time.

Unfortunately, in a way, Father's first success of sales in New York encouraged him in making further purchases of paintings. He had the speculative spirit just as much as any Wall Street operator might, which was more than bolstered by a deep love for good painting which doubled his desire for acquisition. Sundry dealers were not slow to place tempting morsels before him with most enticing letters to urge him. A lady-dealer, Mme. B., wrote him about "Occasion unique!" She had arrived two minutes after he had left her store and had run in vain after Father right across the Pont des Arts. The sight of this fat lady running after her prospect must have been worth watching. Her show of zeal was probably rewarded later. At any rate beautiful canvases kept coming to Auvers, one after the other. Most of them were placed in what we called the library.

How gorgeous these works seemed to me when Father hung them after a painstaking process of cleaning. As he studied them he would invariably point out some peculiarity of the painting or of the painter who had done it, giving me the opportunity of absorbing a liking and a recognition of the works of all the principal schools of painters, especially the Barbizon men, his favorites.

At this period many Oriental art products from Asia Minor and from Algeria came on the market. He bought many of these at very reasonable figures and covered vacant spaces of the walls with rich rugs, camel bands, saddle bags, etc., while on the floors, prayer rugs and carpets were spread among antique pieces of

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

furniture.

Since this was the library, book shelves were filled with ancient volumes in leather bindings, picked up on the Seine "Quais." Father spent hours reading them, calling to me to listen to passages that appealed particularly to him -- to which, I am sorry to say I listened with a rather "distract" ear.

At the same time, as he steadily spent money buying pictures he also succumbed to the desire for aggrandizement of his property. In this he always said he was urged by Mother who got him to buy the old house opposite us, across the lane. It belonged to Marie Pique who lived with her daughter and goats in what seemed, even to my young judgment, utter filth and penury. She was quite unabashed by any one and very "sans gêne" with Mother who conceived a great dislike for her. Father bought this property including the cherry-tree lot for 1200 francs and had the house torn down by Jules the Chick who again favored us with his songs and nose blowing when this was being done. During the demolition numerous coins were found one of which as stated before dated as far back as Charles VIII of France, showing that the house had stood there since the Middle Ages at least. Father left the first floor standing and had it covered with hard cement. He built square ornamental pillars around this terrace on which Mother set potted geraniums of all colors giving the whole structure a very pleasing appearance. Under this cement floor old cellars, formerly used for stabling Marie Pique's goats, damp and musty, were left as they were. Stone steps led down to them. They were used by us for little else but the storage of wine casks from which we drew our wine in pitcherfuls for lunch or dinner. The aroma of these ancient cellars used for centuries for storing roots, goats, wine, cider or anything else was, to say the least, unusual.

The demolition improved the property vastly. The house could now be seen, and have light. Father subsequently mentioned that he had had many misgivings regarding this enlargement but, all considered, I am certain that he succumbed to the temptation rather easily.

The level of the garden was well above the road level. A retaining wall some three or four yards high held the dirt and kept our privacy. It overlooked the Daubigny property, "Villa des Vallées" where we often played.

By dint of filling and grading good soil became accumulated. Loads of manure were drawn to fertilize it. In one corner a little kiosk was constructed using locust tree logs for posts and thatch for a roof.

This garden was Mother's own little realm. Father bought her apricot and cherry trees which in a year or two bore fruit. Alleys were made separating the ground into beds. Mother gave each of us children a small patch to cultivate as our own. She taught us the fun of gardening from the early consultations of the catalogue of Vilmorin-Andrieux, the seeds merchants, to the cleaning of beds after the first killing frost.

Early sowings were made in boxes, watched daily thereafter for signs of germination. There is a great thrill and wonder in seeing the first green shoot appear above ground. There is no greater exponent of continuous life than this rhythmic emergence of active life from dormant life. Its consciousness may be somnolent for a time but in the same way as it is differentiated in the seed, so it becomes integrated again in the new plant. Mother and we children bent over these shallow boxes of dirt fascinated by this stage of plant evolution. She never philosophized about it. She was lost in wonder. I do not know what attracted me the most, the actual event of germination or the rapt look in her face.

When the seedlings were large enough we transplanted them in beds. Aster, marigold, calendula, eschscholzia,³⁶ salpiglossis, stocks, gilliflowers. Other plants were sown in the open -- sweet alyssum,

³⁶ California Poppy. The typed draft is hard to read but appears to list it as "aescholtzia"

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

mignonette borders, coreopsis, poppies. There were perennials too, blue iris, fleur-de-lis, dahlias, wall-flower, and, when frost had cut down everything, the hardy chrysanthemum persisted into winter.

When in full bloom the blossoms combined into an unbelievable fragrance, so sweet, so powerful, so expressing the passionate love of flower for flower. It was the vibrant period of life recreating itself that stirred the air so. Bees, butterflies, hornets, hovered around whirring the pollenized air with the fans of their wings.

Hardly understanding the strange feeling aroused in me, I breathed, I listened, in a magical, almost hypnotized state of mind, in Mother's flower garden.

MEDICAL ATTENTION

The year 1894 opened under prosperous auspices. The home in Auvers was completed. Attractive neighbors made the country pleasant. The studio in Paris at 235 Faubourg St. Honoré was shared with Checa.

Dated early in the year a letter from Atherton Curtis, author and dilettante in art matters, especially black and white, referred to Father's lithograph of the church at Auvers. He wrote: "So completely have you avoided all those difficulties that there is no fault to find with your lithograph in any way...you have made a masterpiece of it."

The winter was cold. My Grandmother Ahier mentioned snow in Jersey, a most unusual occurrence. This cold weather did not improve matters for Father who suffered considerably from toothache. From one of Mr. Keppel's letters I gather it was an ulcerated tooth which caused the trouble. This matter brings up the fact that our dentist, M. Claise, lived in a little town up the Oise called l'Isle-Adam. His waiting and operating room were full of curios from Indo-China where he had fought during the French colonial war. Among other souvenirs he carried a scar over one eye, the result of the whack of a Black Flag's sword during some fight. His life had begun and ended with his war adventures which he never tired of relating while drilling our teeth or extracting. Now Indo-China is practically in the hands of the Japanese³⁷ and Claise's curios are probably ornamenting some Berlin apartment.

I often accompanied my parents on their unpleasant visits to the little town where our physician Dr. Vanier also had his office. It seemed drab enough to me, with its monument on which were listed the names of French soldiers "morts au champ d'honneur" during a battle fought against the Prussians in 1870, to prevent these latter from crossing the Oise. More Frenchmen died from this town in 1914 and more in 1940 and now the Germans are in occupation.

Dr. Vanier, had seen the battle and loved to tell us about it again and again. For some days prior to the battle, he related, he and his friends had observed a more or less orderly withdrawal of French forces. They realized that the next troops to appear on the scene would be German.

Opposite l'Isle-Adam was the little hamlet of Parmain. The two were only a short distance apart. They were separated by a bridge across the quietly flowing, poplar bordered River Oise.

It appears that Parmain formed a bridgehead for the French defense. Thus the action which took place was divided in two principal episodes, the first being the defense of Parmain, the second the defense of the bridge. Among the defenders of Parmain were a number of civilian inhabitants or "francs tireurs."³⁸

Dr. Vanier related that, in the early hours of that day, he heard the crackling of rifle fire from Parmain. He realized that the Prussian army was now completing one of the links of its encirclement of Paris. L'Isle-Adam itself seemed deserted, all houses were shuttered; not a soul was to be seen on the streets. Firing went on intermittently for an hour or two to be followed by a period of silence. Dr. Vanier went to the top story of his house, as high as he could, and peered towards Parmain through the shutter blades. A vast billow of smoke rising in his direction apprised him of the worst. Parmain was captured and was burning.

³⁷ French Indo-China was occupied by the Japanese during World War II in 1941

³⁸ "tireur" means a shooter, a gunman

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

The houses of this hamlet, he learnt afterward, were set on fire, all but one, where an old woman lived. Knowing the village doomed, during the fusilade of the battle she had baked all the cookies and pies she could. She had sat them upon a large table in her kitchen, ready to eat, with glasses and pitchers of cider for refreshment. Then, as the columns of storming spike-helmeted Prussians had burst wildly into the village, mad with battle lust as troops are after a heavy resistance, she had fled. Systematically each building was broken into and searched for men by the victorious Germans. A few huddled peasant boys were thus caught and lined up against a stone wall.

At that moment the platoon left in charge of the village came upon the old woman's home. The door was open. Cautiously they went in. No one was there but that loaded table, seeming to beckon. A few bolder ones tasted the fare with some misgivings. No ill results followed and soon the troops were enjoying the feast including the Lieutenant in charge. Good food took the edge off their anger. They had made up their minds to shoot the captives and burn the village. The cakes somewhat mollified this program. They spared the boys but burnt the village, excepting the old woman's house. Charred rafters still stood as witnesses of this conflagration.

"There was an uneasy quietness until near noon" said Dr. Vanier, "We could smell the smoke from Parmain and wondered what would happen next. Soon after twelve we knew that this pause in fighting had ended. Firing broke out again more furiously than ever and much nearer than in the morning. I knew that the attack of the bridge was on. It lasted for a couple of hours, then died out except for the odd rifle shot, and the shuffle of odd groups of soldiers scurrying in rapid retreat.

"Again quiet reigned. As I peered through my shutters I saw two Prussian soldiers approaching cautiously along the street. To my amazement, surprise and obvious fright, they stopped before my house and rang the bell. Greatly upset, I tried to pretend the house was vacant by not answering. The soldiers rang again and again. Finally, impatient they started to batter down the door with their gun-butts. At this I cautiously and tremblingly opened. One of the men could make himself a little understood.

"Our army surgeon shot...in battle...badly wounded...you doctor come or kaput...Bring medicines' he added. Kaput meant 'we'll kill you...'

"I hurriedly gathered supplies of drugs, but not without the close supervision of the two soldiers. At each article I picked I was questioned as to its poisonous or non poisonous nature. If the drug was poisonous or if they felt suspicious about it they destroyed it. In this way, among other things, they got rid of all my morphine. When they were satisfied about the supplies they led me out with them. No sooner had I stepped out when a flight of bullets whistled over head. I ducked behind my iron fence, with its spear-headed posts. No sooner had I done so when there was a hard impact. A spear head and a spent bullet fell at my feet. I still have them. By this time, my guards, after some skirmishing, reappeared and ordered me to follow them. We came to the banks of the Oise. The scene there was lamentable, French and Germans were lying in all states of pain and mutilation. Among them was the German Surgeon, in frightful agony, shot through the liver. He was done for and the only thing for him was sedatives. But the stupid soldiers had destroyed them, so the unfortunate surgeon could not be relieved of pain. After I had attended the other wounded I held the unfortunate man in my arms, as a father might, until the end came. He left a last message for his wife and children, which I later transmitted."

Dr. Vanier was decorated with the Legion of Honor for his services during this action. Proud of his Chevalier's button, gained in military action, he dressed the part, Vandyke beard and goatee were accompanied by sharp grey eyes and a resplendent top hat. In bad weather he wore a flowing black pelisse lined with scarlet; his spare frame made its folds the more impressive.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Dr. Vanier was an all-round physician. He attended the birth of Fiffle, Yvonne, Henry and John. Although telephones were unheard of, somehow or other, we got word to him about all our ailments before they became critical. There was always some freight or other train to bring him down. The relief we all felt when we could see his top hat bobbing up and down above the window sill was unbelievable. When he walked in we felt already half-cured. Faithfully he nursed Mother and children through pleurisy, pneumonia, bronchitis and all the epidemic diseases of childhood.

His treatment for respiratory ailments was always the same: "Keep to your room." This was faithfully observed. Chinks were carefully plugged so that no air, no drafts could get in. We simmered thus in our own bugs till they exterminated each other. He was, however, a great believer in cod liver oil. The rawer the better. Each morning in winter we had to swallow a dessert spoonful of the vile liquid before breakfast. There was no escaping this. Strange to say Henry enjoyed his dose. He never had to be coaxed to take it and would gladly have swallowed our shares, but this was not allowed.

When Father was home he volunteered eagerly to be Dr. Vanier's chief assistant when the occasions arose. It speaks well for Dr. Vanier's tact that their ideas did not come to a clash for Father had his own ideas on medicine. In relating of his early apprentice days in a London pharmacy he claimed to have memorized the entire *Materia Medica*! My impression of this may be wrong or it may have been a boast. Be that as it may, he nonetheless put a certain pride in following Dr. Vanier's directions implicitly. However, his desires to dabble in medicine were given their innings when occasions arose to apply first aid. In so doing he had the opportunity of prescribing his own pet remedies. His favorite for cuts, bruises and bumps was hamamelis³⁹ extract which has a smell similar to witch hazel; probably it's the same thing. Every time I smell it now, I associate the odor with the minor accidents of childhood.

"Hamamelis! Bring the Hamamelis!" Father exclaimed whenever one of us stumbled for help yelling to High Heaven. Head, knees, finger tips would be drenched in the curious smelling liquid and tears abated till something else happened.

Disorders of other categories came in for different attention. Some were easy to spot, stomach-ache for instance. The reason was plain: too much of something or a little of anything principally green fruit. Other digestive disorders, not so easy to classify, were put into the one category of "bilious attacks." Whatever it was, we were treated to a brew of chamomile tea prepared by pouring boiling hot water on a pinch or two of dry chamomile flowers in a cup. In the spasms of colic or nausea, we kids watched the steam arising from under the saucer covering the steeping cup with a renewed hope that we were not going to die this time, after all. After the soft, soaked flowers were skimmed off by Mother, we sipped the yellow tea slowly, feeling already better. I could not explain which did the most good: the herb's virtue or the hot water, but it seemed to work, whatever the reason

Father had great faith in chamomile. Some inventive fellow in America had even made pills from the flower. At every trip Father never failed to import large supplies of the little orange colored round boxes which contained them and which he stored carefully at Auvers. Whenever he felt off color a pill or two did the trick, or so he claimed. If Mother lacked pep or had a headache, a chill, a fever, anything, so long as she did not feel up to par, he insisted on her taking these pills also. Needless to say there was a quickly accumulating lot of empty boxes which I industriously gathered for various purposes. For one thing, I kept beetles in them, though the poor things never lived long in this atmosphere of chamomile so beneficial to us. Our remedy was their poison. Father often lectured Dr. Vanier upon the virtue of these flowers and pills. As the Doctor

³⁹ "There are two Japanese and one American species; the latter (*H. virginiana*) is the witch-hazel." (Webster's New International Dictionary, 1922)

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

himself prescribed tisanes of basswood flowers, tisanes of “*quatre fleurs*,” of which four flowers I only recollect violets and mullen⁴⁰, and other tisanes as well as many categories of pills, he could hardly question the validity of Father’s eloquent orations on the subject and nodded. The nod probably meant that he recognized the whole thing to be harmless, his own as well as his enterprising client’s. Possibly also he had difficulty in following the meaning of Father’s somewhat involved versions of French syntax.

Mother also had her ideas. I should say idea, with regard to medicine. It was quite simple: physic once a month.

Once in a while Dr. Vanier’s bill came. It was always the same: Cent francs. No details, no dates, Cent francs. It might cover an accouchement as well as major illnesses, over a year or two. Or it might include only a couple of colds or pains in the neck. When we were in funds they might be more frequent. When we were broke he conveniently forgot. This kind of accountancy appealed to Father; he understood it. I often heard him say: “I am an artist, I keep no books...” Neither did Dr. Vanier. Whether his instinct or subconscious memory told him it was time to send the bill, or whether he needed money he just scrawled off: cent francs.

At least that’s what he said it was when asked the amount, as no one could read his writing. I say no one. No one but the druggist, who claimed he understood Dr. Vanier’s prescriptions. We believed him then, but, as I remember it now, I think it was a miracle that we were not poisoned. Perhaps also the druggist deliberately made his concoctions harmless, whatever Dr. Vanier wrote. At any rate we survived, possibly more by the unconscious application of Christian Science than through the prescriptions. There was strong magic in the good old physician’s top-hat, goatee and red Legion of Honor boutonniere.

In addition to his general practice, Dr. Vanier was one of the physicians of the Nord Railway Company. One of the perquisites of this post was that of riding free on any train he fancied. He could use any of the Company’s accommodations, from the blue trimmed luxurious first class coaches to the caboose or car of the most humble way-freight. When it came to a choice his preference ran to the latter. Many are the times when, his visits over, I saw him stalk into the Station just in time to catch one of these.

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A freight is bringing its worn wheels to a grinding stop. Dr. Vanier’s keen eyes have already made a selection. It is a dusty, old flat, loaded with large blocks of building limestone. Extremely agile for his age, the old Doctor hops on. He dusts a spot on one of the slabs, unfolds his “*Petit Journal*,” quite unconcerned of our stares, envious in my case, curious in others. The conductor gives a glance. Yes all is right, his passenger is on. “*Toot! Toot!*” The train crashes and starts, raises a dusty breeze. The sharp grey vandyke perks up. The stove pipe hat is firmed on, a scarlet flap of the black pelisse is tucked in. As the train rounds the curve, the cloaked silhouette, bent over the paper, grows smaller, disappears. Monsieur le Docteur Vanier, Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur, is riding home to l’Isle-Adam.

⁴⁰ “any of a genus (*Verbascum*) of usu. woolly-leaved herbs of the figwort family.” Mullen pink is “a European herb (*Lychnis coronaria*) cultivated for its white woolly herbage and showy crimson flowers.” Both quotes from Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary (1973; 1981)

MORE TRIPS

What with dental care and Mother's nursing the tooth trouble, winter had passed away and the spring of 1894 found Father painting and drawing lithographs for the Salon. Unfortunately his paintings were not accepted. It was probably too difficult to jump from the un-rampant realism of toothache to the painting of Arcadian Scenes. His lithographs, however, were well received; of these "La Rentrée du Troupeau" brought an honorable mention. Atherton Curtis thought it should have been a medal. Nevertheless this award brought many congratulations from all sides. Competition in a place like Paris was keen; any notice of any sort carried a lot of weight in France and abroad. In addition to exhibits at the Paris Salon he had two oil paintings hung at an exhibition of "Beaux Arts" held at the Chateau of St. Germain-en-Laye, "Au bord de la Mer Egée" ("By the Ægean Sea") which I had seen painted, and "La fin de la journée."

However, the realism of business made it desirable for Father to cross to America. After the usual tearful farewell from us he left for England and sailed from Liverpool on the SS Campania, on October 6.

One of the principal reasons for this trip was the exhibition at Atlanta, Georgia, which Father had publicized among his painter friends on behalf of his friend, Horace Bradley. This latter, having been obliged to give up his job on account of bad health, (he had T.B.) had obtained a job from the Cotton States Exposition, which was to be held at Atlanta, Georgia. Mr. Bradley's work consisted in traveling about the art capitals of Europe to collect pictures for the art exhibits of this show. William McBeth, the art Dealer, was in charge of the American end of this business at New York. Father canvassed artist friends and acquaintances -- I note Checa, Souza-Pinto, Demont, Merson, McMonnies and Louise Abbeman, etc. In reference to this last mentioned lady, Mr. Bradley wrote that he had received her blanks properly filled but, "where is the dear girl's photo?" In addition he was quite overwhelmed with applications from other French artists eager to connect with U.S. Dollars. As they were quite unable to comply with, let alone understand the rules and regulations which were all in English, he was obliged to do everything for them, even to assuming responsibility for their pictures. All they did was to drop their works in Father's lap for him to accomplish the rest: applications, history of painters, customs, entries, etc. It was a mean, thankless job for, not only did many of them fail to show any gratitude, but they prodded him unmercifully if things did not seem to go fast enough. In addition, others set prices, quite exorbitant in many cases, which prevented sales. When pictures were returned they were in a rage. This job must have been quite a chore for I note bills for customs entries, bills of every description, on account of the pictures of various artists. They are all duly receipted but Heaven knows whether Father ever was reimbursed for all these outgoes. He was most particular about paying bills for which he was in any way responsible and I am certain that with his very conscientious habits he would have surrendered the receipted vouchers to artists on collecting from them, which makes me think that he was never reimbursed for those I found. Many for whom he devoted himself kept friendly as long as he was willing to do their donkey work. When this unprofitable pastime ended, Father incurred their displeasure. Thus in trying to benefit them he got kicks and no ha'pence. There was no return on their part for benefits secured. At the cost of his own patronage he secured thousands of dollars worth of commissions for them but never a cent did he get through them in return. On the contrary, when this source of golden revenue dried up, they did all in their power to check and prevent the awards he so well merited in the many exhibitions where his works appeared, hoping in this way to divert his sources of revenue to themselves. This did not occur to any extent and they were, as a result, induced to feelings meaner than ever.

Nevertheless he attended to the whole business of collecting, forwarding, insuring. He added a picture of his own "Le Repas du Soir." The Exposition was a success. There were many people there and Father's picture was hung on the line.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

In spite of this thankless task, on arrival at New York, he immediately got in touch with his patrons. He sent one oil, "Going to Market," to a St. Louis Exhibition. To another, at Pittsburgh, he sent "Whisperings of Springs." I do not remember either of these pictures. He also made contact with Mr. Keppel who arranged to hold a one man show for him. Furthermore he took advantage of this trip to publish a volume of poems entitled "Poems of Nature and Sentiment" for which he secured a copyright in Oct. 31, 1894. I have already quoted many of these poems previously. He sent this booklet around to friends and patrons thus stirring interest in his forthcoming exhibition. This collection of pieces, written in his youth and young manhood, show great sensitiveness and the influence of Emersonian philosophy exemplified in the poem:

"Send forth thy ships upon the sea...
And they shall come again to thee;
Though some fall prey to wind and rock
Others the angry waves shall mock
And, laden, sail to thee..."

This is plainly a variant of the Emersonian philosophy of compensation to which he adhered throughout his life, though this faith was badly shaken many times when more ships than the average fell "prey to wind and rock." The Art Amateur of that time reviewed this collection of verse and stated "They show the clever young artist to be almost as good a poet as a painter." The realism of several of them was in some cases ahead of his time. I refer particularly to "At Mont-Orgueil."

The exhibition opened at Keppel's just about the time P. G. Hamerton died. The catalogue has an introduction by Frederick Keppel which gives a good picture of Father at that time. After a short biographical sketch and a statement that his works speak for themselves. Mr. Keppel stated:

Of the man himself it may be said that he is above all what the French call a "chercheur," ever seeking, ever studying and investigating and, though well-versed in the learning of the schools, caring much less for such traditions than for what he learns from nature.

Mr. Wickenden...is essentially an intellectual man...He yet maintains that the artist should yield to no man in intelligence, knowledge and culture and he has practiced this doctrine till he hardly needs his fine library -- so well is his memory stored with contents. A recent letter of his will indicate his ideal of what manner of man the artist should be: "We see at the time of the Italian Renaissance such artists as Leonardo da Vinci and Michael Angelo employing themselves variously and at the same time in conducting military sieges and defenses, writing verses, constructing churches and palaces, painting or modeling as the demand was made on their intellectual forces."

Mr. Wickenden has never as yet "conducted a siege or built a palace" but like the great men whom he cites -- and like Jules Breton⁴¹ in our own day -- he sometimes finds that his ideas can be better expressed through the pen than through the brush,

⁴¹ Jules Adolphe Aimé Louis Breton (1817-1906) -- a French painter "...essentially...of rustic life, especially in the province of Artois...His numerous subjects may be divided generally into four classes: labour, rest, rural festivals and religious festivals...He also wrote several books and a poem." Quoted from The Encyclop³/₄dia Britannica, Eleventh Edition. Breton is not listed in the biographical section of the *Nouveau Petite Larousse* 1958 edition.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

and one result is his recently published volume entitled "Poems of Nature and Sentiment." Like all artists he has special divinities and chief among these is Millet.

No one can say that he is an imitator of the "poet of the poor" but a like poetic sentiment has been recognized in both and in a review of two of Mr. Wickenden's original lithographs which won a recompense at this year's Salon, the *Revue des Beaux Arts* says: "They are art of elevated character, they express extraordinary grandeur and there is nothing in the work of Millet more intensely pastoral and poetic."

The works thus highly praised are "The Harvest Moon" and "Return of the Flock." From such imaginative productions as these Mr. Wickenden turns easily and frequently to that species of work which, of its nature, almost precludes the exercise of fancy -- the painting of portraits. Several of the best of these being in private hands in Europe are not available for the present exhibition. But his portrait of Philip Gilbert Hamerton, painted during the present year, will certainly interest the many admirers of that eminent man.

Thus Mr. Keppel gives an excellent cross-section of Father's thoughts and ambitions at that period.

The exhibition opened. Noted by the press were: "By the Ægean Sea" of which the *Springfield Republican* (Nov. 16, 1894) said: "Notable in the exhibition is a delicate toned scene 'By the Ægean Sea' in which the modeling of the Greek maiden and her flock of sheep by the seashore is superb." This was the picture I had seen him paint a year or two before. Of "Le Repas du Soir" the *New York Evening Post* of Nov. 2, 1894, said that the lithographs were better than the paintings. "The paintings tend more to a poetic fancy than to technical skill. Both should be cultivated, for who cares for a picture of Daubigny's studio boat if it be not well painted?"

In my own mind there arises the question, what is meant by well painted? It is largely a question of fashion. Whatever the method used to express it, the sincerity of a painter is made visible in his picture. A technique unpopular today may be the rage tomorrow, witness Van Gogh.

Further the article went on. "The nicely studied figure of an aged peasant woman who reads as she eats her supper of bread and milk is well illumined by the candlelight, and contains a fine sense of mystery in the surrounding gloom. This work is the result of intelligent study and shows that Mr. Wickenden need not rely on aught but his own well directed right hand. As the proceeds from this picture are to be given to the solitary old woman who posed for this picture it is to be hoped that a purchaser may speedily be found." This was much better criticism, but the fact was that a critic must criticize.

Of its own kind, Father's painting was well above par. That it did not conform to all the methods in fashion at that time was to his credit. He painted things as he saw them insofar as early influences allowed him and that is what an artist should do. Gradually his own style may evolve but the approval of the public is an uncertain thing which makes the artist's life a difficult one, but also most interesting.

The *New York Tribune* of November 22, 1894, said of the Portrait of Philip Gilbert Hamerton: "Mr. Wickenden has been decidedly successful. He has arrested Hamerton's characteristic demeanor, expressing delicately the combination in the critic's face of acute mental faculties with the florid physical qualities of the English country gentleman and the effect must gratify those who themselves possess a personal impression of the subject. Mr. Hamerton's death, of course, calls special attention to Mr. Wickenden's picture."

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Such good send-offs made the show a success. The galleries were packed and the lithographs, particularly those of Hamerton, sold like hot cakes. This show and its resultant business ended the year on a note of success, spiritual and material in which Father's life reached its zenith. Subsequent events obliged him to exert his attentions elsewhere as we shall see.

The beginning of 1895 found Father at work attending to sales in the United States. After his success in New York he immediately proceeded to Detroit where he held a show at Hanna & Ives in January. As explained in the Catalogue: "Mr. Wickenden having come to pay a short visit to our city before returning to Paris after the successful exhibition of his works at Mr. Frederick Keppel's galleries in New York, it occurred to us that to show them here would interest art-lovers and his many friends in Detroit." This catalogue made much of P. G. Hamerton's portrait -- "most highly spoken of in the New York and Art Press and reproduced in Harper's..." It called Mr. Hamerton "Mr. Wickenden's intimate friend."

It also states that "By the Ægean Sea" was "representative of the fact that Mr. Wickenden's strong poetic personality has not yielded an inch before the almost overwhelming waves of materialism that have threatened to destroy all love for the beautiful in painting and literature." This sale went well and he realized several thousand dollars from it. In addition several letters show that business was quite active outside of the exhibitions themselves. Charles Stinchfield sends him a cheque for \$368.90 for his son's portrait; R. G. Chandler of Coldwater, Michigan, wishes to see him; F. Keppel writes about pictures left at his galleries and about sales of Hamerton lithograph portraits.

But he was not content with these successes alone. He was also thinking of other fields. I find letters from two Quebec sisters he had met on board ship of his westward trip. Both had fallen under the spell of Father. Said one, she loved the company "d'un charmant artiste" (so charming an artist) and the other referring to this same charm writes: "sic'est un tort de vous le dire, punissez-moi par un souvenir..." (if it is a wrong to admit your attractiveness, punish me by some souvenir) These attentions on the part of young ladies were, to say the least, flattering. Their father was none the less impressed and urged Father to come to Quebec; without guaranteeing business, he would do the best he could to make the stay a financial success.

Early in 1895 Father returned to France. He endeavored to take part in activities of the world of art and sent three lithographs to the Centenary Show of Lithography; they were *La Mère Panneçaye*, "La Rentrée du Troupeau" and "Notre Dame de Paris" for which he obtained a "diplôme d'honneur."

He also took active part in the publication of an art publication called *l'Artiste*, the object of which was to sell in albums the works of Lithographer artists. His own "La Rentrée du troupeau" was included in Album no. 3. This was purely an effort to popularize lithography and brought no profits. The fact was that France was not a source of income. It was a source of recognition which had to be cashed in elsewhere.

Moreover his growing family required plenty of funds. His very successes in raising money by commercial means, prodded by these necessities caused him more and more reluctantly to turn to the business end of art; 1895 shows this, principally by his active interest in the Hamerton sale, his promotion of the Cotton States Exposition, his constant business correspondence with Mr. Keppel, but more so his absorption in collecting all kinds of pictures for a sale similar to the successful one of 1893, held by the American Art Association of New York, which had netted him a small fortune. At any rate Father returned to France in February and was soon busy with various affairs of a business nature rather than with his art.

Mrs. Hamerton planned to make a sale of her late husband's effects at Hotel Drouot in Paris and, for this purpose, she solicited and obtained Father's help to promote it. Father attended the sale and purchased all sorts of objects more or less useful: stools, canvas, paper, sets of compasses in more or less good shape, bits of this, bits of that. The compasses impressed me particularly and I tried to use them but their usefulness was

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

not improved by my handling of them. There were also odds and ends of all kinds. Stubs of pencils, pen holders, some whole, some broken, many crowquill pens, some rusty and some almost cemented with india ink, cakes and old bottles of this latter, nibs of all description, compass parts that did not fit. It was quite a litter of junk which I searched in vain for something interesting or useful to my youthful schemes for amusement. The old erasers, unused so long that they were hard as brick after being neglected by Mr. Hamerton for a decade or so, were kept by us for many another year, useless, until I or John threw them away after they had followed our fortunes and misfortunes, hither and yon, across the ocean, up and down Canada and in the States.

Out of all this I still have two oil sketches by Mr. Hamerton drawn with almost naive precision and a complete lack of feeling. He, eminent critic of art that he was, acknowledged his own efforts to be mediocre.. However his judgment proved a great incentive for artists of his time, particularly etchers and lithographers. He had the art of expression by words.

Meanwhile Mr. Keppel's correspondence was continuous. He had crossed again to Paris to collect black and whites. He took occasion to recommend Father to a Mr. Beatty to obtain a collection of pictures for the Carnegie Gallery at Pittsburgh. I believe that these possibilities of repeating his sale of 1893 prompted Father to buy as many pictures by well-known painters as he could spare cash for. His expectation was to dispose of them to some institution at a good profit. This project proved rather speculative and yet saved the situation many a time in subsequent years.

Nevertheless life was at its busiest and happiest and the summer of 1895 at Auvers was one of long unclouded bliss. No wonder that Ulpiano Checa, addressed Father in one of his letters from Colmenar, Spain as "Dear and happy patriarch..." All this bustle did not prevent him from helping the unfortunate Mére Panneçaye, the old nurse and model. She had written, in a long letter of woe from Fressinville, that she was practically destitute. Her son influenced by his wife would do nothing for her and she was reduced to starvation. Father sent her money and received in return a letter of thanks out of proportion to the gift. Evidently the old woman's life was saved by this donation of a few francs which possibly lasted her months. As likely as not the son was scarcely better off than his mother, for the poverty of French peasants seems to me now almost unbelievable. If living was cheap it was because of its utter simplicity. Bread was literally the staple of life, being frequently the sole diet of many people for breakfast, lunch and supper without even an onion or a bit of cheese.

I must say it was good bread, so nourishing and tasty, that I have never found any to equal its appetizing odor and flavor. Of course these are impressions of a nose and stomach under ten years of age. With the bread might go a little cider or milk to wash it down. Among the better off peasants meat was used occasionally, but there were lots of vegetables, according to season.

Earth floors or damp tile set in earth were usual. Bathrooms were unknown. This with solid stone walls always sweating, and poor heating, made the places damp, winter or summer. As a result evidences of arthritic deformity among the older peasants were numerous. I recollect one man so bent by arthritis and labors with the short handled hoe that he walked with body swaying horizontally, at right angles to his legs. He could not straighten up.

In the meantime I had entered school at Auvers some time before, an event which furnished many adventures and misadventures.

SCHOOL

I entered the village school at Auvers at the beginning of October 1894 when the session started, to continue till mid-august, a rather long school year.

The school was situated in the rear part of the Town Hall, the Mairie, which itself served many other purposes. In front, on the ground floor, were the lodgings and office of the Secretary-Treasurer who also was our senior master. In the rear were two class-rooms, one for the “petite” class (5 to 8 year old boys) and the other for the “grande” class (above 8 or 9 years old). On the top floor there was a large hall where civil marriages were performed by the Mayor. The outside of this building was rather drab. On fête-days a tricolor hung in front of it. It has been immortalized in a painting by Van Gogh who saw the beauty of it, though, at that time, it would have seemed the last place where to find it, which shows what the mind will do to things. Indeed one definition of Art might call it the aura created by the mind around the objects or beings it depicts.

The grounds around the Mairie were open and were used for the local fair. There also the local firemen and gymnast society had a wooden tower on which to practice. Around this open space stretched a fence of chains loosely hanging from round stone posts. At one of these posts was a public tap where all and sundry could draw fresh water.

At the rear of the Mairie was the School yard, surrounded by a high stone wall. At one end of the school yard was another “borne fontaine,”⁴² with spring tap, and, at the other end, a shed, where we recessed on rainy days.

The senior-master, also secretary, was a Monsieur Cazier. A shrewd stocky man, white-haired, with brown eyes, he greeted Mother and myself when we came on that memorable morning just before eight. Monsieur Cazier had a large walrus moustache which impressed me at once and has since remained in my mind as typifying him. When I think Cazier, I think moustache. M. Cazier put me in the “petite” class under the junior master, Monsieur Chaubet.

When I entered the boys stared at me and nudged each other. Rather confused, I sat with slate and pencil, drawing little men until recess-time which proved anything but pleasant. The boys played a rather rough game. It consisted in forming up a whole string of youngsters one behind the other, each hanging on to the belt of the one in front to drag one and sometimes two heavy boys, half sitting or half digging their heels into the coarse gravel littering the ground. Another boy acted the part of carter. He was generally selected, first for his bullying qualities, secondly for his knowledge of a carter’s rather profane vocabulary. This was a hard game on the “horses” and “cart” as well as on clothes, as I was soon to discover. I was placed in front of the “horses.” Being made to exert myself desperately ahead of the others, I pulled so hard that my belt broke and I went flat on my face in a puddle. My spotless black apron, my face and hands were a mess. I raised a commotion. Up came M. Chaubet. He ordered me to wash at the pump, willy-nilly; after this he made me stand in a corner, “au piquet”⁴³ for the rest of the recess. My humiliation and indignation were bitter. This was not all. On the way home for lunch I was thoroughly teased by the other boys. The climax came when a little fellow hit me on the head with an empty sardine can, which caused tremendous hilarity. I was not hurt but I was extremely puzzled and somewhat indignant.

⁴² a water fountain mounted on a borne which is a stone marker or post which may be used as a barrier to prevent vehicular access. A borne fontaine is translated in a modern dictionary as being a “fire hydrant.”

⁴³ piquet means literally a “stake” or a “picket” and also means a punishment requiring a schoolboy to remain standing (like a picket), motionless, during recess.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Worse was to come later from one of the boys called Pierre. He was certainly full of life. To me he was the embodiment of deviltry. He could outrun and out-fight all the others. They admired him greatly. I did not admire him; I hated and feared him. Naturally he had to have his sport of the new boy by giving him the odd kick and cuff when he discovered my presence a day or two after admission. I was indignant but had gained enough wisdom to wait after school for settling differences. At least I thought I would. When the little gang of boys, of whom I was one, disappeared out of sight into the little lane in front of the school, on the way home, one noon hour, knowing no better, I went for him with both fists to the face. He was taller than I by a head which obliged me to raise my arms to strike him. The gasp that went up from the boys was audible. Pierre's surprise was just as great, but his grey eyes at once focused into a baleful glare and his retort with fists was instant. I got his heavy sabots in the shins as well and was tripped in the dirt with him on top of me. Pierre⁴⁴ could fight. When he had me down, he ordered some of his minions to drag and to pitch me into a large patch of nettles and thistles. His orders being carried out at once, he picked several stems of these weeds. As I dazedly tried to get up, he thrust them repeatedly and skillfully into my face. My rage, humiliation and helplessness were complete.

I went home, face stinging, covered with welts, bawling to high heaven. Pierre dusted his hands and left the field with the satisfaction of a job well done, followed by his retinue of would be flunkies.

Mother was horrified; Father was grim. However his main concern was not the damage to my person but whether I had put up a good fight. I indeed had, but most unwisely. Having gathered from my story that several boys had had to do with this incident, he complained to M. Cazier. This latter talked to the boys and they were more careful after that. So was I. I had learned a good lesson. The lesson of discretion. Thoroughly imbued with its elementary principles I walked to and from school somewhat like the old settlers in Indian-infested forests, always prepared to run or to skirmish.

For a time I led an uneasy existence. Mother had provided me with a slate. I found that this was not necessary as there was one set into each desk. Monsieur Chaubet presided over the destinies of the junior part of the school, consisting of the primary courses. He was a young man of some culture, dark, olive-complexioned, good looking, and rather disgusted at being thrown in with this crowd of near infants from the local peasant families. Some were nearly penniless and dressed in rags; most, including myself, knew nothing at all and showed little aptitude or core for study.

Chaubet generally started the day by being severe, then harsh, then frantic, ending it a maudlin wreck. He would lean against his raised desk, brush his fingers through his long, black, poet's hair, moaning over and over again: "Poor Chaubet! Poor Chaubet! It is the end! Unhappy one! Your last days have come. You shall die among these sacred hay-seeds! Poor, poor, Chaubet..." and so forth and so on. The class of kids stared like sheep at such outbursts. I myself could not understand what he was complaining about, seeing he could walk about and talk as he wished while we unfortunates were tied speechless, to our benches for endless hours. Chaubet's moods got more and more melancholy as the day advanced. Then touching bottom as it were, he would rebound to jump on the school dunce, Pinaud, who was bright enough in mischief. "You...Pinaud -- croquant⁴⁵ (hay-seed) imbécile, crétin, imagine your having the advantage of Chaubet's teachings...and see what you do -- stick a pin in the derrière of that little louse in front of you -- Pinaud, poor, poor, Pinaud -- some day I'll throw you out of the window, as sure as I live! Out you'll go, glass, frame and all! You'll go through it yet, crétin of Pinaud!" We were all curious to witness this performance but it was never tried.

⁴⁴ the name "Maurice" appears in the draft but is undoubtedly in error.

⁴⁵ the word is spelled *croquant* in the draft; however, the Harper Collins Robert French-English dictionary lists only *croquant*, translating it as "yokel, (country) bumpkin."

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Pinaud was indeed poor. His clothes were rags consisting of the pickings from rubbish heaps, too small or too big, full of holes and covered with mud. He was so poor he went bare-headed, winter and summer. At that time it was not fashionable to do so. The poorest had thin berets to sit on during school hours, no cloakrooms being provided, but Pinaud only had the rags he was in. At inspection he was the butt of the Master's eye.

Every morning all classes lined up for inspection. Each master passed in front of each boy, examined hands, over and under, behind ears, hair for lice, shoes or "sabots," clothes. Invariably Pinaud appeared looking like a scarecrow. Face and hands unwashed, running nose, no handkerchief, unstockinged feet in sabots which looked like lumps of mud, he was the dirtiest-looking urchin I ever saw. Time and again Chaubet exploded to send him to the yard's pump with one of the big boys to douse him with water, cold and raw especially in winter, on hard frosty mornings.

Obviously I was scared still of Chaubet. He did nothing to lessen this fear till one day Mother had the tact to invite him to dinner. Chaubet became a different man after that. He loved the pictures, was interested beyond words at our "Rochester" kerosene lamp (Auvers used mostly candles), in short he had a relief from the "croquants." This diplomatic move saved me many a bad moment, that is to say, I was left more or less alone to my own cartoonings on the slates.

In the school room, ranking went from left to right according to benches, from the front; my seat was next to Pinaud's on the rear bench, he and I competing for the distinction of being at the extreme right of it, which was last in rank, in the lowest class. I liked Pinaud at once. One feature that won my admiration was that he was on the indigent list and could therefore obtain supplies from the school store for nothing. I, who had to pay, frequently had to go without the odd book until our family funds permitted it.

We hob-nobbed amicably, heads together over the drawings of little men on our slates, till I got his lice. Mother reacted vigorously and mercilessly with washing of vinegar, etc. After a few such scrubblings I decided it was easier not to come too close to Pinaud if I wished to avoid further drastic cleansings, which felt terrible to eyes, ears and nose. As to Pinaud he was quite oblivious to this imposition of distance to our friendly relations, happy moron that he was. A mumps epidemic put a stop to this blissful state of affairs. I came down with it and left school for the rest of the year.

I relieved the tedium of my convalescence by watching the return of the boys from school. From the shelter of my high wall I tried to brain them by dropping bricks and stones on their heads. I nearly succeeded, but my aim was poor. They ran with bent heads and cries of dismay. After the first ambush they walked on the opposite side of the road, thoroughly scared. As they were out of range of my bricks, I tried to shoot arrows from a bow but they replied with volleys of stones. They were good at this and, if I had not had the advantage of height and shelter, I would probably have been hit, as their aim was very accurate. I dodged their missiles without too much difficulty and was getting on capitally until I fought a snowball duel with one of their sisters, Marie. Contemptuously and certainly ungallantly, I took advantage of wall and height to pelt her. She replied in kind. Her first salvo hit me in the eye, blackening everything, then creating a million stars. Marie laughed uproariously. I was most humiliated for several days as I could not hide a perfect black-eye, nor did she avoid boasting about her marksmanship of which I was the living proof.

The ominous whistle of pitched stones made me realize the superiority of this kind of missile and I attempted to return the fire of all and sundry. My aim, unlike theirs, was decidedly poor; I hit a newly installed street lamp hanging from Mère Sophie's house. The crash of glass was terrific. She was around as usual and caught me red-handed. Other neighbors rushed up. I hid in vain -- haunted by visions of the village jail and of the disgrace of being led there by some gendarme. The rural-guard paid us a visit. Mother paid for the glass, one franc; she added twenty-five centimes for the guard to have a drink. The guard was happy and

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

jovially tweaked my ear. I almost felt as if I had done a good deed, but Mother thought otherwise. I was sent to bed to start my convalescence over again. The neighbors predicted a bad end for me.

These exchanges, however, had a good result. Strange to say they made for friendlier relations with the boys, so that when my second attempt at schooling came, things were much easier. For one thing I was better at estimating the size of opponents before wading into them. As I was not willing to be under any gang-leader I shunned these latter like poison, letting the others follow them if they wished.

On returning I discovered that we had a new under-master, Mr. Roure, from Southern France. Instead of being put in the last group to the right of the master's platform I was now advanced, why, I could not fathom, to the section to the left of both the platform and the separating aisle. Pinaud had been advanced too, possibly for the same reason as myself; they were tired of seeing us in the same place.

As usual he occupied the last seat in the new class to which he had been promoted. His undisputed possession of this comfortable rank came to an end with my arrival and we resumed our happy rivalry of alternating for last place. Pinaud did not seem to mind. I've forgotten what we were tested on, but it was fairly frequent. When the ordeal was over and corrected, the Master called "Changes d'places!" At this order we moved over to the new rank attained. I just slipped myself and my beret over to Pinaud's place, and since Pinaud had no head-gear, he'd just slip himself alone, leaving me to unscramble his desk which contained one or two slate pencils, an assortment of corks, bits of glass, dead beetles and a pin or two for the "derrières" on the benches in front of him, to be used when drawing "bonhommes" became monotonous. This inventory always proved most interesting. Pinaud scarcely bothered about these treasures; he could get plenty more where they came from.

Pinaud's status however was much improved since M. Chaubet had gone. In his stead M. Roure was in charge. He was a most reasonable man. He spoke with Southern twang. He had a dark humorous eye, yet brooked no nonsense. An innate kindness made him pity the almost nude poverty of Pinaud and he threatened no more to pitch him out of the window. He had a just way with little boys, seldom using the easy way of punishing both sides when disturbances arose. He would soon find out the aggressor and, although his punishment was mild, it seemed to work. The classes became quiet and interested.

A partition separated us from the upper class where M. Cazier reigned. M. Cazier was a great believer in group singing. From his side we could frequently hear some happy chorus arising. We would join in, though, of course, Roure discouraged these efforts. Occasionally Cazier himself came to make us sing since Roure could not put two notes together. My first triumph came one day when he spotted me and made me sing by myself. Quite unabashed I went through some song in a high soprano. Cazier was delighted. He wanted me in his class. He made a test in sums and reading to try me out. When he saw the result, his face fell; he was quite discouraged; Roure smiled "Changes d'places!" I shifted to last place, Pinaud to next to last. My reading was nil; in arithmetic I had not yet mastered the sum of two and one -- let alone two and two. Writing consisted

in jumbling meaningless capitals; script consisted of mere forms, totally void of significance, not even of abstract appeal. But one day it began to dawn upon me that consonants and vowels made sound. With this discovery to stir my curiosity I could read in two weeks and began to enjoy gift books whose entertainment value hitherto had been pictures only.

I sat some time longer in my last or next to last place shared with Pinaud, in and out of which we gravitated at regular intervals, like satellites or other stellar bodies, but Roure's teachings were becoming subconsciously absorbed. Came another test day. I filled in my slate as usual, quite indifferently. Corrections were made. "Changes d'places!" ordered Monsieur Roure. I had not even looked for my new rank, neither had Pinaud. We motioned to make the usual exchange. "No, no, no," shouted Monsieur Roure "Robert, comes up

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

here.” After the custom of the locality boys were named after their Father’s Christian name -- so I was “Robert” for a while. I looked up. “Up here!” repeated Monsieur Roure. He was pointing at the front line of benches where sat the class’s intelligentsia. I picked up my odds and ends, put them into my beret and moved up. Monsieur Roure showed me a vacant space next to the first boy, with whom I scarcely had a bowing acquaintance.

I was still rather vague about it all but checked up my rank on my slate. Where had been formerly the number thirty or thirty one now was a number two. I was second.

Completely dazed by this success, flattered by the envious compliments of the front row, I began to like it. Gone were the happy careless days of idle scratchings on slates and of Pinaud’s simple if not always kindly entertainments. This jump had startled me into activity. I had become a slave of ambition and Pinaud a somewhat remote feature in my existence. At last he held undisputed sway over the last seat at the foot of the class.

Years after someone sent me a postcard showing a monument to the war dead of Auvers. Practically all my classmates are there. Pierre, the happy bully, the Petit boys, Mère Sophie’s youngest grandson, René -- many others, and Pinaud -- poor Pinaud -- is there too. Probably his rank in his regiment was last man in the last platoon of the last company but bullets, shells and bombs are not respecters of ranks, even the last.

The name of my new neighbor of the top end of the class was Alphonse. He was the son of a rich butcher. If I can judge by his florid cheeks and stout body, he did his father’s wares full justice. He had plenty of aplomb too. His was a comfortable personality. On account of his size probably, also on account of his father’s power. (His Father’s was the decision in many families as to who could have meat on credit). Alphonse was left alone by the gang and its leader, Pierre. As his policy was a consistent avoidance of trouble, as he was friendly and of a somewhat epicurean frame of mind, his manner suited me to a T, just as much as Pinaud’s.

On the next test I displaced him for first place. Then he beat me. This game of exchanging places was already familiar to me so I carried it on at the top extremity of the class as I had at the bottom. Strange to say the effort was no greater.

I began to get honors showered upon me. Little blue tickets were given for good marks. My acquisitive sense was awakened to such a degree that soon all the tickets became exhausted. For extra good behavior and marks a nickel cross was awarded a week at a time to be worn by a deserving scholar. I got it once and kept it so many weeks that it was finally given me; I still have it. On it is inscribed “Pour le mérite.”

My progress went by leaps and bounds, save in one subject: handwriting. I did and still do write like a cat. Nevertheless I began to read more and more readily which Roure noticed. He also observed that I was expert in all the twists and turns of the “dumb-bell” mentality, having gone through that moronic stage myself. In fact I, the ex-companion of Pinaud, knew more of his ilk than Roure himself. The result was that I was handed a small group of these forgotten ones to teach. The experiment was a huge success. Pinaud himself began to read under my tuition. I thought it was fun to boss my small class, and, by teaching learnt more thoroughly what I had begun to learn.

In the meantime Alphonse’s commercial instincts made themselves manifest in trading stamps. This was a new departure for me. When Mother saw my new interest she handed me a small collection from Uncle Henry. She also bought an envelope full of assorted stamps for one franc on one of her Paris trips. With such a stock in trade, Alphonse, myself and other boys traded energetically at recess. “You are quite a competitor,” said Alphonse.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Our time table was a rather long one. The daily schedule ran 8 to 12 in the morning, and 1 to 4 in the afternoon. The session extended from October 1st to mid-August when our summer vacation began, to last only six weeks. The beginning of summer vacation coincided with the village Fair which was like most village or town Fairs anywhere.

Tents for itinerant merchants held wares of various sorts wrapped in gaudy packages -- Wheels of Fortune ranging along all sorts of prices from two cents up, sledge hammer -- ring the bell competitions, high-set swings and a merry-go-round, gaudy and loud with blaring music of which I remember the refrain:

“Les matelots	“Oh Sailors
Sont rigolots,	Are railers
Aimons à rire,	Let’s laugh a fit
Quand ils chavirent.”	When they tip a bit.”

Not very witty perhaps but, with its rollicking tune, we could hear it right up to Les Vallées on hot summer’s days, inviting us to the Fair.

The dancing tent with its rickety floors on which village beaux and belles polka’ed and quadrilled to their hearts’ contents was a popular resort. It was quite large. Its size permitted it to be used for the distribution of prizes ending officially the school session. This ceremony was conducted with speeches, songs and the actual giving of prizes to the scholars.

For this M. Cazier made a tremendous effort. He canvassed the village for books or money to buy books; he organized a school choir to sing various patriotic songs and finally arranged for a speaker. On the great day the officials sat on a raised platform at one end of the tent; the parents and children sat below on folding chairs to watch the ceremonies. It was stifling. The speeches were interminable; I do not remember a single word of them. When the prizes were distributed, wily and kind old Cazier fixed the lists so that all got something. Naturally the first got most, but even the worst students obtained some small token. All prizes were books. As each name was called the pupil would go up to get his prize or prizes while the list of his accomplishments was read. Applause rang out. On the platform the presiding official placed a crown of imitation laurel leaves on his head, gold for first place, silver for second and green for other ranks. In 1895 I got a second place and books of adventure as prizes which I could read and therefore appreciate.

The ordeal over, everyone piled out of the tent to visit the Fair; proud parents exhibited their youngsters, with laurel-crowned brows from the rich butcher to poor Pinaud’s folk. Thus paraded before my eyes the little boys who were so soon to die in the butchery of 1914-1918, so oblivious that their young flesh was to become the carrion of battlefields.

And yet the finger had writ and the voices called their own prophecy in the songs they had just sung: “La Marseillaise,” “Le Chant du Départ,” “La Parisienne” and the ominous dirge, “Mourir pour la Patrie.”

But such thoughts entered not our heads; the sun was bright, the Fair’s golden dust showed us the gate to our summer’s vacation. Lazy, beautiful days.

In the Fall I entered the upper class under M. Cazier. My progress under him was rapid. He seemed full of energy and picturesque vigor. He tried to inculcate boldness into his boys. He made us teach and address the class, encouraged research, particularly in history. He welcomed any facts found in books outside class texts.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

These latter were sold by his daughter, Angèle. It was a little sideline which brought him a few sous. Before the afternoon class began she would set a little folding table covered with stationery. We bought what we needed, mostly exercise books; these latter I remember particularly because their covers were printed with illustrations in color of battle episodes of the Franco-Prussian War. They all had one similarity. The French had shown tremendous courage against odds, had fought cleverly, should have won but for some reason or other always lost their battles. There they were, red Frenchmen plunging bayonets into dark uniformed, spike-helmeted fat Prussians -- river crossings, railroad embankments, village defences, and, to crown all, glorious cavalry charges with drawn sabers. These sold very rapidly.

An intensive nationalistic education was carried on in the French schools of that time. History was taught from one battle to the next. Every lost battle should have been won. The feeling that went with every battle won was as near Paradise as could be. Each boy out of two owned a long French clarion and could sound all the army calls. Instead of playing marbles they played a game of chance and skill in which leaden round disks, about two inches in diameter, were tossed as near as possible to a line drawn some three or four yards from the players. The player whose disk was nearest got the stakes which were pictures of soldiers cut from large sheets made for this purpose. For two cents you could buy a whole sheet of Marines, or Chasseurs, or plain Line infantry. I remember particularly the impressive rows of mustachioed cavalymen, with cuirass, helmet and vest, red pantaloons with leather legs, nonchalantly leaning on their huge sabers. Large soldiers counted for two, small ones for one. Part of the fun was clipping the soldiers from the sheet and keeping them in a booklet, generally a railway company time-table.

The first mistake I made in this regard was buying a sheet made up of very large soldiers. No matter how large they were, they only counted two each. Instead of the normal thirty or forty I only had seven or eight. They were much admired and envied. Add to this my lack of skill and in about ten minutes I was watching the others, cleaned out completely. This disaster made me think. Without soldiers I could not play so I practiced pitching my lead disk at lines, to gain at least a little skill against the day when I might get a penny to buy a sheet of soldiers. This occurred finally. Greatly thrilled I entered Buvelot's store and looked over his sheets. They were too thrilling really. All glorious red and gold. I was sorely tempted by the beauty of a sheet of about eight charging cuirassiers but reason prevailed. I dug and dug and finally found what I wanted, a sheet with about 150 warriors on it, all brown Zulus yellowed with age. True they were small, but 150 was enough for many a game. My joy knew no bounds when I cut the little oblong pieces each with its Zulu. It seemed I had a real army for two cents.

At first the boys were eager to play with me, thinking of their early croppings of my resources. But this time I was ready. With the skill gained by practice I now won fairly consistently, infantry with long mustaches, gunners and sappers with beards, glorious Republican Guards which I tucked away in my little booklet of the Nord Railway Company Timetable -- or rather the ads which paid for it. In the event of an unfortunate loss my opponents only got a measly, tiny Zulu, old stock neglected by generations of boys. The serious gamblers objected to this and after a few games refused to play.

I went the rounds of various boys. Those of poor families were the first to steer clear of my Zulus. As long as they won they did not mind too much but when the game became an exchange of nice Chasseurs, Dragoons, Zouaves and even Turcos for miserable little imps of Zulus, they could not stand it. Confidence in my own ability made me search out other foes; I went the rounds of richer opponents till I tilted with Videcoq, the rich grocer's son. Videcoq first lost, then won. He objected to the pygmy I handed him and we were soon engrossed in battle. He knew "savate."⁴⁶ First thing I knew I had the heel of one of his hobnailed boots in my teeth, chips of the latter littering my tongue. However I stood my ground and let him have a swing to the head

⁴⁶ French boxing which allows a fighter to use his feet to hit the other, even in the face and midriff. "Savate" also means a used shoe or a shoe, new or used, with edges turned down [thus, possibly an athletic shoe].

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

from the shoulder. It was well timed. One leg in the air, Videcoq completely off balance, fell hard on the cobbles of a drain gully. His head struck one of these with a resounding thwack. What my punch failed to do the cobble did. Two friends ran to him, helped him up. His hand, going to his head felt a large damp bump raising. His mouth twisted into a frightful grimace, it seemed to gulp a couple of times. Out of it burst a strident bawl such as I had seldom heard except from my own self when the boys shoved nettles in my face in one of my early encounters. This outburst frightened me. I thought he was going to die. Nevertheless I stood my ground ready for an enraged assault. It never came off. Helped by the two good Samaritans, Videcoq was led to the much used pump to wash the wound in his head. He limped, for, somehow, during the short fracas I had managed also to clip one of his shins with a heavy sabot, literally a case of sabotage. All the while, as he drew away, further rhythmic howls came from him. I stood transfixed, scared I had killed him, scared the masters would come to investigate.

I was not immune either. My chipped teeth were very painful. Bits of enamel were in my mouth. My wits returned; I gazed about. A circle of boys, stared at me with thoughtful gaze. There was a new appraisal in their eyes. Pierre was not around; he had not graduated but had either been kicked out or had left the school by common consent with the master, so there was nothing to be done about it. No one was anxious to get his head banged on gully stones. Since this episode, it appears Videcoq took part in other battles. His name also appears on the monument of the war dead of Auvers.

From then on my life in the school yard became quite happy except that the boys always found some excuse not to play "soldiers" with me. I checked over the lot. Alphonse my competitor for first place was the last I tried. But he was not interested in such childish, profitless affairs. His financial mind was engrossed in the stamp trade for money. This born merchant managed to extract the odd sou from near-mendicants by selling them old postage stamps. It was the old gag. "Wonderful bargain" Alphonse claimed "I'm somewhat pressed for funds -- otherwise I could not make such a sacrifice. Two sous for the stamp...What? Only one sou for this unusual treasure. Man, do you realize it is worth one hundred sous...Ah! What misery to be so hard up!! Well...I'll take your sou; here's the stamp, but it is a disastrous thing for me." Thus Alphonse immediately starting on some new victim of his salesmanship kept himself supplied with additional pocket money, notwithstanding his Father's affluence which permitted his having a regular allowance. Not having even the sou to buy stamps I could only trade with him. As Father and Mother had many letters from abroad I managed to get quite a supply for this purpose. Alphonse and I spent many a pleasant hour in the dusty yard or in the damp play-shed looking over each other's or other boys' stamps.

One day I discovered from one of the latter that Alphonse had sold a stamp obtained from me by trade for two sous. I was neither surprised nor angry. However this inspired the thought "Why didn't I do it myself?" So I tried this new trading slant and got two or three sous from sales. Alphonse noted it and simply remarked "Ah...a competitor?" We remained good friends.

Many other games were played which had no ulterior chauvinistic background --Prisoners' base, hide-and-seek, Roosting-Cat, tag and one peculiar ball game called "Hunter's Ball" in which one ball was used. Whoever was "it" was given the ball. He would try to hit with it the struggling, running and taunting crowd of gamins. When this occurred the one who was hit would join number one in trying to hit others till a third was thus caught. After a while a crowd of boys would be "it" or hunters and would chase the remnant of those who were not yet hit. Finally only one was left, dodging, running, stopping, panting while the hue and cry of the others harried this last survivor to finish the game and start another. What with the running, sliding, and stamping the yard was a cloud of dust in which darted happy, shouting youngsters getting mighty good exercise. As a concession to sensitive skins, hits to the head or hands did not count. On the other hand it was permissible to soak the ball in winter. If it froze, all the better. In this condition it was thought particularly delightful to hit at the part of a boy's anatomy where kicks are often aimed at. If the hit boy raised a yell the pleasantry was thought highly successful and at recall

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

from recess the boys would be almost paralyzed with laughter over this bit of comedy, including the one who had been hit.

Which reminds me that since no automatic bells called us to class, sometimes M. Cazier, very busy with some secretarial matter forgot all about ringing the hand bell. The fun in the yard would go on crescendo, louder and louder for a quarter of an hour, sometimes one half or even one hour more. These were memorable occasions.

When I attained the higher half of the school I soon discovered that it was highly thought of to help M. Cazier with his garden at recess. Once or twice a week we did this. My job consisted in being a "drawer of water" with another boy, spilling, stumbling, as each held one side of the pail wire handle and got his feet and stockings wet. When summer advanced, just before the holidays, we raided old Cazier's orchard for apples or pears when we came back with empty containers. True, the fruits were green, most green, and hard as rocks but somehow or other our teeth got the better of them.

Another time to go for the old schoolmaster's fruit was at cleaning time. Every day the classes and yard and toilets were swept by the boys. Two different groups did this on alternate days.

At dismissal the group on duty started a great clatter shoving desks. One or two boys got sprinkling tins to sprinkle water on the dusty floor. Naturally they would spill more than necessary and could hardly miss the temptation of pouring water down the necks or shoes of comrades busy sweeping with bass brooms. No sooner was a space swept when the desk belonging to it was banged into place. The dust was awful, you could see it coming out of the open windows clean across the square, with bursts of terrific noise. It was like an earth-quake.

I was not included in this crew. Louis, a brother of Alphonse, and myself were given the job of cleaning the drain gully of pebbles and washing the latrines. These were most elemental, consisting mostly of a row of holes in a cement floor. As the patrons of these institutions did not have a very good aim our job was to see that their contributions went where they belonged, through the holes. It took many a pail of water and pushing by birch brooms to do this. Old worn birch brooms were best for this purpose as they were stiffer than new ones. This work over, we washed the brooms and slipped off home, generally a little ahead of the classroom's sweeping gang -- whose exhaustion could be gauged by a gradual abatement of the noise coming through the dust clouded windows.

At first I was rather sickened by my filthy job but gradually became hardened to it; more so when I found it easy to slip into the orchard with Louis. He and I helped ourselves from the time the apples were the size of marbles. This diet was varied with pears or currants. Apparently old Cazier turned the blind eye to all this. He had plenty left and our help in watering during dry spells more than compensated this slight loss. It was a case of tacit pay.

MONSIEUR CAZIER'S TEACHINGS

Cazier generally began his classes by making us copy some saying or proverb written by him on the board for all to see and digest. These sayings or saws contained the essence of reality and the wisdom of ages. They were taken from all the philosophies of the world, ancient or modern. Many came from La Fontaine's animated version of Æsop's Fables -- for instance, the French equivalent of "Haste makes waste," "Many a mickle, makes a muckle" etc., or else some moral precept, such as respect to age, parents, the property of others. We listened carefully to his discussions and analysis of these guides of conduct, then we'd all sneak into the garden and steal the odd apple. It was like mice stealing crumbs from a cat for Monsieur Cazier was the self-appointed Juvenile Court of the Village. This fact was well known among the inhabitants of the district who brought every bit of gossip anent mischief, past or brewing, to Monsieur Cazier's attention. All he needed was a few facts. With the barest hints at hand he would hold court at the first opportunity. We would be aware of something unusual by Cazier's preamble, or his reading names of boys from a list, and ordering them to stand in the centre aisle before his high desk. This procedure was followed by a close cross-questioning of the suspects. He would catch them unaware, scare them into disculpating⁴⁷ themselves by accusing others who were promptly called upon to join the line-up. There was no attempt to follow the method of English Schools by calling upon the culprits to declare themselves. It would have been useless. A schoolmaster in France was obliged to work hard to locate guilty parties among his charges.

For instance, one day after calling for silence he said: "Mesdames Aubert's pony cart was taken away from in front of Buvelot's store last Thursday. On coming out after making purchases they found it gone. Mme. Buvelot recognized Ernest near it. Ernest stand in the aisle! Tell us what you know about it!" Ernest stood on one foot then on the other. "T'wasn't me...it was Albert." "Ah! Ha!" Cazier would exclaim, "This is interesting. Come up Albert! Tell us your story." Poor Albert whiter than a sheet, with the stare of fifty pairs of eyes on him, stumbled besides Ernest..."Well it was this way. Ernest, Jacques, Jean and me..." "Jacques and Jean come forward," interrupted Cazier inexorably.

It turned out that Jacques had climbed in the go-cart; Albert or Ernest had flicked the whip. The pony leaped in wild career through the village Street to be abandoned by the scared boys at the first opportunity. Some farmer had returned it to the owners.

To the delight of those uninvolved, this story of mischief unraveled itself dramatically from the lips of the culprits, hedging and lying themselves into deeper and deeper waters until the whole affair was laid bare from the initial plottings to its conclusion. Bursts of laughter greeted muddled statements, or Cazier's mimic of some particularly unfortunate lie. No sense of pity entered our hard young souls in regard to the cringing performers. We thought it was grand entertainment. The conclusion was always the same -- punishment.

To start with, each guilty party got a drumming on knuckles and legs from Cazier's pet ruler of the day.

As he walked among our toiling crew, scratching pens, making blots, spilling ink, dropping books, shooting spit-balls, his eye would suddenly fasten on one of these wooden affairs made to help us draw straight and narrow lines conducive perhaps to paths of similar virtue. They varied in cross-section from one half to perhaps three-quarters of an inch and, in length, from eighteen inches to three feet. The larger ones

⁴⁷ exculpate. "Disculpate" is an old form listed in Websters New International Dictionary of 1922 but not in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary of 1973-1981.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

were generally brought from Pointoise or Paris by doting parents -- hoping thus to encourage the thirst for knowledge of their young ones. They were appropriately of vivid coloring: crimson reds, vicious greens or Prussian blues dominated. Ominously they were cut from hardwood. Green or red best seemed to catch Cazier's eye. He would gradually draw nearer and nearer the irresistible attraction. Without a word, he appeared to look at the result of our intent efforts but his mind was not on learned matters; his whole attention was focused upon the new ruler. The uneasy scholar over whom he stood like a cloud of doom scarcely dared fidget until he could see Cazier's hand, fumble hesitatingly but with one unerring direction: the new ruler. What a relief for the disturbed pupil! A stage play of absentminded picking up and replacing the ruler would follow. Perhaps a few remarks to the class were sandwiched in. On some pretext or other he would begin by waving it as a baton or as a pointer, the while stealthily drawing away from the flattered owner still uncertain as to whether it would pass Cazier's pet test or land on his own knuckles. No, all was well. Here was Cazier introducing it at the nape of his neck and working vigorously up and down as a back scratcher. Upon this trial depended the popularity of the ruler. If it scratched too much or too little it was promptly returned and never even glanced at again. If its angles were just right to relieve unattainable itchy spots, then it would be twirled around to the joy of old Cazier until he had enough. Its joyful mission completed the ruler was replaced on the desk of the flattered boy whose vanity was tickled to the same degree as the ruler had eliminated tickles in Cazier's back. For several days, he would use this ruler until its virtues became less potent or blots of ink marred its surface. By that time another lad had a new one -- perhaps even the cheap local variety -- no matter, this sultan of rulers was on the look-out for a new favorite and with fickle mind abandoned the old. Of course it never entered my mind that bathing might have helped these distressing moments of my school-master's itching back. I was accustomed to the Saturday night tub, but, probably, he was more likely to make it a six monthly affair, if at all, as at that time the use of water inwardly or outwardly as I pointed out previously, was considered perilous by our kind friends of Auvers and shunned accordingly.

So Cazier always had some pet ruler and on the "grand" occasion of culprits needing a hiding he used it rapidly and effectively as a starter, or hors d'œuvre, to be followed by a speech and, if possible, by a mere tedious form of punishment: staying after school for several days, or lines to write.

Order being restored and the culprits again at work Cazier resumed his patrol among the aisles, working the ruler up and down his back with renewed vigor and ingenuity.

The boys might stay in one afternoon or two after which Mr. Cazier conveniently forgot the whole affair. He seldom got the lines as he never made entries of his sanctions. I wrote twenty-five lines for him once which I carried right through my school years, in case. But he never called for the first nor for any subsequent lot. I never volunteered to give them.

Strange to say this unorthodox discipline was very effective. With a lot of lively kids it carried weight and drama. It left no resentment nor grudge and there was no mischief but old Cazier's sharp ears somehow or other got hold of it and set it right, sometimes before it occurred. In this work he had the confidence of gendarmes and rural guards. Juvenile delinquency was thus practically non-existent in the little town.

However, these activities were but side lines compared to Cazier's pet hobby: singing. He had a good roaring baritone and could read his tunes direct from notes. The music may not have been very complicated but, just the same, it seemed marvellous to me that he could hum a tune never heard before, from the plain notes before him.

He taught us many songs. Patriotic songs, songs of love, of the simple village life, descriptive lyrics, and songs of one of his pet pursuits in season, hunting. These, performed in two parts, furnished the entertainment at the prize giving ceremony.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

His great delight was a voice which carried notes truly and clearly. He was not too particular about the tone. He enjoyed equally well my erstwhile rival Videcoq's heroic:

“L'air est pur la route est large,
Le clairon sonne la charge...”

by Paul Deroulède or my tender:

“Dors dans ton berceau, petite Mireille”

a French counterpart of “Sweet and Low.” But his despair at one who had no ear for music was pathetic. He would almost tear his hair out trying the impossible to make the unfortunate boy sing.

For instance there was Van Grunderbeck from Flanders. An old French canon was being sung:

“Good morn Pierrot
Good morn Jake - O
Let's kill the cock
Let's kill the cock
No more will you sing
Cocker-dee, Cocker-dah
No more will you sing
Cocker-dah -- ree -- co”

The tune was of the simplest. You could learn it at one hearing. In the crowd were good and mediocre voices, some poor but all somehow blended into an harmonious whole. Van's voice however was different; it would invariably stick out wildly and spoil everything. Where a note should be high he made it low, when low he made it high. Add to this a natural squeaky huskiness made worse by nervousness and the canon was ruined, completely spiked. Worst of all the effect was so comical that first one titter then a giggle rolled up into a roar. All singing came to a stop for some minutes. Cazier would then attempt to teach Van separately. “Stand up Van. Now, follow me: ‘Good morn, Pierrot...’” Somehow or other, as long as Cazier sang with him, by some unknown hypnosis he managed to be somewhere near the tune; more likely he merely hummed his version while Cazier's rich baritone drowned his squeaks and made the room tremble, smothering all Van's unwilling opposition -- for a while. Thus deluded, Cazier would try him out alone. No more dodging behind the Master's voice was possible then:

“Good morn Pierrot
Good morn Jake - O
Let's kill the cock...”

To go farther was impossible, every one was in fits and gasping for air. The cock was indeed killed and so was Van's last squeak, drowned in a roar of laughter. It would come near doing in old Cazier too, red in the face, perhaps as close to apoplexy as a man could be without the actual stroke; however, I am not without suspecting that he too may have been laughing for all we knew.

After one or two such episodes Cazier gave up. He told Van to remain silent during the singing hour. Song or no song, Van's name can be deciphered on the war dead monument of Auvers.

My possession of a clear soprano was a gift which brought me many favors. At the time of preparation for the prize-giving choir recital, Monsieur Cazier joined forces with the girls' school.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

This latter was run by a lady of advanced ideas, a Madame Poste. She was a forerunner of the suffragists and believed in woman having an individual identity. Her mode of thought went clean back to the French Revolution when men called themselves "citoyens." She signed her reports and letters "Femme Poste," ("Woman Poste") -- Fifi and Yvonne were her pupils. She had her own ideas regarding education. They must have differed from Monsieur Cazier's because he quoted her with a scarcely concealed sneer, and a not at all concealed superiority.

Yet, when the time came for the prize distribution rehearsals, Femme Poste generously handed over her girls to Monsieur Cazier so as to permit the formation of a two voiced choir. She went so far as to bring her girls to the Mairie where our school was situated to practice in the Assembly Hall where Town meetings and marriages took place.

Monsieur Cazier found that the volume of the girls' voices was not sufficient to balance the boys'. He evened up the matter by blending my soprano with theirs. Did I have a time! The girls pushed me and pinched me and I stamped on their toes when Cazier was not looking. I would finally place myself near my sisters Fifi and Yvonne. Having become wise in the ways of boys and practiced in the use of fists there was very little teasing from those who sang the second part or alto. Quite the contrary, I was somewhat envied as I walked importantly to take my place to practice and to perform among the little Jeannes, Suzannes, Alices and others.

Outside the regular curriculum old Cazier also taught us rifle shooting. One day after much wire pulling he received a long box which he opened before us. Before all the focused eyes he pulled out a brand new rifle, Lebel pattern, roughly of the 22 caliber.

"Mes enfants," said he, "some day La Patrie will need you. It is not enough to hear of its glories in song and story. You must also be prepared to pay to it your debt of blood (la dette du sang)." This latter phrase has stuck in my mind all these years. Here old Cazier had struck in two words the utmost which a citizen can do for his land, his country, which the French have summed in the word Patrie, from the word Pater, father.

Never could he forget the debacle of 1870-71. He was therefore going to teach us its lessons. "You must pay the debt of blood but, you must make the enemy also pay, drop for drop. Here is our carbine. We shall teach you to shoot straight at a target so that when the Prussian again crosses our Eastern frontier you will be ready, perhaps even regain our old provinces Alsace and Lorraine. Enough. The following boys are to come in the yard..." I listened to the list. My name was among them: "Robert." In the yard a target was set up as well as a door mat to lie on. He gave us directions. In turn we fired from a prone position the little BB caps which scarcely made a crack. The bullets striking against the metallic back stop went "th...amp." One or two very poor shots ricocheted -- my turn came. I was only nine. The rifle seemed to weigh a ton. I doubt if I hit the target once. Cazier was disgusted. Out I went.

For some weeks I was off the squad. I envied the boys who could leave the class room to shoot for one hour or so, twice a week. In the warm spring air of the yard I could hear "Crack -- th...amp." The sweet smell of the fulminate powder came faintly through open windows. At recess I searched around where the shooting had taken place to find flattened lead bullets, and little empty copper shells. Cazier's method was to let us simmer a while then to try us again. I was given a new trial. This time I decided to make a supreme attempt. I held the front sight full into the bulls eye instead of holding it flush with the top of the rear sight and below.

Naturally I was shooting high and going clean over the target every time. By some luck I managed to

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

nick the center of the top of the target. I knew then what to do. I aimed at the center of the bottom. First crack was in the black, second, third and the rest. In spite of one or two misses at the beginning I had a score above average. Monsieur Cazier looked pleased. Later in a regional competition I came first. As I plugged bull's eye after bull's eye I could hear Monsieur Cazier remark to the Master of a competing team: "These fellows from America are born with a rifle in their hands..." I felt like a Wild West cowboy, pistol and all. The prize was a five franc deposit in the Postal Savings Bank. I still have the pass-book. Five francs were then worth one hundred cents; now they are worth nothing. Thus interest went retrograde.

Our Master did not neglect chances for public competitions. In Paris there was a general test given for boys of elementary grades in which hundreds participated. It was held in the huge glass covered Orange conservatory. We went together from Auvers under his kindly guidance. We bought our own tickets and had lunch for one franc twenty-five centimes. It tasted delicious. After lunch came the exam. What a jumble it was!

Each, with pen and a small bottle of ink, found his appointed place. Hundreds of boys excitedly talked, pulled, quarreled, spilled ink. It was the most appalling confusion. Suddenly, on high towers, the monitors running the test started dictating the questions which each wrote down, then answered. This was followed by a dictation. In the semi-riotous state of affairs we missed half the questions, half the words. Driven to desperation we tried to get these from our neighbors, some kind, some mean; quarrels were inevitable.

In the midst of these discussions the monitors swooped upon us to pick up our papers: "Enough! Enough!" they shouted, "Time's up! Time's up!" It sounded like calls of doom. We sighed, handed in our muddled attempts and forgot all about it. Our little crowd collected itself from all over the conservatory, rejoined Monsieur Cazier and returned to Auvers, gloriously tired. I saved my bottle of ink and brought it home to Mother. On the first attempt I failed. The second was more successful and I received my diploma, in time.

As may be gathered from earlier notes Monsieur Cazier loved his garden. This resulted into his broadening out into academic studies of other phases of agriculture by introducing into the curriculum a book called "Modern Agriculture" and a novel called "Thou shalt be an Agriculturist." The reading of these texts enflamed my youthful mind to enthusiastically absorb their theories. M. Cazier made us take part in various agricultural competitions at Pontoise where we wrote several exams. As recompense I obtained two silver medals, "petit module." These agricultural activities bore their fruit finally. One day M. Cazier announced that he had been decorated. He had become a chevalier of the order of "Mérite Agricole," which scoffers called the order of the "Leek," "L'ordre du Poireau." Notwithstanding the cynicisms of the jealous-minded, Monsieur Cazier henceforth proudly wore in his boutonnière the red and green button of his rural knighthood, as worthy as any in the land.

My last public examination took place at Pontoise. Its purpose was to test us on our grade school work for admission to secondary, or high schools. I got through with flying colors attaining third place among the hundreds competing for the district. I was also the youngest.

Ease now replaced awkwardness in my school work. Notwithstanding the fact that my grade work was finished I attended the school at Auvers for another year until the summer of 1898 when I was twelve. I would have gladly stayed there as long as I was allowed. M. Cazier now used me as his right hand boy in assisting to teach backward youngsters. The bullies of early years were gone. I now ruled their erstwhile followers with a benign, yet firm hand. This included young Gilpin whose sardine tin had hit me in the head on my first day at school, two or three years before.

DOINGS OUT OF SCHOOL

My first impressions of Maurice, my little neighbor were unfavorable. He had been in the first rank of my tormentors when I started school and had nicked my head with an empty sardine can. In retort I had ambushed him with his friends and had tried to brain him with boulders hurled from my garden fortress. Later, having patiently acquired some knowledge of the use of fists for guard and offense, I went for him. Although he was about my size, he did not wait for me, but ran for all he was worth, then made approaches. Tacitly we made peace and became good friends.

Among the boys he was my nearest neighbor. He lived across the road in a low yard, near my good friend Appoline, the one whose pears I had tried to steal.

His Father was Père Ferdinand, his Mother, Mère Sophie. The former was reputed to be almost as lazy as his donkey, also called Ferdinand. All were very good-natured folk. To this day I do not know how they lived, save that there was a patch of garden near their two-roomed, dirt-floored, thatched cottage. They were just one stage above Pinaud. The difference lay in the fact that they were always clean. Their clothes might sport multi-colored patches but they were free of dirt. Maurice had a carefree, jolly character. He and I soon settled upon whistle signals which we used during our stay at Auvers. Since then, my brothers, my son and I have continued to whistle these calls, over a period of some forty-seven years.

In the morning, whoever was first would tumble out to pick up the other. Together we tramped off the ten minutes to school with our bags of books. On dismissal we trooped across the square in front of the Mairie and disappeared into the lane which led to the Sansonne, that winding dirt road depicted by Cézanne, which led to Les Vallées. Seasons brought variety to the features observed as we went. Maurice and I would linger in the Fall to pick up the long leafless stems of the horse chestnut. Later on, as winter came, we slid, or, on the rare occasions when snow fell, we had snowball fights.

All this however was of minor interest compared to the coming of spring. Early in February we climbed the rolling slopes above the Sansonne for the first buds of violets. I was thrilled to discover these buds and jealously watched them for a sign of opening. To hasten the final blossoming I would blow on the scarcely divided petals and generally succeeded in securing a blossom or two, thus opened, for Mother's birthday on February 12. Later on the hawthorn would come out. We wandered around these bushes to look at the blossoms and smell their odd perfume. We searched their branches for the scarab-like insects of rich green and gold color crawling in the lace-like flowers. Goodness knows why we collected them. The local name for them was "catinette."⁴⁸ One day I lingered a bit longer than I should have on my way home, gathering these catinettes. I clean forgot about time. As I stretched to reach a high branch on which crawled the golden-green insects, I slipped and fell. My open palm struck a piece of glass which cut me near the base of the thumb, and did I bleed! The cut was deep and startled me into the realization that I was extremely late for home-coming. Jules, a boy of limited wit ricaned⁴⁹ at me: "Ha! Ha! Ha! The catinettes have brought you bad luck." It was so stupid I could have fought him. But there was no question of such a thing. My hand bled profusely and Maurice saw me home. The cut was very deep and took a long time to heal; but Mother did not scold me for coming home so late. She understood the overpowering attraction of the fields above the Sansonne at hawthorn time.

Later in the season the sun would become quite hot around noon time. At the top of the climb we

⁴⁸ "catin" is defined as a woman of bad morals.

⁴⁹ "ricaner" means "to snigger or giggle away."

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

watched the little lizards flick about among the rubble stone walls, among the wild morning glories, which scantily covered them.

We lingered, yet marched on, ever a little nearer to our homes where food provided the necessary magnet. At noon it was lunch; at four it was the buttered piece of bread, though at times, when butter was expensive, we used lard for spread. To a hungry boy this tasted delicious. This unhurried gait of schoolboys has resulted in the French equivalent of “the road by Robin Hood’s barn” being called the Schoolboys’ Road (le chemin des écoliers). The noon hour trip was fairly hurried, but at four there was a lightness to our step on being let out for the day, but if there had been no four o’clock crust awaiting us we would have taken much longer.

On reaching home we got rid of books and play⁵⁰. In winter we were confined. The years little John was so sick I had quite a time entertaining him. I made little paper chariots on wheels, with nails. John was so entertained that Mother would welcome me joyfully: “Come up to see John -- he has been calling for you all afternoon!” “Jean will not eat until he sees you .” Poor little John would watch my chariots fly around and thus absorbed would swallow the food spoon-fed to him by Mother.

In spring or summer we repaired to our playground behind the house with Fifille, Yvonne, Henri. There we scattered among shrubs and trees, the girls with their dolls and the boys to play Indians with their bows and arrows. Our playground was enclosed by a chicken wire fence with two gates leading out to the Moutier road. These were padlocked.

My early escapades in going out of bounds had made me realize how distressed Mother was when she could not find me. We really had plenty of room to play and there was little reason for more. Nevertheless I envied little Maurice’s freedom. He could go and come as he pleased. The only thing to remember was meal times, a not very difficult thing to do when the clock was the call of a young stomach for food. As to allowing Maurice into our yard, that was another question. Mother had certain ideas about class distinctions, a very firm tradition easily understandable in the Norman Isles. The result was that, for a long time, I could not see Maurice after return from school until next morning brought us together again.

But we finally managed otherwise. By our system of whistles, which he could hear in his yard, I would tell him to come to our meeting place at the part of our grounds, back of the house and farthest from it. Thus surprise would be minimized by the necessity of walking several hundred feet up hill to reach this spot.

We met there, sat and talked, Maurice on one side of the chicken netting and I on the other. Having both read books of adventure of wrecked sailors we built a hut of sticks, covered with grass for a roof. The chicken wire netting separated the hut in two, but it was the mainstay of the roof, of which the rafters were passed through its hexagonal holes.

Our idea was to enjoy each other’s company even if it should rain. For a long time we carried that illusion until rain actually came but, our roof being flat, we got soaked. I was puzzled and not a little disappointed. My dream of becoming a Robinson Crusoe was literally dampened and all but finished. I did not realize that a sloped roof was necessary. At any rate this would have been beyond our resources of sticks and our meager grass supply.

Nevertheless we enjoyed the shade of this rickety structure. We entertained ourselves by reading aloud the French equivalent of dime novels or Westerns. In this way our hut became in turn the lair of robbers, the shelter of ship-wrecked sailors, the castle of nobles and even the palace of oriental potentates.

⁵⁰ “played?”

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

However I found the chicken wire that divided our hut in two quite irksome when it came to looking closely at the lurid illustrations of blood and thunder stories. As nothing could persuade Maurice to come within my tabooed fortress, I decided to leave its bounds and join him. I did this by climbing up one tree on my side of the fence and climbing down another which was outside the fence.

My feelings on each tree were poles apart. On one tree I felt tied down, the sensation I had had in Paris, in the Luxembourg gardens, or at Mme. Daubigny's village residence. On the tree outside the fence I immediately breathed differently as when one comes out of doors from a stuffy room. The sky seemed bluer, the flowers fairer and the whole expanse of the Plain of Auvers beckoned to me. However, sitting beside Maurice, tasting this delicious forbidden fruit of freedom, I was always uneasy lest Mother should take it into her head to leave her housework and babies to come and see what I was doing. At the first sign or noise I could climb back rapidly into our grounds and, panting, resume my seat on my side of the hut. This dodging around gave an added thrill of reality to the stories we read. Maurice, of course, did not have it. His people did not mind what he did, so long as he kept out of mischief and from being underfoot in the two-room cottage.

Nevertheless, Mother came up one day. She was not trying to catch me. She just naturally wandered up because she had not seen this part of the grounds for a long time. We were so absorbed in the frightful story of a brave French sailor in India that we did not hear her. She was close to us, staring absent-mindedly. Shame-facedly I said: "I'll come right in, Mother, I'm sorry."

"No child, stay where you are, have a good time! Lovely isn't it Maurice?"

I was dumbfounded.

After that I grew bolder; I asked her if I could go on the plain, outside the grounds; she said yes but to let her know about where I was going so that she could find me if I became lost. Nevertheless I left our grounds by the tree, even with permission. It gave me more of a thrill.

My range now extended to a little grove of hazel-nut bushes. Never had I such fun as gathering these hazel nuts and cracking them in the shade, on stones amid the dry grasses and pungent weeds, such as yarrow, mint, thyme. There were wild mourning doves in this grove. They had a nest nearby. Their melancholy notes seemed to intensify the love I felt for my little hazel wood as if it were an unreal thing, to be doubly cherished because it was so transitory.

Sometimes my sisters accompanied me on the plain to glean the ears of wheat left after harvest. This was encouraged by Mother. Our pickings gave us much food for the chickens. Ear by ear we gathered. Some ears were yellow and some were a dark bronze. When I had all my hand could hold I tied the small handful and hid it like a squirrel to return later with other handfuls. It was surprising what large bundles could be gathered in this way, after the stacks had been taken away.

These bundles of ears, well rounded with grain, were very beautiful. More than one was taken by Father into his studio, to decorate the walls.

When blackberries were ripe I would also be encouraged in taking my sisters to the patches I knew so well. There we gathered many a dessert of fresh fruit or fruit to be put into preserves.

Sometimes Maurice was with us, sometimes I was alone. On one of these latter occasions I found a large horse chestnut tree. Although it had a girth larger than my stout little body, I managed to climb into its lower branches, thence into its topmost limbs. It seemed like being in the sky; I felt dizzy when I looked down

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

but it was not a feeling of terror but rather of pleasant fright. I shook chestnuts off the tree and when I got down I had another thrill picking them up among their newly opened burrs. There is nothing more glossy maroon than a newly opened horse chestnut nor a purer white than its under portion where it contacts the burr. I gathered scores of these and made several trips to bring them inside our grounds. Having amassed the heap I didn't know what to do with it.

Fifille, with true feminine instinct, threaded them into a long chain which adorned her from neck to waist even with a double loop. I felt that my effort had not been entirely fruitless.

These excursions went on with varying objectives. I looked into all sorts of corners of woodlands and fields finding interesting tid-bits as above. One day I ran into an English walnut tree. It was not very far from my horse-chestnut and much easier to climb. The nuts were yet unripe. Their outer green shell stained my fingers. When the season was sufficiently advanced I filled my pockets with the ripened nuts to bring them home. This did not prove a satisfactory method of transport for my treasure trove so I planned to use a little haversack, borrowed from Father's studio. With this haversack slung over my shoulder I straddled our fence and jumped over into the open spaces of the Plain of Auvers and set out towards my walnut tree. I made no particular attempt to keep under cover, but, coming near the tree, I became more careful as I did not wish any other boys to share my secret. As I penetrated the bush there suddenly burst a great hullabaloo. It was Poisson, the much feared rural guard. He had stealthily lain in wait for me, or someone else, and, fearing to lose his prey in the underbrush, had thus tried to terrorize me into immobility. The memory of Madame Pique's cherries came to me at once and I darted like a hare among shrubs and fields, reaching my ladder-like trees in ten minutes or so. Poisson was slower. He had not calculated on my weaving, yet rapid retreat. But he had recognized me. I must have been home a half-hour. My pantings had completely subsided. I was quietly playing in the yard as if I had never been anywhere else, all afternoon. The gate bell rang. It was Poisson.

"Where is your little boy?" he asked the servant.

"Here," she replied.

"Wasn't he out?"

"Not that I know."

It turned out to be an alibi. I played on unconcernedly, in full sight. Finally Poisson left but I could here his muttering under his breath.

"C'est drôle, ça. C'est drôle tout de même." (It's strange this; it is really strange.)

This walnut tree, although situated in unfenced woods, apparently had the same status of taboo as Marie Pique's isolated cherry trees from which my Father had chased a bevy of American girls a few years before. The business of sorting out what was open to the public, such as hazel nuts for instance, and what was not, such as walnuts and cherries, was quite beyond me. As fear wore off, I went out again but it was with the utmost care and no Iroquois could wiggle his way unseen better than I could. However the status of the walnut tree having been determined by old Poisson, I left it quite alone and contented myself with blackberries and hazel nuts for my pirate chest, near the ancient cave.

FAIRY GIFTS FADING AWAY

1896 was for us all a very memorable year. It began normally enough. Father was closing his end of the business connected with the Cotton States Exhibition at Atlanta, Georgia for which Mr. Horace Bradley was agent at Atlanta. This business consisted mostly in returning unsold pictures to local artists. There had been several sales among which one for artist Merson. However a war message by President Cleveland plunged the U. S. into a panic. Everyone South wanted to volunteer, said Bradley's letter, and all thoughts of art purchase vanished. Further along in January, Fred Keppel wrote from New York that business was dull.

At this juncture on January 19, 1896, a little brother was born -- promptly named Jean François, after Jean François Millet -- whom we promptly called "petit Jean." As usual Dr. Vanier officiated.

In the meantime Father, since his successful sale of pictures at New York, had been accumulating pictures of contemporary or of old masters. In doing this he had practically spent every dollar over and above his house expenses. Now he found himself with a fine collection but no money. He decided that the time had come to realize. I presume that the news from America, forecasting a possible depression which he had missed so narrowly in his sale of 1893 influenced him. At any rate he sent a list of his pictures to a London firm, Robinson & Fisher, with the object of making a sale. Why did he choose London for this purpose, instead of New York? I can only explain it by his possible fear that, with business deteriorating every day, there was not enough time for dealing in New York. London was certainly closer, but he forgot that, in art matters, it was also a good deal more blasé.

At any rate, after due publicity, the sale took place in April. I find by the accounts that it was indeed a disaster: only some £35 gross were realized -- not enough to pay commissions and expenses. It was a far cry from the New York results of three years before; instead of large profits he owed money. Moreover most of his collection was gone and with it all he had made at the previous sale. Some time after the pictures had been packed and shipped and the walls looked bleak and bare where they had hung, I saw Father and Mother conferring. I knew immediately something was radically wrong. Father looked drawn and haggard. He seemed crushed. On the Monday morning following however, he left for Paris, bowed and pensive.

When he was gone Mother requested me to go with her towards the village. A few rods away from our house we turned towards a place called Valhermeil; a few paces more we stood in front of the iron gates of a villa belonging to Mme. Dutertre, the good lady at whose doll christening I had officiated. There, in a whisper, she confided to me that she was about to disclose something I must never, never divulge. I promised.

"Alfred, we are ruined..."

My slight acquaintance with melodramatic stories made me fully grasp the importance of this revelation. The details were hardly listened to. I was stunned. My first question was "How much does it cost us to live?" "Two hundred francs a month," replied Maman. To my childish mind this seemed a huge sum, beyond any earning. At school we had lessons in morals and ethics and I remembered the stress placed on thrift. "We must cut down expenses," I remarked, but the nightmare of poverty and starvation just about scared the wits out of me. The shock of this revelation upset me so completely that, to this day, I can feel the fear it engendered in me.

"I shall do all I can for you, Maman, to help."

"Yes, yes, dear boy, I count on you," and from that time on she told me everything and we shared our

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

anxieties.

Father came back late the following Wednesday. I did not see him till Thursday which was our off-day at school. He was very quiet.

He was really at his wits' end. From letters received later I gather he had asked my aunt Alice for a loan of \$200.00. (She later sent \$20.00 and advised him to try Mrs. Coyl or Uncle Tom.) Having made these requests he could do nothing but wait for results. This inactivity, the inability to do anything seemed maddening. About noon, I could not say what were the circumstances, probably some request for change, he drew out his coin purse and out of it a small gold piece tumbled to spin on the table.

“There, said he, “the last louis...”

The last louis, twenty francs, three days to live; and then what? No bread, no meat, no vegetables, just that gnawing hunger which I had felt on long walks with Father. Things were gloomy indeed!

Somehow or other we had lunch. After it, things seemed better. Father decided to go for a walk. I went with him. The weather was damp and overcast but the air was sweet with the smell of budding leaves and those fallen the preceding autumn. We went up to the Plain, cut across plowed fields, where I muddied my boots and we flushed partridges hard by some patch of blackberry bush, with last year's brown leaves still fluttering on prickly stems; then we came across the road to Hérouville.

This was a military road which cut straight across the country, flanked by the typical French trees branched carefully to have only a tuft near the top where a round ball of mistletoe would frequently show black among the transparent mass of twigs. We followed the road into the village of Hérouville which bore the outward signs of utmost poverty. Uninteresting, grey, sodden, it was hardly the place for a man to come to when broke. Nevertheless Father, due to the air and exercise, perhaps the contrast of being better off than these peasants, had brightened up considerably. We had taken a couple of crusts of bread and some chocolate and I was almost shocked when he took me in to eat it. We were the only patrons. We sat in a deserted room, cold and damp, paved with earthenware tile. The host came for our order, which was a bottle of “limonade gazeuse” which literally translated would be “gaseous lemonade,” actually lemon flavored soda pop. It never occurred to me that this superfluous drink purchased with part of our last louis was indeed a chilly way of stirring our courage. To both of us it tasted delicious although I was puzzled and mentally questioned the wisdom of spending our last pennies in this manner. I could not make out either the miracle of Father's recovering his cheerfulness in the midst of this financial debacle. Still, I was going to play up to it and I did. We left the inn in great fettle. The heavy clouds were breaking, interspersed by blue patches and rapid streams of sunlight as we walked towards a farm called “la ferme de Fontenelle,” which I have mentioned before. There we stopped some half hour, he chatting with the Madame, while I chased geese.

Thence we walked on to dip into a small valley where nestled the village of Nesles-la-Vallée. This village was served by a train of liliputian dimensions. By the time we arrived there I was tired enough⁵¹ to accept a ride home by train, for which tickets cost a few coppers more. The limonade gazeuse incident had sufficiently prepared me for this spendthrift policy; moreover I was glad enough to get off my ten year old legs to get home. On arrival there I was put to bed, early, to sleep with undisturbed dreams of green plains, cheerful farms and toy railways. The details of this walk have stayed with me all these years, so impressed I was by the circumstances.

Father's recovery of composure puzzled me for years. I can now explain it. After the first shock, his

⁵¹ The Michelin map indicates that it is 11 kilometers or 6 7/8 miles from Auvers to Nesles-la-Vallée via Hérouville.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

youth (he was only thirty-five), his nimble mind, reassumed their ascendancy. The walk took his mind off the gloomy aspects of the picture punctuated by the last louis. Pure oxygen had entered his blood stream.

He had made two decisions; both obvious enough. One was to leave pictures for sale in Paris at a picture merchant's named Cousins. The other was based on the fact that he owned outright his house at Les Vallées. To raise immediate funds for a sales campaign he could place a mortgage on it. In this connection he visualized fields for his efforts.

First were various cities in the United States; second a new untried country, Canada, three of whose inhabitants he had met on ship board. One was an old gentleman, the other two were his charming daughters. Any man at any age would be flattered to be called "charmant artiste" and "cher ma"tre;" Father at thirty-five was scarcely an exception. All these projects, simmering in his mind, cleared away the gloom of the loss of his pictures and the disaster of the sale. Here was something to do about it. He reacted and was ready for another battle with life.

To make matters better, on the next trip to Paris, he was greeted by Cousins with the news that one of his pictures had sold for some 250 francs. Commission and expenses deducted left ten louis, thus reassuring him of the value of his own work.

On June 25, 1896 he obtained 4000 francs as mortgage on Les Vallées. So he was again in funds.

Meanwhile, unacquainted with all these new developments, I kept marvelling how Mother could make that last louis last so long to feed us all, for, by that time, we were five children: Fifille, Yvonne, Henry, John and myself.

Later on, in June, very much encouraged by all these turns for the better, Father decided to take another walk to the Ferme de Fontenelle where perhaps he would find more inspiration. Naturally I went with him. At the Ferme, Father painted some study or other while I explored every bin, every barn, every hen coop and finally stayed in the sheep fold to play with lambs and ewes. This time we were asked for lunch by the farmer, a dour, calloused and sad-looking man, though very kindly. His gay, vivacious young wife may have whispered in his ear. At any rate we had ample fare with the hired help. Peas, large and thoroughly cooked to a flour-like consistency, tasted particularly delicious to my hungry palate. We went home with the study, happy as could be. We arrived in time for supper.

But I hardly enjoyed this: I had a head-ache. During the night I felt as if I were whirled around in space. What sleep I had was oppressed by nightmares. The next day Dr. Vanier came: "measles" said he.

Pimples developed and soon, brothers, sisters and Mother joined me in this catching malady. Two rooms separated by an arch held our beds. It was a regular hospital. Six of us, Mother and Petit Jean on one side, brothers and sisters on the other. More fever and more nightmares. We were given hot herb tea (I think it was borage) to make us perspire. Before we knew it we were all out and happy but Mother and Petit Jean (Little John) took it hard, particularly John who kept a hard cough which he could not shake off. Nevertheless the utter joy of coming out, to race about in the yard and garden was like new life. Never the flowers seemed sweeter, particularly the beautiful, exotic and pungent coreopsis.

It took a pretty strong constitution to nurse a family of six through measles after a disastrous sale, down to the last louis. Father did it nevertheless and kept preparing his plans. I see by a letter from Uncle Tom Wickenden, dated July 6, 1896 that he thought Father's plan to go to Montreal and Quebec a good one. Business in the United States, he said, was stagnant due to the Presidential election and the currency question. His advice was that Father should try for portraits as the best way out of trouble. Ulpiano Checa wrote

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

offering help. Bad luck, said he, cannot last forever. Both hoped the measles would be over soon.

“Dated August 5th, a letter from Mrs. M. R. Coyl stated that finances in the United States were in a “startlingly fearful condition.”

Though conditions were so bad in America and though he had received no specific commissions from Canada, he decided to risk all on going there. It was a new field. Should it fail, he could switch down into the States as a last resort.

Before we knew it Father was gone and had arrived overseas with the good wishes of his friends in France and to the delight of his Mother, brothers and friends in America. They were most happy to have him on American soil. Mrs. Coyl signed a letter: “your Mother of adoption” and wanted him to come to Detroit for a good rest. His brother, Uncle Tom, was also delighted. He gave a very vivid view of conditions in the United States. He said that business was in very bad shape. If democrats were re-elected he could not foresee what would be the result. Money was going into hiding and was very scarce. He had lost money on two contracts and had no cash. He hardly knew which way to turn in this year which he called the toughest of all his life. However Mrs. Coyl later wrote again sending \$50.00, a very welcome sum at this juncture though she stated she wished it were \$100.

In spite of all these uncertainties, another picture had been sold by Cousins at Paris for 800 francs more, so that one way and another he managed to tide over the expenses of trip and hotels to Quebec until cash could be raised. To do this he organized a sale which took place at the end of October at the Quebec City Hall. This comprised pictures brought over from France and others painted in the neighborhood of Quebec as well as in the Lake St. John country, where he had gone on an excursion ticket. His reception was good. Local press notices were enthusiastic and patrons not only bought pictures but gave him commissions for portraits. He was simply lionized. The press, the high Officials, the Clergy and the Aristocratic Society of the City and Province vied with each other to invite him, to entertain him and last but not least, to buy his works. This was indeed an emergence from the deep despair of a few months before.

BYE-LOW BABY BUNTING FATHER'S GONE A-HUNTING

The house seems very large and empty now that the Master is gone. Fall is on the way; winds, even breezes, have a chilly bite. Darkness comes earlier to blacken the curious maze of corridors and winding stairs that connect together rooms or different parts of the fantastic old house. Some of these are drafty. When one retires at night it is necessary to hold one's hand in front of the candle whose light appears almost smothered by black shadows. Then it is one feels rather than hears whispers: ghosts? fairies? lutines?⁵² elves? Perhaps. Strange that when the Master is here they do not show signs of being. The Master's presence in one room seems to keep them quiet in the whole house. Perhaps they, too, enjoy seeing him around. Perhaps like us they sigh back in content when his protective influence is within the place.

Now he is gone they feel unease. So does the Mistress of the house, walking slowly from bed-room to bed-room where children sleep, herself a little ghostly as the candle flame dances hither and yon, its little face making grimaces in the fear that one puff, stronger than others, may extinguish it. One flame has only one life. Re-lighting the candle does not create the same flame. It is another flame and another life.

The mistress is half satisfied; she enters her own bedroom. There the youngest, still an infant, sleeps in his crib -- tending his little needs is a palliative for the emptiness she feels around her. No more we hear the horn over the hill on the other side of the Valley calling its old love song. The player has gone from the hill-side, the love is over the ocean and the tune carries its enlarging ether waves into stellar spaces.

When Mother was left alone in the large rambling house, the first time Father went to America, she was only 23. As I grew older I noted the change that came over her when this happened. She seemed more alert, perhaps a little harder. She was the captain of the garrison⁵³ then.

There was a feeling of defense over the whole place. One morning as I rummaged about her bed, still unmade, lifting a pillow to throw at my sister Fiffle, I froze in my gesture as I saw the little bull-dog pistol lying on its side under it. This was the same revolver that Father had used ineffectively for sundry purposes including rats. When I exclaimed about it Mother removed it rapidly to a safe place ordering me never to touch such a dangerous thing. I was indeed too scared to touch it, especially as I had observed the shadowed, rounded noses of the bullets inside the little barrel. What practical use Mother intended to make of the thing in case of necessity, I cannot picture. I think she tried it once, just to see if it would go off.

There was also a dog. Father and Mother were careful to select one that would combine good guard qualities along with a kind disposition to children, a very difficult problem to solve. We had a succession of dogs, finally purchasing one which seemed to fulfil our requirements. He was a black poodle named Marquis. There is one thing of which I am certain however, and it is that Mother's courage would not have failed us in the event of meeting a thief or burglar in the nest of her young ones. On the few occasions of even distant threat which occurred, her gentleness was replaced by an unbelievable fierceness of purpose which one would never have suspected in one so gentle. She who fainted at the sight of a mouse would unhesitatingly walk into a distant room on hearing an unusual sound, and there were plenty in this centuries-old structure; not merely one creak at a time but several in rhythmic sequence frequently came to us as if someone were walking in the

⁵² French for imp, sprite, goblin.

⁵³ "of" substituted for "and" in the draft.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

library, or the parlor, or the huge studio, or the medieval back-winding staircase besides the old bake oven -- this latter seemed particularly fit for an entrance to some traditional underground passage into the side of the hill on which we were backed to a height of two stories.

The most suspicious noises were not necessarily the loudest. The stealthier they were, the worse we felt. It might be a repeated shuffle or a weary sigh perhaps. At that, games, readings, knittings stopped simultaneously, all looking up at the same instant. That was the worst of it. The feeling that something might be there, in some distant room, caused a sudden, simultaneous jerk in all of us, a choking sensation, wild beats in our hearts. Sometimes Mother, on second thought, could reassure us: "It's a loose tile..." or curtain, or some other commonplace thing. We then resumed games, reading or knitting, but not quite reassured, still on the qui-vive. Other times she would stand up, ears at the listen. Opening the door cautiously, perhaps a poker in hand, perhaps without anything, she would noiselessly explore the cause of our alarm, disappearing from the light of our large kerosene lamp into what seemed the caves of night. Endlessly, seconds ticked from the old weighted clock -- what could have happened? Unharmd, she would reenter -- she was there! before us, talking. I felt as if some strange power might some time swallow her up when she left us on these night prowls and that we might never see her again. Her courage to my young eyes seemed beyond belief.

Once however, it was not imagination playing on nerves. That time Mother knew it was someone. There was no doubt about it. In vain we looked for our dog Marquis to reinforce us. We could not find him anywhere. Mother felt there was no use wasting more time. There was someone in the studio. Happily my Grandmother Ahier was there to act as guard for us children. On this occasion there was no fooling with a poker. The little nickel-plated pistol was in Mother's hand ready for action. As she went up the stairs towards the studio we heard the noise again. On she went, nerved up because she knew she was not dealing with the supernatural. She almost craved the encounter, feeling the strength of a weapon to use. She emerged into the huge studio. Her entrance was simultaneous with a crash and a bump followed by hurried steps outside. The flight made her feel triumphant. She called to her Mother -- "Come up with a light -- he's gone!"

My grandmother, insofar as her age permitted, climbed the two flights of stairs to the studio. The light revealed the cause of the crash: the man had escaped through one of the skylight panes, a bludgeon dropped in his hurry explaining the bump. As to the dog, we located him later in some corner or other, sound asleep. We accused him of cowardice but I really think this was not the case, he just didn't care. The rest of the night was sleepless of course but the disturbed would-be burglar took good care not to show up again.

The local police were warned next day (there were no phones at that time). They stamped around, examined the place, made loud boasts and tapped their revolver holsters. Nothing came of it. The glass was swept up, the pane replaced, and Mother resumed her vigil of creaky noises.

However there were many things to attend to besides noises real or imagined. Accidents as well as incidents occurred during which there was no question of listening to shuffles or sighs from gone centuries. Such for instance were those created by the guard dog Marquis who so disgraced himself during the attempted burglary episode. We children naturally wanted to play with him although he was quite cranky. One day when I was jumping around him with little Brother Henry on my back he leaped on my ear and all but tore it off. The maid rushed immediately to the local Doctor who came with his little case. The hanging organ was plastered into place. While Mother held it, the Doctor stitched. No anaesthetic, local or complete. It was done in the raw. I was about eight years old. For a long time the wound ran with pus and I had boils from infection. These latter were cured by old reliable Dr. Vanier who duly called on us for this purpose. The ear so grafted "took." I still have it, perhaps a little awry. In spite of this I pleaded for Marquis' life and won. It was really unfortunate for us I did. A year or two after this episode sister Yvonne got badly bitten by the same dog. This time there were doubts as to whether he had rabies or not. The dog was sent to some veterinary for examination. In the meantime Mother risked no chances. She took Yvonne to the Pasteur Institute in Paris.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Doctor Roux,⁵⁴ a famous Member of the Institute, made the examination and decided on the antitoxin's use, in case of doubt. Those were the early days of this method of treatment. As a result many injections had to be made, some forty in the case of Yvonne. This figure is closely fixed in my mind because Dr. Roux gave a five centime copper to his little patient as a reward, each time she took the needle without trouble. As a result Yvonne gathered about forty such coppers -- riches unbelievable to our eyes. We envied her the dog bite which had brought her such a cascade of sous.

After Yvonne's affair it was quite clear that Marquis was more dangerous to the family than to burglars. He was therefore destroyed by the veterinary.

In spite of these cares, Mother still found rare outlets for relaxation. She managed to go to Paris occasionally which was not difficult, as it cost little more than our ordinary street-car fare. These trips were frequently for Father's account. He wanted some of his pictures packed, shipped. She had to get men to do this and go through all the red-tape of export. Her principal trip however took place before Christmas to shop at the Department Stores whose catalogues were received early in the Fall and which gave us their fascinating entertainment. Her return from these trips was closely watched by us children but she always eluded our inquiries regarding presents. Sometimes indeed it was not difficult; there were none. But she always managed somehow to get oranges or a few candles and to dress a Christmas tree. As time went on we gathered a few decorations that were carefully saved for the celebration from year to year. We also kept the tree, dutifully transplanting it into tub and back into the garden where it finally stayed after we left. Years after Father visited it. It had become a full grown pine almost as tall as the house.

There were also visits, odd farmer weddings. These latter being conducted with all the ceremonial of the countryside. After the ceremony the guests, bride and groom in front, promenaded through the village headed by a fiddler or two to entertain the promenaders. Or else they went on drives in small buses. The principal reason of this exercise was apparently to rouse an appetite, because the wedding feast that followed was truly Gargantuan; meats, fish, vegetables, desserts floated in hungry throats borne on an assembly line of wines, topped off by liqueurs. How any one could sing after such a compound stuffing seems a miracle now. Guests stood up called by the bridegroom who presided the feast and produced more or less melodious entertainment. This is my impression of the one or two weddings I attended as escort for Mother. The last wedding celebration, however, went on into the night. We had to walk home from Méry, some two miles at about half past eleven. Mother had a hard time to get me to make the grade; I was only eight or nine. My whinings, I suppose, made her impatient; the next time she went alone. A little favor imitating orange blossoms stayed with us a long time until lost in the shuffle of moves.

All the above episodes of burglary, dog troubles, marriage feasts, took place during Father's trips to America. During these periods of absence there were also serious cases of sickness: colds, bronchitis, even pneumonia.

The most critical time we had was when Father left for America in the Fall of that disastrous year of 1896. For him it was the supreme effort to re-establish, not the family fortunes, but its barest chances of subsisting. The success of this trip could not be put in jeopardy by stinting. Practically all the ready money he had was necessary to pay for the trains, boats, freight, hotels and travel in general. I can see Father and Mother talk over the division of funds, banking on the little garden patches to feed us, "the stones of the hill," the hen coop -- bits of food here, bits of credit there -- anything to reduce the ready cash to be left to carry on for two or three months and then what? It was really a frightful gamble.

And what was the situation at that time? Mother, Fiffille, Yvonne, Henry, John and I, all had had a bad

⁵⁴ Pierre-Émile Roux (1853-1933) was the developer of the treatment for diphtheria by means of horse serum.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

attack of measles. Mother and John (not a year old), still felt the after effects. Both were very weak indeed. Mother's mind was in the fogs of weariness when she was left with these responsibilities. Happily, in all the preliminary arrangements, somehow or other, a helper had been provided for Mother. It was Berthe, our maid.

Berthe a short time before had been hired by us. Some chance put us in touch with her. One of these was that she was the cheapest we could get, as she claimed no experience, being a newly widowed girl. Only 25, beautiful, ladylike, she had lived a life of ease as wife of a newspaper reporter when suddenly he died of some rapid illness. She was superstitious about it. She said she had seen crows flying across her path on that dreadful morning and her husband and lover had died. Broken-hearted, penniless, the pangs of hunger had forced her to look for anything, just to live. She knew little but the happiness of existence. Its drudgery had not struck her yet. When we hired her for some fifteen francs a month her status scarcely improved. A precariously poor table was hers, and the care of a half-ill woman and her convalescing children. Yet her good nature, her capabilities were never more apparent than in this double crisis, hers and ours. She showed stamina, kindness, courage, devotion such as I have seldom seen, in her efforts to see us through.

With the elasticity of youth she managed to look well in spite of all these cares; she also did not fail to watch for chances of improving her position.

Our butcher, one of the richest men in the village, fell completely for her. One result was that he took our route instead of allowing one of his helpers to do it. Mother soon found the advantage of allowing Berthe to purchase our meat; it was worth the extra time Berthe took to give Mr. Ducheval the benefit of her large grey eyes and it facilitated putting off the time for paying bills.

In the case of our milk supply it was different. We had to get it ourselves at a farm a mile away. This could be easily managed when we were all well, but when all were sick how could it be obtained? Boys were sent for it for a sou or two. When Monsieur Vassar, the farmer, discovered that we were ailing he very kindly undertook to bring the milk himself. This was a difficult thing for one who labored all day at his farm work. He was naturally tired when he arrived at our house and sat down to gossip with Mother. He was a very conscientious old man and for a bit of gossip kept bringing us our milk all winter which relieved us not a little of this problem. Naturally he was very patient regarding the payment of his bill.

Thus the butcher and milkman were taken care of. Our baker, somehow or other fell into line. But there were other things for which cash was necessary -- drugs -- eggs -- shoes -- odds and ends. Unforeseen expenses caused Mother's funds to vanish quicker than calculated. The ever unexpected delays prevented sales in America from materializing. No money came. Too soon arrived a day in November when it was not a question of the last louis, but of the last franc. Mother and Berthe held a council of war. What could we dispose of for immediate cash? An inventory was made of cashable resources. The finger of fate pointed to the straggly chickens in our coop. They were not laying many eggs and they needed food. Thus at one stroke we would dispose of a liability and get precious funds, albeit so few. Where could we get money for them? Pontoise, of course. In the open market where all and sundry from the countryside went to sell and went to buy.

At this juncture I was called to join the council of war. Berthe was going to Pontoise; I was to help her.

We went to the chicken yard and selected a dozen or so of the oldest fowl and the old rooster. As I wrote to Father at the time, this latter came into the category of "useless mouth to feed." So, Berthe and I, early one cold and misty morning, started for Pontoise with four baskets full of cackling birds. To carry two baskets each to the station was a terrific job. To sit in the train afterwards, albeit on the hard third class benches, seemed a luxury.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

We arrived at Pontoise by train and proceeded at once towards the market. Scarce a few steps out of the station, a uniformed official ran after us accusing Berthe of trying to smuggle chickens into town. This she denied. Her denial was backed by her fine grey blue eyes. Berthe was clever. Seeing that the eye business was working, she smiled. No Frenchman could resist this from such a beautiful "paysanne" although she did wear her kerchief in a somewhat sophisticated fashion. The officer even carried her baskets to the little shed where the "octroi"⁵⁵ was situated. Thus, I discovered, each town of any size in France had its own miniature customs where duty had to be paid on entering products. This system was an evil one. It stifled trade to keep a petty officialdom in annoying authority. It has had a lot to do with the ruination of France, if not of Europe, perhaps the world. Government functionarism with its forms, files, and exactions creates a class replacing the old feudal lords and retainers. Names only have changed.

Berthe and I happily had a few sous between us, scarcely enough to pay the very low assessment, but one or two more smiles and the trifle was amply covered.

We proceeded up the street towards the old cathedral, where we climbed the steps past the statue of General Leclerc, one of Napoléon's generals, native of Pontoise, turned to the right and reached the market place. There Berthe took the chickens out of two baskets to display them on the pavement in front of us. Their legs were tied, and they had that thoughtful staring expression of chickens knowing something to be radically wrong, although they scarcely realized that their fate was to be the inside of a stew pot. Well, there we were. We sat on our empty baskets.

It was about eight in the morning. The air was quite cold and foggy. Out of the mist loomed up someone. We thought it was a customer. No, another official; this time a huge woman with a purse slung like a haversack from her shoulder. "So much for your place," she asked. The sous saved by smiles at the Octroi came in handy. We got no concession from this dragoon;⁵⁶ she was impervious to smiles. When she was through, we had nothing left but our place for the day and our chickens. If we sold none, we would have to walk to Auvers, some four miles away. My visions of lugging our baskets full of chickens for this distance were devoid of the slightest enthusiasm. The half mile to the Station was bad enough. Four miles was simply appalling. This disposal of a few sous became one of the big gambles of my career.

People began to flock around. We sold one black hen and one red hen. There was a pause in prospects, then a recurrence of activity. Two white chickens and the rooster went followed by all the rest but one. For an hour we sat without further results. As I stared at the last staring chicken, wishing it too would tempt some hard-boiled bourgeoisie, I heard someone talking to Berthe. Who was this handsome individual? Whose were these well fed ruddy cheeks, baby blue eyes? Whose those handle-bar mustachios, elegant and black? The round hard hat, colloquially known as "melon," over this genteel face put me off completely and yet I had seen it -- I had. I looked for further clues of identity. The buttoned patent leather boots with soft grey suede tops, the striped pantalons, the very definitely checked coat told me nothing. The buff colored vest arrested my eyes centered as it was by a wonderful green tie in the middle of which, like a target's bull's-eye, was a horse-shoe pin; elegant was not the word for it; then the ponderous gold watch chain, strong enough to hold an anchor -- the charm it held! Here was the answer! It was a solid gold ox head, large as a nugget. No mistake! Monsieur Ducheval! But our good butcher, without his every day, somewhat ensanguined apron, without his belt and knife sharpener was hard to recognize when dressed like a gent. I stared in wonder. It did not occur to me that he looked somewhat like a villain in melodrama. He was too magnificent.

He had turned up in Pontoise, away from his Auvers business, on a business day without apparent

⁵⁵ The administration (and also the office) charged with exacting a duty upon products entering a city. *Nouveau Petit Larousse* (1958 ed.) states that "l'octroi de Paris" was abolished in 1943.

⁵⁶ "dragon?"

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

business to do. It was quite accidental of course; an unusual coincidence.

He drew out the gold watch that so bulged his vest pocket. Its size was in keeping with the chain that held it. Eleven or so.

“Well, well, Berthe! This is a surprise!”

“Fancy now, Monsieur Ducheval meeting you here!”

“And you competing against me, in my trade?”

“Hardly, Monsieur Ducheval. Rivals, friendly rivals; besides this is Pontoise, not Auvers -- chickens, not beef or mutton -- or --”

She left the “cheval” category out as M. Ducheval was somewhat sensitive regarding implications that he sold horse meat.

“So it is. Well ma chère, I must talk business with you --”

“Chickens? Do you wish to buy this elegant black fowl -- I’ll let you have it for --”

“What could I do carrying a skinny chicken, in Pontoise -- me, Ducheval the Butcher. If my friends in the trade saw me I’d never hear the end of it. No, it’s some other business. Will you come?”

“Chicken business?,” teased Berthe again.

There was a calculating pause. She knew all the plays. She must whet his anxiety.

“What about Alfred here?” continued Berthe, making problems.

“I’ll go with you -- I’ll carry the chicken around,” I volunteered eagerly.

The cobbles were cold, my feet were getting numb and I, only ten, hardly relished being left alone in the crowd of milling shoppers. Ducheval, the rich butcher, hardly fancied carrying the chicken himself; but to be seen arm in arm with the handsome young widow, followed by a dark little boy carrying a black hen --

“No -- no -- no -- that won’t do at all!!” he quickly exclaimed. “I must speak to you alone; I must really. It is important!”

Berthe considered his imploring eyes like a sailor considers weather signs. He was undoubtedly set, well hooked.

She showed her hand with decision. She agreed with Ducheval and cleverly made use of her impediments.

“Alfred, you know this chicken must be sold. It is difficult and slow, I admit, but you are a clever boy. Do your best. I must go with Monsieur Ducheval. We shall return soon.”

The pretty grey eyes worked on me; this hardly warmed my cold feet but a more substantial prospect seemed alluring:

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

“There’s a whole slab of chocolate in it for you my lad --” interjected M. Ducheval, already moving off with the handsome kerchiefed Bergerette while I hesitated --

“Jeune fillette, profitez du temps,” says the song.

So there was I. Ducheval had Berthe, and I the chicken.

I waited quite a while. The lonely doomed hen did likewise. Finally an old roving haggler spotted me in the market’s bedlam. Hard-boiled and grim she approached like a thin-flanked tabby spotting a lame sparrow.

“Chicken for sale,” piped I mechanically, rather tiredly, “nice chicken --”

She picked the helpless bird, feeling it with sensuous fingers, anticipating the taste of fresh fowl, calculating on roast, stew or pie. The black hen clucked a bit, then hung helplessly; it had a resigned disconsolate look as if to say “see how you’d feel if you were facing dismemberment.”

“How much,” queried the old ogre.

I looked more helpless than ever.

“Twenty sous?” she ventured. My reply should have been at least forty. The resulting debate carried over a half hour or so might have given me five cents more, perhaps, and her much pleasure. But the bird, hanging head down, had been my playmate. It was doomed anyway, I held out my hand.

“Twenty sous, please,” said I.

This instant acceptance of her ridiculous offer almost took her breath away. Quite overcome, without a word, she gave me two silver ten sous pieces, hefted her bird and walked off. The job was concluded.

The chicken gone, I waited, guarding my empty baskets used as seats. The market milled about me. Young and old gossiped, bargained, flirted and brawled in an atmosphere fragrant with the smell of fresh vegetables: carrots, long white turnips, cabbages. The odd whiff from some inn where tripe was stewing made me desperately hungry. I began to find the time long. I hoped I was not forgotten. At this juncture Ducheval and Berthe came back.

Her smiles had again worked their miracles, for Ducheval took us all in his gig, a beautiful shining chariot, to which was hitched a spanking bay mare with elegantly docked tail. It appears that he had been completely won over. This competition by a beautiful young woman in his own line of business, albeit the specialized one of poultry, dispelled finally any doubts he had had about making her his partner for life. Dowry or none, he had plenty of money anyway and scarcely could forego the delightful prospects of a charming bride backed by plenty of business sense. Berthe kissed me effusively. Ducheval patted me and called me “a brave little man.”

He also gave me the promised cake of chocolate. It fulfilled the double purpose of staving off my hunger and of focusing my attention elsewhere. I did not pay any more attention to them. We were off like the wind. Within the hour or so, we were home at Les Vallées. Mother was waiting anxiously -- so much depended on this venture! Food for the well and medicine for little baby John.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Well, there it was! We turned the baskets upside down to show they were empty. Berthe -- out of a black purse, tumbled out the receipts, all in coppers and silver -- 27 francs and fourteen sous! It made quite a heap. A fortune! Mother was speechless with relief. Once more a corner of fate was turned until a money order should arrive. Whether this would come or not did not matter. Here was tangible help to-day! We took it joyously and wholeheartedly; tomorrow was still far away.

Mother's faith was not disappointed; a week or two later came the profile of Victoria bearing good news inside a letter. A little blue money order fluttered out. She picked it up, almost fainting. Those who affect to despise money have never known what it means to a mother reaching the end of her funds. When relief came, joy was enormous. The sum? Ten, fifteen perhaps as much as twenty-dollars. These money-orders were not payable until cash arrived at the Post Office. I accompanied her there on many occasions. "No Madame, it has not yet arrived --" In spite of these postponements she was not too disappointed because she knew at least that the money was on the way.

These harrowing money matters were not settled too soon. The after effects of measles had weakened Baby John for more than we thought. A cold he caught could not be shaken off, try as we might. Before we knew, it was so bad that medical attention was necessary. As usual in these crises Dr. Vanier popped up as if by magic. He looked serious. Pneumonia. He gave his prescriptions. Part of the chicken money went to the druggist. John's fever climbed up, and up, and up. Then he went into a coma. We were in despair. I said to Mother we must pray. We knelt by the bed; all we could think of was to repeat:

"Dear God, please save little John --"

The next morning, after a sleepless night, John was still alive, but very weak. Dr. Vanier came early, by freight train, as usual; cape, black gloves, top hat were set on an arm chair. There was no smile on the old musketeer-like face as he bent over the crib, sensitive fingers on pulse. Breathless we waited for a word, though it might be a sentence of doom -- poor little John! poor little John! kept running through our heads -- at last the old doctor turned to us:

"He is saved for the time being, but you must be very careful; he must build up -- he must eat -- he must be kept in the room."

This last recommendation was followed to the letter. Doors and windows were hermetically sealed. No germ could escape; no air enter. In this really miasmatic atmosphere Mother spent her nights, mostly sleepless, watching every breath of Little John. His appetite was most cranky. He would not eat. No coaxing except mine could persuade him to take even a spoonful of food. As a result my return from school or college was watched for anxiously to help feed John. The contortions I went through to keep up this reputation (of which I was most proud) were extraordinary. I worked on all psychological angles, the best of which was to make him believe I was going to steal his pap to eat it myself. He could not resist this and it generally worked for a spoonful or two, enough to keep the spark of life going for another twenty-four hours. There was the reward angle too. The reward of a story about the evil doings of a naughty grey cat. Of course this was when he was older and could talk, which brings up the fact that he was so weakened by his first illness that bronchitis and pneumonia recurred with him yearly until we came to America.

After such sieges it can be scarcely wondered that Mother used to emerge out of them on the verge of exhaustion with her five children more or less wobbly from the various illnesses that go with winter, perhaps also the lack of fresh air.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

At last the days are lengthening. Buds appear on the elms -- the garden earth begins to breathe the fragrance of spring. A blue telegram comes to give Mother one last shock before being opened: Father is on board ship -- on the way home. Everything brightens; there is light, even in shadows whose little folk whisper reassuringly now. The large shadows withdraw at the news.

All alarming creaks, shuffles in the dark and sighs disappear; the Master will soon be home -- and Berthe will become Madame Ducheval, sitting in the Cashier's cage of Monsieur Ducheval's prosperous meat market.

RECONNAISSANCE OVER NEW TERRITORY

Father's letters of late 1896 and early 1897 from his new fields had been full of good news: sales, orders and not least, applause from the press all made this voyage appear to be a great success. It was indeed one of the turning points of his life. He had started under the rather vapid influence of Rossetti and the pre-Raphaelites. Soft figures, soft tones, a disregard for realities, diffusion. Any temptations he might have had to neglect his own painting and, instead to collect and sell pictures as a merchant, had been shocked out of him by the disaster of that spring. After the blow had come the reaction which took the form of an intense application to this art. It seemed to catch the flame of autumn maples and the vigor of the clear, cool Canadian air. From misty plains of Europe where the bent peasant, already so nearly a ghost, almost merged into the soil, he came to a land of cleancut horizons, whence men sprang out alert, vigorous and crude. It was almost prophetic. He painted. He painted like mad. His landscapes of that period are among his best. Red and yellow maples and black spruce were combined in versatile patterns which never tired his eye. For once he could play the gamut of a full spectrum of colors.

Exhibitions, private views, succeeded each other quickly only interrupted by numerous portraits of local notables.

His first exhibition was held Nov. 3-10, 1896 at the Hôtel de Ville de Quebec. There were fifty-four numbers; all but three of the oils had been brought over from France. They sold very well. The watercolors were mostly landscapes of the Lake St. John country: the Ouatichouan River, the Saguenay and some Quebec views. Practically all his lithographs were shown. The latter including the portrait of Hamerton were skillfully displayed to show that the artist could paint and draw good likenesses.

M. l'Abbé Casgrain at that time held sway at Quebec as a wit and arbiter of the arts. He and Father got on capitally. One of the first commissions Father obtained as a result of his exhibition was to paint the good abbé's portrait. And, what a delightful task it was! He went to the abbé's apartments. Both spent hours discussing art, literature, music, philosophy, aye, and religion too. The worthy abbé had a traditionally excellent table. Father would stay for lunch. On Fridays, of course, fish was served. And choice fish too. The best of Gaspé salmon, sea trout, lobsters fresh from the lobster pots, oysters from Malpecque. Fast days, under the circumstances, were something to be looked forward to.

The crafty old abbé would exclaim to his servant.

"Allons! Allons! We shall be broad-minded; we shall respect the scruples of this pagan, this heretic -- bring some meat, cold beef? cold veal? or steak? NO? Well then, what a surprise! He will join us in eating our meager fish? What a conversion!"

So Father would enjoy the delicious fish, even at the cost of being the butt of Abbé Casgrain's delightful wit. Naturally the portrait was a success on being exhibited to the great delight of Quebec's Beau Monde. The local press reflected its appreciation.

The paper "L'Electeur" of December 3, 1896, said "C'est une œuvre au dessus de tout éloge." It called it the work of an artist as modest as he was skilful.

The Chronicle of December 8, 1896 called it an admirable portrait "a certain amount of grace and repose is given by the folds of the hood which is that of a Doctor of Letters of Laval University." It also stated that the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec, Sir Adolphe Chapleau, had purchased two water colors, one showing

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

the source of the Ouatichouan River and another the rapids on this same river. I also note the “Repas du Soir,” exhibited at Keppel’s in 1894, went to a Mr. Amyot.

With this publicity backed by the well painted originals, other patrons became interested. He received a commission to paint the portrait of Mayor Parent, of Quebec, before the end of the year.

Although his Christmas was away from home, invitations were many, from local people as well as from Grandmother Wickenden, at Toledo Ohio, from Mrs. Coyl and Mr. Driggs of Detroit. Finding business good he thought best not to leave it.

The relatively good times in America compared to those of Europe made Father think more seriously than ever of making a move. Indeed, he began to put out feelers to sell “Les Vallées.” He corresponded with Atherton Curtis on this subject. But Curtis judiciously remarked that he was interested in Auvers only on account of Father being there; so the matter was dropped.

On the other hand, the life of comparative ease and elegance in Quebec Society made him feel all the more the load of his family responsibilities. I came across a paper written early in 1897 wherein he took the gloomiest views of marriage. In this he concluded, as many have, that art and marriage do not mix. As a matter of fact his conclusion was that, in marrying, an artist risked the destruction of his art “in that constant state of warfare called life.” He forgot that without a struggling life, Art may lack true vigor.

In the meantime he kept at his paintings of the portraits of Lieutenant Governor Sir Adolphe Chapleau and Mayor Parent.

Our letters from him during the winter were like fairyland stories. To go to the Lieutenant Governor’s palace in the morning he was called for by a sleigh with coachman and footman dressed in bearskins or buffalo fur; two spanking bays drew the sleigh, which bore the armorial coatings on its door. The inside was smothered with fur robes into which Father ensconced himself. A flick of the whip and the whole equipage went smartly along to the jingle of sleigh-bells, with coachman and footman sitting stiffly on the box. At the palace, he was handed out with due ceremonies and introduced inside, via aide-de-camps, butlers and more footmen.

Flunkeyism was there at its best with many bowings, scrapings, clickings of heels. All this, combined with the association of knights, ladies, high clergy, lording things with bon-vivant bonhommie, created a world he had read about but never contacted. The effect of his letters of this time on his American friends was tremendous. The pomp and circumstance of officialdom has always existed in all nations; even to-day we see Nazis vie with Fascists in creating uniforms and in robotizing humanity into clicking machines. But never has it reached or ever will reach the rich ceremonial of the Victorian era. This was the tail-end of it and it glowed then with all the colors and trappings of the last flares of a beautiful sunset. It had its merits. The flunkey enjoyed his creeping and crawling just as much as his Lord and Master, who condescended to receive these attentions like a benevolent Jove. To be on terms of equality with these Olympians seemed too much of a good fortune. He took to it naturally, as to the manner born.

Moreover, with money coming in, it was with regret that he contemplated leaving all this to return to France at the end of March. I can see his reluctance, after he fussed about one more month, receiving all kinds of compliments for his portraits from high officials and, not the least, from the ladies. At the end of April, he left Quebec via Montreal whence he wrote to an old friend how much he loved and would miss Quebec. Nevertheless he went to Detroit, sold three pictures there and boarded the SS. Westernland at New York early in May. Again he wrote to Quebec friends how much he missed it all.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

He had taken care to leave loose ends at Quebec, so he might have good reasons for an early return, though his old friends met with a disastrous political defeat during his absence.

His arrival at Auvers was triumphant. He had cases of all sorts of curios, souvenirs with a strange new fragrance. It was the perfume of sweet hay and birch bark, a penetrating yet pleasant odor. It spoke of woods, deer, wolves, Indians à la Fenimore Cooper, spanking teams, sleigh-bells, a land of make believe come true.

Soon after his return a visitor came from Quebec. It was a lady. We met her at the train. She almost went past Auvers as she was accustomed to have the station called by conductors inside the compartment. This lady was a brunette, very beautiful, much be-jewelled, apparently a very wealthy person. Mother was cordial but a little on the stiff side. We were greeted kindly but I believe Father's gracious ways had more appeal. At that time he was blond, slim and 35. I can quite see the ladies enjoyed his company. I find kind letters, all on a high plane, among which several from a lady in holy orders and a writer.

In July 1897, he left for America via Antwerp, Amsterdam and The Hague. In each city he visited museums, thus increasing his knowledge of paintings of the Dutch and Flemish school. He boarded the R.M.S. Labrador at Liverpool. I have the program for the usual ship concert for the benefit of sailors' widows and orphans. It was drawn by Father and reproduced by the gelatine process. Various numbers are listed among which one by Father, "The Midshipmite," which he sang very well, as I recollect. Also by Father is the notice regarding the end of the concert when "Gondolas, wheelbarrows and patrol wagons may be ordered for 10 o'clock sharp." Such late hours were shocking, yet I largely abide by them now, and like it.

No sooner had he arrived in Canada than on July 25 he had a first invitation and that from Mme. V. (who had called on us at Auvers) to visit her at her Villa. Other invitations came but this was the first.

Mrs. Coyl also wrote inviting him for Christmas. She had discharged her cook, Becky, who had been so kind to us children. But the main part of her letter was about a possible move by our family to America. She was worried particularly about me and the army service in France. Thus, this dear lady felt the coming of war eighteen years before it occurred. She knew that the French Army would undergo the trial of butchery and felt sorry for the poor herd being prepared for silly, useless slaughter, especially as it might affect a child she loved.

Meantime Mme. V. again sent an invitation. It appears he accepted this one for I find a friend's later writing to him to give salutations to "the charming hostess."

Again in September Mrs. Coyl sent her invitation for Christmas; again she worried about my possibly having to be conscripted. In the meantime Father was subject to heavy expense at the Chateau Frontenac. He tried hard to push the sale of his excellent lithograph of Sir Adolphe Chapleau but met with scant success. Only the sale of many proofs at five dollars apiece could make a respectable sum. I gather that this was the case from a friend's letter advising him that, in Quebec, he could not count on more than \$10.00 to \$25.00 per picture and he should govern himself accordingly. This lack of success was in spite of good press notices. One of these states that the lithographs were shown at a local art dealer "by the well known Parisian portrait painter." Only one hundred copies were to be struck. Apparently not one hundred were sold for we have many copies of these on our hands now. It is a very good piece of work, one of his best portraits, but Sir Adolphe's party had lost the election: sic transit gloria. Nevertheless his popular portrait of Abbé Casgrain kept bearing its fruits. He was commissioned to paint the portrait of Mgr. Bégin, 5' x 8', for \$300.00. Needless to say this price, for so large a canvas, with heavy hotel bills, was scarcely enough to cover cost.

After the first success of 1896 Father was finding the going at Quebec much more difficult and calling

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

for constant effort.

To Mrs. Coyl's great disappointment he could not go to Detroit for Christmas, but stayed at Quebec, with somewhat beclouded prospects.

It was January 1898 in Quebec. Father was at the Chateau Frontenac. Naturally a more or less constant stay at Quebec had somewhat worn off the novelty of his first arrival. This was a difficult matter for him to understand. "Why" thought he, "should this have anything to do with the appreciation of my art? Why should not the public judge the excellence of a piece of work by its inherent qualities rather than by the fashionability of its method?"

As a matter of fact I doubt whether this latter alternative ever entered his head. He was so engrossed with the higher judgments of art that he ignored its fashions just as if it were a vogue for women's hats, yet, for all its warmth and hospitality, for all its stern externals, Quebec had many feminine qualities.

Nevertheless he would not give in. He would stir interest anew.

He proposed to the Provincial Government to form an Academy of Beaux Arts. He offered the use of his collection and of his services for teaching, lectures, etc. He was ahead of his time. Many years later this idea was carried out but, at that time, commercial enterprise ignored the use of art. This proposal without being refused, just dragged on unanswered.

Yet not entirely. An enthusiastic group of young ladies formed a Studio Club. Father was elected honorary member and instructor. Thus, fifteen years or so after leaving the young ladies of Detroit's Art School, he was starting other classes in Quebec. The instructorship did not pay very much but it was an outlet for his energies and helped to pay hotel bills.

Added to these worries was the dilemma of what to do with his family. Obviously Europe was no place for it. On the other hand there were the expenses of a move, from a place where living was relatively cheap to one where it might prove much dearer (he remembered Chicago) and on top of this the uncertainty of an artist's precarious living. To complicate matters there was the house at Auvers, which would have to be sold.

To summarize his problem. At Auvers he owned his own house, living was cheap, and he knew pretty well the total of his expenses. The country, the people were all that could be asked for.

On the other hand the past proved that he could not make a living out of French patronage. His source of income would always be on the American Continent. Overall this were the constant signs of coming storms, menacing clouds from Germany, England, Russia, rumblings of coming social upheaval.

Mrs. Coyl, his adoptive mother, corresponded frequently. Disappointed at his not coming for Christmas nor for the New Year she kept writing, sharing the worry of these problems.

He carried on. He obtained a commission from the ecclesiastical authorities to paint a full size portrait of Cardinal Taschereau who was very old but whose achievement as first Canadian Cardinal made it desirable to have a permanent record of his features for times to come. It was none too soon. Two or three weeks after the portrait was started the Cardinal died. Father was present at the last arrangements for burial and took a death mask of the deceased prelate as well as the impressions of his hands. After that he completed the large

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

painting from sketches and photographs or casts.

Based on this picture he made a set of lithographs to be sold at \$2.50 each, to which many devout Quebeckers subscribed. The stone however was completed and printed later on in the year, in France. This and other smaller commissions helped him form the decision that he should move. A letter from his old friend Checa, written from Paris, was full of common sense. It might have been Sancho Panza writing. His logical conclusion was that the procedure could not be hurried and that the first thing to do was to dispose of the Auvers house, itself a slow job to accomplish. By that time May had come.

He decided to return to France to start the wheels going for the change. The last affairs were settled in Montreal where he left some prints with a local dealer. At the same time he visited friends, among whom a young lady, newspaper woman and unattached; she showed great promise and later married a local artist and poet. She boasted of her Huron ancestry and, as I remember her, was very dark and attractive.

He sailed for Europe on May 21st by the SS. Dominion, Capt. James. His portrait sketch by Father appeared on a programme printed for the usual ship concert.

His departure without seeing Mrs. Coyl caused this lady much disappointment. She was devoted to him. Her affection remained the most loyal, throughout her life. She never swerved from her care for him and many were the times when her cheque saved Father, Mother and us children from the most miserable starvation.

Father's stay at Auvers was short. He arrived early in June. He attended rapidly to his lithographs of Cardinal Taschereau. I went up frequently to the studio. It seemed alive again with the artist at work. I was glad to smell the paints as Father worked among draperies, canvases, easels. There I curiously examined the casts from the old Cardinal's face and hands. They seemed so impersonal and yet they had touched the dead prelate.

About this time we heard of the sinking of the ship La Bourgogne which increased our anxieties in regard to Father's early projected sailing by the SS. Dominion to take place on September 15, 1898. The crossing however was uneventful; Father arrived at Quebec where he stopped at the Union Club to distribute his prints of Mgr. Taschereau and Mgr. Bégin.

At once, the pleadings of Mrs. Coyl for his presence at Detroit for Christmas began. Her letters were most urgent. Grandmother Wickenden also wanted him to come to Toledo; nevertheless business at Quebec held him. The pulling was getting harder, for he had made up his mind to cross the family over and strove to consolidate his position by all means possible.

The Official pomp and circumstance still impressed him, but its first bloom had worn off. It was quite necessary to follow things up at Quebec. An International Exposition at Paris was being seriously planned and Canada, particularly the Province of Quebec, expected to make quite a showing there. Father was already planning two pictures for this purpose. The "Défricheur" or "Woodsmen" was one and the "Voyageur" was the other. They were as yet but projects, hardly sketched, but his experience with former exhibits had shown him the necessity of making an early start.

He soon discovered that it would be too expensive to paint these at Quebec. Paris was the only place to secure models and to be in the atmosphere of painters. Therefore, armed with sketches, he decided to return after making several sales and collecting on various commissions.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Father sailed from New York on the French Line Steamship "La Champagne" arriving at Le Havre on March 19th.

After resting for a few days at Auvers he went to Paris where he leased a studio at 81 Boulevard Clichy.

COLLÈGE DE PONTOISE

During the summer of 1898 I had a glorious vacation. My year at the local school had been a very successful one.

Crowned with gold laurel, at the prize distribution, my pride and happiness knew no bounds when I saw the joy of my parents. My arms had been loaded with huge volumes. On closer examination these beautiful looking books had perhaps proved somewhat disappointing as they were practically all “useful books,” one describing scenes of picturesque France, another its state manufactures at Sèvres, Gobelins, etc., and a third its railroads. Yet they were beautiful looking books, so beautiful that for over forty years I have carried them hither and yon and never got inside their pages except to glance at the odd picture. On the whole some dime novel or equivalent would have been more satisfying to my young barbarian soul and, as such, more satisfactory.

Nevertheless the feeling of triumph was a lasting one which gave an added fillip to my rambles around the plain of Auvers, of which I now had the freedom.

I expected to continue at the Auvers school for a higher certificate. Old Cazier would have coached me in a class of which I would have been the sole pupil. He probably was also planning to use me frequently as assistant with backward pupils whose mentality I knew, having thoroughly enjoyed the restful quality of their company in the past. With remembrances of events of the preceding two years such as the last louis, the sale of chickens at Pontoise, and various minor episodes wherein our vehicle of family existence had skidded close to the ditch, I was quite content to attend a school where tuition was free.

Unfortunately, or otherwise, fate had somewhat revived our exchequer. The curve of funds, after so nearly disappearing in the depths of nothingness and flickering there a while, had changed to an upward direction which left a visible space between it and the zero abscissa.⁵⁷ This state of affairs encouraged Mother greatly; she decided that the Auvers school was not good enough for me. I must go to College at Pontoise. This decision was broken to me one morning as I was preparing to lazy my time away picking flowers or hazel nuts, flying kites or teasing the old rural guard whose joints were getting creakier while mine were more and more nimble. I argued on the excellence of Auvers’ school and of my progress there. All objections were overridden. I felt then that our emergence from financial straits had its drawbacks. I downed these unworthy thoughts not without difficulty.

We went to Pontoise for an interview with Monsieur Colas, the principal of this institution. Colas was impressive, grey-bearded, frock-coated. Yet there were two twinkles in his eyes. A very happy one when they rested on Mother, a less happy, though understanding one, for me. I was accepted for classical studies.

I was to commute by train from Auvers to Pontoise every day, lunch at College and return evenings. This was defined as being a “half-boarder:” the lunch being one “half,” and the other “half” consisting of sleeping at the College and being jailed there like a convict. For this the fees were 320 francs a year, 64 dollars. My commuter’s ticket was a small folding card with my picture pasted inside. All I had to do was to show it to the ticket collector on leaving the station. I could travel from Auvers to Pontoise and vice-versa, all I wanted, which was a novelty to me.

⁵⁷ from *abscindere* to cut off. “The horizontal coordinate of a point in a plane Cartesian coordinate system obtained by measuring parallel to the x-axis...” Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary (1973-1981)

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Having had plenty of object lessons regarding the meaning of money, I made a special effort to do well at this college. It was with the best intentions I arrived along with a host of other boys when classes started. Instead of one Master for all subjects we had several. One of these was our class master, Monsieur P. He was the dreaded superintendent-general or chief assistant to the Principal. It was not long before we discovered we were dealing with a hard-boiled fellow. Tall, dark, with thick hair, he had a face resembling cuts I have seen of Alfred de Musset. He was always elegantly dressed. He had no patience with poor dumb bunnies. He just kicked them around though, how hard, I could not tell, as the sound of a thwack or two convinced me I could not play with this fellow who certainly did much to strengthen my good resolutions.

Monsieur P. taught us French composition, and Grammar, Recitation, Geography, Ancient Greek History. His impatience so frightened the boys that unless one knew something about it, it was pretty hopeless. The sight of his shining boots so paralyzed unfortunate scholars, that their brains ceased to function.

His classroom was small but that was a relatively unimportant matter. What mattered was that the benches were the most uncomfortable I have ever sat on. They were of one piece with the desks. Generations of whittlers had so narrowed them that sitting them was like riding a pole, for a tar and feathering. The desks also had been ingeniously carved up. To write on them was a balancing stunt of no mean calibre. The unwary was also beset by the presence of many pits and longitudinal diggings which caused the writer to pierce his exercise page with pen or pencil, necessitating the rewriting of it. If this were delayed too long, a good booting in one's shiny pants was to be expected. However, during the pants polishing process, the sharp poles on which we sat produced a welcome numbness which somewhat alleviated the misery attendant on Mr. P.'s exertions.

In contrast to this, Monsieur Colas, the principal, was all kindness, all urbanity. He chose to teach but one subject, Beginners' Latin. "Rosa, la Rose," he intoned pursing his lips for the first lesson. We were on the road to classical learnings.

A new feature to me was the supervised study-hall. Each pupil had his locked desk there and could leave his books not in immediate use. We did our homework during these periods under the supervision of half starved sub-masters, butts of masters and pupils alike. Contemptuously they were called "Pawns."

As in the Auvers school there were two main divisions in the College. The lower half and the Upper. We played in separate yards at recess. I was among the older boys of the lower half. With the wisdom acquired from Auvers' boys, I was soon left alone, although a new-comer.

All these little affairs being settled satisfactorily I soon fell into the routine of the place and was free of worry except for a keen watchfulness of Mr. P.'s boots.

As far as food was concerned we had plenty to eat. Every day at 10, as we filed out to recess, we picked a large piece of bread from a basket held by François, one of the janitors. With or without chocolate we ate this up while playing in the yard. At about 12.30 we had dinner consisting of soup, meat, vegetables and sometimes dessert. For drink we had a mixture of red wine and water, mostly water, for which reason it is known by the slang expression of "abundance."

As is always the case in such institutions, there was always a lot of grumbling about food which was always the same on the same week day. However, it varied every day of the week. Thus Tuesday's menu was different from Monday's but was the same for all the Tuesdays of the year. Meats consisted of roast pork, roast beef, boiled mutton. Twice a week we had beans or lentils instead of meat. The most appreciated dish was roast pork. We always looked forward to that day's meal. Potatoes were mashed with water. Sometimes they were French fried. The scramble on these occasions was terrific; if one didn't watch out one went

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

without. If French fried potatoes had been served every day the place would have gone into bankruptcy in no time. The biggest reason for grumbling was the often repeated rumor that horsemeat was served instead of beef on Wednesdays. To back this suspicion was the unescapable fact that there was a horsemeat butcher doing business opposite the entrance of the college. He publicized this fact by means of a tin horse's head, colored brown which swung in the breeze and the sign "Boucherie de Cheval," meaning Horse Butcher shop. I would not be surprised if at a pinch, Monsieur P., the superintendent-general, made both ends meet occasionally by using this God-given opportunity. At any rate he was always a lean fighting-cock ready, nay, anxious to kick out disturbers, large or small. One rule was severely applied: there must be no waste. You were allowed to help yourself as you wished from large platters. What you took must be eaten. No scraps were allowed whether meat, vegetables or bread. We soon learned to make our judgment conform to our appetites and to the half hour or so given us to satisfy them. When time was up we must have clean plates, get up and file out. No retarding or lingering was tolerated. Mr. P. at once attacked the delinquent who would be projected past the last ones filing out and made to undergo other punishment.

Play in the yard followed our meal. Games were the same as at Auvers except that the young men played more prisoner's base or kicked a soccer ball around. This recess over, the afternoon session lasted until four when we were offered another hunk of crusty bread for the afternoon collation. At this ceremony the janitor reigned supreme for he had charge of the full boarders' supplies of jams, cakes, chocolates furnished by the parents for this purpose. He also had a little canteen from which we could purchase chocolate, candy or fruit to go with our bread. The display of jam pots always made my mouth water but more often than not I had a bar of chocolate given me by Mother for this purpose. I am at a loss to understand how I managed to keep most of it for four o'clock. At five, recess ceased and study began. For me, study lasted a little less than one hour, until the time when the janitor opened the door of the hall to shout "Five past six!" meaning the train which left Pontoise at that hour. Followed longingly by the eyes of the unfortunate boarders we left the place until next day and promptly forgot about them.

Delightedly the few of us taking the train disappeared from the hall into the street then on to the Station. A short wait, a short ride, Auvers again. Ten minutes more and I was home for supper with stories of the day's doings, good or bad. At nine thirty, bed. The next morning I was up about 6.30. In winter it seemed a bit hard, in the cold room to light my candle and dress. Downstairs the maid had a large bowl of hot milk for me. A dash of coffee, a little sugar, gave it taste. I broke my bread into it and ate with good appetite. Then a walk to the Station, a ride by train on the hard benches of the third class compartments, another day at college.

Vaguely I found out the boarders' time-table after my evening departure. They studied till supper time, after which more study, then early bed in large barrack-like rooms housing thirty or forty boys. On Thursdays and Sundays they were marched out two by two into the country for a walk. Never did they get one instant's liberty. To make matters worse they could be forbidden to go home for Christmas or Easter holidays or even summer holidays. The place was like a jail in this respect. No wonder they call these colleges "Boxes" in schoolboy slang. If I thought I got up early at half past six at home in order to catch the 7.30 train, these poor unfortunates rose at 6.00. Their breakfast was followed by more study -- then classes at eight. This overwhelming amount of work made the school day at least fifty per-cent longer than in English or American schools. Holidays were fewer. Summer vacation only lasted six weeks. It is no wonder boys of 18 or younger obtained their B.A. degrees if they could stand it. The numskulls couldn't.

I have heard it said that the amount of study necessary for the French B.A. is less than for the American. Insofar as Arts are concerned, I am of the opinion that the French degree under these circumstances was in no way inferior to the English or American equivalent, in many ways superior. As to the advantage of greater maturity, I see very little difference between a boy of 18 and one 21 years old, in this respect.

One thing was very certain; in the higher classes there were splendid professors in the arts of

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

expression, historical research and classical languages. Mathematics and science perhaps were not quite so developed. The drawing classes were really splendid. Conducted by Monsieur David, an artist who had gone through the Beaux Arts, it was a treat of Bohemian inconsistencies, all leading to one well defined end, command of eye over hand in draughtsmanship and appreciation of Art.

Another lesson of his was thrift. When we joined the drawing class, we each brought a Conté pencil which was carefully marked and registered by a monitor. If we lost it or got another we were severely punished by Monsieur David whose punishment and rules were few. Another rule most drastically applied was to stop work at once when he ordered it to stop. This might happen anytime. À propos of nothing in particular, Monsieur David called "Cease working." We had to lean back and relax at once -- not one stroke more was permitted. His reason for stopping was generally to tell us some story. His hero was Benvenuto Cellini whose memoirs he read or quoted volubly. Another favorite was the relations of Thucydides⁵⁸, the Greek historian. As he picked the more lurid episodes you may be sure we dropped everything with alacrity. Yet there was always some half-baked wit who missed it, rousing bearded M. David to sarcastic resentment. Tall, gaunt, bearded, a high comical hat of the ten gallon variety on the back of his head (he always wore it in classes), he would sit on his high stool and give us a speech about the culprit's lack of something or other, winding up by giving him one hour's detention. The chances were that it would be cancelled by the end of the period. He was as likely to stop the period before its end as after. In this latter case anyone reminding him that the period was over was sure to rouse his fury, which, as far as expression and expressions go, was terrific. Yet he never touched a boy. This letting the class out late interfered with one or two other classes. There were complaints by the boys concerned. "What shall we tell our next professor?" they asked. The drawing master's eyes reflected childish astonishment. "Why, tell him he was waiting for David -- of course he'll understand."

Apart from these few disciplinary oddities, when we sat at drawing we could talk, sing, whistle, do anything we liked; David, prince of Bohemians, presided benignly smoking his cigarette over his apprentices in Bohemia.

This strong untrammelled individualism was manifested also in his method of transport from l'Isle Adam some ten kilometers away. He used one of the earliest made motorcycles. It was a sight to see him riding through Pontoise, cape and beard flying, sparkling eyes under his felt cone, astride a machine without muffler, making a noise like an earthquake. He meant to and succeeded in appearing like a demon out of hell and it took little imagination to see flames in his breath as well as out of his exhaust. Everyone knew him; scarcely less amusing therefore was the sight of a "sergent de ville" leaning lazily, bored to death, against a lamp post without a glance at the daily apparition. The funny thing was that, in spite of these liberties, all his colleagues from the principal down were very fond of him. They invariably waited for his dramatic entrance in the morning. As they stood in the yard before the first period David roared through the arched entrance, jumped off his steed like a despatch⁵⁹ rider and walked to the distinguished group, hat in hand, like a d'Artagnan musketeer. Hats went up, hands extended, "Good morning David, good morning, dear colleague..." Smiles, admiration, appreciation of the dramatic, were all contained in gestures and words. David was indeed an artist, living as an artist, adopting, adapting codes, rules, laws, conventions or rejecting them just as he might consider draperies on a model. Bohemia only had one goal, one search: the interesting. This easily explains the Bohemian's baffling disregard for the fixed in conduct, religion, morals, art itself. The path to the interesting is sometimes tortuous indeed.

David and I were fast friends from the start. His whims and humors always appealed to me. I loved them all; yet he reminded us all of economy when it came to pencils. What a paradox!

⁵⁸ renowned Greek historian (approx.460B.C.-395B.C.) best known for his History of the Peloponnesian War. His "relations" of the war are clear and graphic; however, "The social life of the time, the literature and the art did not belong to his subject." *Encyclop³/₄dia Britannica*, 11th Ed.

⁵⁹ obs. for "dispatch". *Webster's New International Dictionary* (1922)

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

One of the systems of rewards at the College was a peculiar system called exemptions. What genius invented this time currency, and when, is not known to me but he must have been a pupil of the banker Law. It consisted of little slips mostly red, on which were printed the words one, two, three or more hours' "exemption." There were various issues: green for being on the Honor-roll counted five hours; blue for being first in subject also counted five; white for being second counted two. They were signed by Monsieur Colas, the principal. The hour then, was the basic unit. Its utility lay in the power of purchasing exemption from punishments, hence its name. These latter, from lines to detention, were therefore more or less listed as to value. Some inflation must have taken place in the system's past because one hour's detention could only be purchased by four hours' exemption. I could imagine that at one time one hour's exemption purchased one hour's detention; then as time went on it took two hours, three, then four. The only exception to this rate of currency was David's exemptions. He insisted that one of his hour's exemption was worth one hour's detention. The trouble was that David's exemptions were scarce as hens' teeth. When he gave one, the lucky recipient made it out himself on ordinary paper for David, who appended his scrawl to it. More trouble also that David insisted, when he gave detention, that it was not purchasable but had to be gone through without fail, one more of David's paradoxes. At any rate this system of exemptions somehow stirred my acquisitive sense. Being naughty became purchasable if you were good enough. I therefore made terrific efforts to save exemptions on the basis of study, of conduct, anything to pile them up. When I thought I had a good reserve I began to take chances on various sports current in the large study room. This study room was the site of the former chapel of a religious order chased away during the French Revolution. Where the altar had been, the "Pawn," or study supervisor, had his desk on a raised platform. We were about sixty boys in there ranging from 12 to 21. We had huge box desks with covers hinged horizontally. Two rows on each side faced inwardly. The "Pawn" therefore had us flanked, as it were. The mischief that went on in this room was appalling. The older boys had developed the art of missile throwing to a height hitherto unknown to me, nor ever surpassed since. Spitballs, marbles and arrows were the principal kind. Of these latter, there was one particularly vicious kind consisting of a winged nib. It was positively dangerous. Elastics and tubes provided the main propelling media, but the use of an accurate arm was not disdained, especially in the case of large spitballs. To be hit by one of these latter, nearly the size of an egg was a very distressing experience. As the two ranks of desks faced each other there was one continuous flight of missiles when the Pawn was not watching. Variations in the battle took place. Little men cut of paper were tied by a string to a large calibre spitball. A mighty heave and the little comet-like projectile swung up to the ceiling, its tail being a little manikin, probably a caricature of the "Pawn." The ceiling was some thirty or forty feet high. The ball struck with a thwack and there was our friend, the Pawn, or his diminutive replica, swinging in the breeze which came through the high windows.

A titter would run through the study; the Pawn's eyes, roused from some book he was studying, would choke the hilarity for an instant, then the guerilla warfare started again. The row would become so pronounced sometimes that the Principal himself would suddenly appear with a face as wrathful as that of Michelangelo's Moses. But this happened more often when windows were broken by marbles hurled by catapults. This huge study hall was a mighty old place in winter. A large cylindrical stove heated it, fed by the assistant janitor. Boys were allowed to burn their soap paper in it until one day a young Moron from Martinique rolled up a revolver cartridge in a large wad and dropped it in the fire. It went off all right hurling either its shell or bullet through the stove pipe. Of course there was a row. The Pawn was provoked beyond belief. The Principal came. Naturally no one would confess to this misdeed, the boys' attitude being catch us if you can, that's what you are paid to do.

The above will give a general idea of what went on. The hilarity was tremendous. To purchase such fun at the cost of a few paper exemptions struck me as a very practical scheme. So I worked awhile to accumulate these redeeming slips which I spent upon detentions or lines. Nevertheless the happiness of my Mother and Father when I got firsts, seconds and Honor Rolls became even more to be desired than the

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

purchase of mischief.

The result was that ultimately I amassed a large collection of pink, blue, green and white slips -- hours and hours of exemption, payable in mischief at some future date, never attainable. The lot remained wrapped up with the five franc deposit book won at a rifle competition. Gone hours and gone francs.

I left the College in the Spring of 1900 just before our departure from France.

HYMN TO EARTH

Shortly after Father's return to France in the summer of 1899, Mr. Lacem, one of his many American patrons, came to Paris both for business and for pleasure.

He was a rich business man from (let us say) Kalamazoo, who owned a sizeable establishment there for the manufacture of corsets. Corsets for the young, corsets for the old, corsets for the stout, corsets for the slim, the object being to standardize the female form, by pressure, padding or other means, into the hour glass pattern. This silhouette, of course, was believed by women of that day to hold an irresistible attraction for the (so-called) stranger, (also whispered at that time, the grosser) sex.

From the letterheads of this corset outfit I managed to gather considerable information regarding Mr. Lacem and the purpose of his existence. Similarly to hieroglyphics or ideographics, a jumble of cuts proudly unfolds his lifework's achievements.

First there is the sketch of the factory. It must have been of considerable size as I counted some eighty windows distributed on the street side of its five floors. On the side of the building is displayed the sign, "Lacem Corset Co." The street in front shows remarkable activity; people are on the sidewalk, ladies high-hipped and with long spreading skirts, no doubt wearing Mr. Lacem's creations, gentlemen admiring them; on the pavement, delivery rigs, some with one, some with two horses, are galloped away from the building in desperate haste to distribute their loads of corsets to the impatient, waiting, feminine world. Also displayed are cuts of medals, bronze, silver, gold, indicating the progressive prizes won by Mr. Lacem's product at various exhibitions. What merits these uncomfortable armors had for suffocating, suffering females is unknown to me, so I am somewhat at a loss to determine just how judges made their awards in these noble jousts of corsets.

However, among these enlightening illustrations giving us a resumé of Mr. Lacem's activities, the pièce de resistance is the cut showing his ideas of what an attractive corset should look like. Behind this illustrated corset float satiny ribbons on which is announced "Every pair sold with a guarantee."

Guarantee of what? Guarantee of resisting all attempts of rebellious bodies to burst out of the smotheration of this would be whale, like Jonah out of his fish⁶⁰. Guarantee not to collapse when inner pressure reached the explosive point? Guarantee not to resist intolerably the efforts of straining husbands in their tug of war with the laces of the things? No, the principal, the only guarantee was one alone. It was the guarantee of oomph, glamor, the guarantee of obtaining that elusive things know as sex-appeal, whether you were nineteen or ninety. The pains, the discomforts, the bad tempers were all incidental to this objective. In short "Il faut souffrir pour être belle," and the ultimate test of beauty was to attract the ogles of some mustachioed villain in choker collar and black derby hat with twirly brim, only to turn him down with a cold stare and "How dare you, Sir!"

But to continue anent this corset cut on the letterhead, we read below it a statement to which Mr. Lacem seemed to grant a great deal of importance. At the foot of this cartouche depicting his lifework is a statement, final, irreducible⁶¹, obliterating all doubts of allure in one phrase, "Long Waist."

After reading these guiding words, I feel better able to appreciate the engraving of Mr. Lacem's corset

⁶⁰ "And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited Jonah upon the dry land." (Jonah ii, 10)

⁶¹ Rare for "irreducible." Webster's New International Dictionary (1922)

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

and give my rather philistine impressions of it. The whole thing looks like a double eye-cup, the upper one to envelope an ample bosom, the lower one, inverted, to hold, well, the lower part of the torso after its having been stocked up by the ample diet of those careless, carefree days. The upright and the inverted eye cups are joined by a slimmish stem. This is the "Long Waist" referred to in the caption. Ye gods! how could they stand it!

It is natural to understand that Mr. Lacem, making it a business to turn out hour-glass figures by the thousand gross, could hardly find entertainment by the contemplating the female figure during his rare leisure moments.

I do not go so far as to state that he was immune to the oddity known as a busman's holiday which, with him, took the form of attending the occasional burlesque show of that day. But the prancing females of entertainments hardly displayed details unknown to him. It was not relaxing for him to ferret out with his Roentgen Ray eyes, under voluminous petticoats, the problems of corset technique that beset, nay, obsessed his mind during business hours. No, this could not be called fun. His nimble brain, on such occasions became overloaded by problems of new curves in stays, new methods of lacing and hooking, the never quite satisfactorily solved theorem of making a thirty-six inch waist appear like twenty-six. The result was that after such so-called entertainments, although he felt a sense of elation in having found means to improve the figures of ladies according to the concepts of that period, his brain became completely fogged by the additional tussle with things he had been wrestling with the livelong day. What to others were inhibitions to be cultivated delightfully "en cachette," to him only held the commonplace of business, mere routine. In short, although Mr. Lacem's masterpieces were provender to the world, the flesh and the devil, his own attitude towards them was one of cold dispassionate detachment in terms of dollars and cents. He limited himself to one motto, "Business is business."

Nevertheless, he had to get relaxation somehow. The resorts of the other T.B.M.'s of that time being barred to him, even on the sly, by the curse of its being his daily fare, Mr. Lacem turned to art for entertainment. In this pursuit above all criticisms, his emancipated soul found its joy in the lofty, the virile. Among his boon companions for these æsthetic debauches he counted Father. Of course his conscience pricked him when instead of being present at some leg-show, where he should have been, he sneaked off to an exhibition of sculptures, landscapes or genre paintings. He justified himself with the thought that it was his due after accomplishing so much for the pulchritude of the better half of humanity.

And then Father, in his best manner of courtier to merchant prince, had told him that Art was literally at the bottom of all his corsets. That in observing the Milo-esque beauties of the Greeks⁶², the rubicund conceptions of the Flemish, in short, all the female beauties of art, ancient, modern and international, he might evolve his corsets into heights of unbelievable beauty, in short, into super-corsets. Father had even gone so far, on attaining the second liqueur stage of some dinner or other, as to suggest that he, Mr. Lacem, was as great an artist as any. I question such a statement as in keeping with the rules of caution. An artist should never undermine the illusion of superiority he holds over the bourgeois.

Unfortunately or otherwise the germ had been implanted. It served Mr. Lacem in two ways. When he escaped some Floradora show, with all its elegantly corseted beauties, to go to an Art exhibition, he could answer the prickings of his conscience with "I am cultivating Art, for the sake of my corsets. In this way I am getting a good background." The second service it did him was to imbue his mind with the realization that some day his unmentionables might, through the inspirations thus secured, take their deserved place in the Art

⁶² "Venus of Milo, or Melos. This statue, with three of HERMES was discovered by the French admiral Dumond d'Urville in Milo or Melos, one of the Greek islands. It dates from the 2nd Century B.C. and is probably the finest single work of ancient art extant. It is now in the LOUVRE." Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, Centenary Ed., Revised (1981)

Section of the best Museums.

When he came to Paris, he, of course, had to quiet his sense of duty first. This he did by going the rounds of the better couturiers and their mannequins, then by making a couple of duty calls, as it were to the Folies Bergères and Bal Bullier. These chores over, he sighed with relief and started to take in the town. Obviously he began with the City Hall, as all good business men should do. To his delight, he found the walls of this building covered with frescoes painted by eminent French Artists. With sincere admiration, he went from room to room till he came to a large reception hall. There, raising his eyes to the ceiling, he caught his breath. This was beyond question the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. A span of oxen stands steaming against the rising sun; holding the horn of one with his right hand, left holding a goad, a ploughman stands, bare-headed, face uplifted, eyes inspired by the beauty of early morning and of furrowed earth.

Mr. Lacem was dumbfounded. He must have a copy of this painting of a real dirt farmer for his den. What relief after bothering with female shapes all day to come and look at this masculine figure singing his "Hymn to Earth!"⁶³ Mr. Lacem was burned with the desire of obtaining a replica. This was the reason why, on this July morning, he called at the Paris studio to share his discovery with Father.

Could Father come to see this priceless gem? Assuredly. Together they visited the City Hall to see "Hymne à la Terre." Father's attitude did not spoil Mr. Lacem's enthusiasm for the picture. His skilful remarks rather kindled new flames so that, by lunch time, the ground was thoroughly prepared. Over a bottle of Burgundy and "pieds de mouton poulet," they closed the deal. For a copy of the Hymn, measuring three feet by three feet, Father was to get \$150.00. Mr. Lacem shortly after left for America.

On arriving at his home town, Mr. Lacem made the rounds of his factories. After instructing his foremen in the subtle novelties of corset-making discovered in Paris he settled down for a quiet evening home. As he smoked a cigar in his den he thought incessantly of "Hymn to Earth." It was indeed a relief to have even in memory, the glorious colors and figures of this painting to chase away the corset worries which had greeted him on his return; discussions about short waists, long waists, whale bone stays, steel stays, silk, wool, satin, cotton, garter harnesses. All this disappeared, displaced by a remembered picture of sunlit earth, steaming oxen, of a ploughman in the trances of a great vision.

With this in mind, he looked over where to hang it. He got a yardstick, measured here, measured there, puffed his cigar a bit. Under the spell of his enthusiasm he had to communicate with Father, his only confidant. He had found a place for the picture wrote he, above his mantelpiece; the space was seventy-two inches square; what did Mr. Wickenden think of it?

Naturally Father replied "grand!" but this wall would take a painting five feet by five feet instead of

⁶³ It is assumed that when the author refers to the "City Hall" he means the Hôtel de Ville. The Guide Michelin "Paris" states that "on 4 September 1870, after the defeat of the French Army at the Battle of Sedan, Gambetta, Jules Favre and Jules Ferry proclaimed the Third Republic from the Hôtel de Ville and instituted a National Defence Government. The capitulation of Paris on 28 January 1871, however, roused the citizens and in their anger they removed the government, installing in its place the Paris Commune of 1871. In May during its final overthrow, the Hôtel de Ville, the Tuileries and several other buildings were set on fire by the Federalists * * * The Hôtel de Ville was entirely rebuilt between 1874 and 1882 in the neo-Renaissance style by Ballu and Depertthes, complete with 148 statues of the illustrious and of French towns to adorn the building's facade...Amid the caryatids and rostra, coffered ceilings and crystal chandeliers are panels by Laurens depicting Louis XVI's reception at the Hôtel de Ville and mural paintings by Puvis de Chavannes (The Seasons)." According to The Encyclopædia Britannica, Eleventh Edition "In the [first] reception room...[Puvis de Chavannes]...painted two panels, 'Winter' and 'Summer'...On the ceiling we see Victor Hugo offering his lyre to the city of Paris." Possibly one of the other french painters participating in this resurgence of mural painting painted the ceiling in the reception room visited by Lacem.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

three by three. This would mean a trifle of fifty dollars more, or a total of two hundred instead of one hundred and fifty dollars for the picture. In giving these measurement of five by five, Father forgot to say this was inclusive of frame.

However, Mr. Lacem accepted the increased price and Father, after obtaining the necessary permits, went to work on the copy, setting up his easel under the picture in the Paris City Hall. He began enthusiastically by making a drawing, noting the various colors and tones. I looked over this drawing some time ago. I recollect principally the mention of blue grey oxen against orange clouds, sienna-ish earth, numbers denoting intensity of light. Pigeons also, blue grey, crows perhaps might have been more realistic, but this is incidental. The whole was surrounded by a magic circle, perhaps symbolic of the Earth's orb. The man resembles an Italian model; the oxen might be from the Halles. The pigeons from Place de la Concorde. The whole composition was probably cooked up right in Paris.

However it was a most impressive picture and Father began to reproduce it, penetrated with the greatest possible admiration for it. However there was one drawback. It was placed horizontally above him. To copy it he was obliged to look constantly to the ceiling. Day after day he painted, craning and straining to gaze upwards, then returning to his vertical canvas. He tried to alleviate this muscular strain by getting ladders. With these mechanical devices things were, if anything, worse, as in addition to the strained position he had to remember not to walk into the void -- the City Hall floors were hard, highly polished oak. It was anything but comforting to contemplate landing on them from a height of fifteen or twenty feet with the additional hazard of loaded palette and brushes. His days began with ecstasy. They finished with a crick in the neck.

It seemed he was doing nothing but look up, then down, look up, then down -- up -- down. Whenever he left the City Hall he was still looking up. He looked up till his head swam and spots danced before his eyes. He then recollected the story of Michelangelo going blind on account of this constant bending of the neck while painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. He began to wonder whether he could finish the thing before he lost his eyesight or his mind.

In the meantime certain remittances that Father had counted on failed to appear. A state of irritation took hold of him. Being hard up, he conceived the idea of being paid in Paris immediately for the work. He wrote to Mr. Lacem with this idea in view but the tone of his request was condescending in the extreme, as if, instead of asking for a favor he was granting one. Sufficient trouble and correspondence regarding dimensions and prices had already taken place to make Mr. Lacem touchy. He took umbrage at this request. He began to suspect that Father's superior attitude implied a lack of trust. So he took the tone of boss to employee and ordered Father to ship the painting as soon as read; he would pay upon reception. The stage was set; Father got mad. On October 24, 1899 he wrote:

Your letter of October 4 has reached me and I am amazed that you should so little appreciate the terrific inconveniences to which I have been subjected in making the copy of "Hymn to Earth" for you. But, setting all this aside, I may tell you that the picture is ready since the beginning of October. Far from asking "Pay in advance" I had not even insisted on a guarantee deposit, as is usual for such works. If my work here had not prevented me from making a trip to America I should have done you this favor of taking it back with my own effects but, as I am delaying this trip, the picture is here at your disposal. It will be delivered to your Paris correspondent against the price of two hundred dollars -- unless you wish to remit the funds directly.

I cannot obtain for you the customs clearances without the picture being really your property and, anyway, objects of Art, not being common merchandise, cannot be shipped so far without remittance.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

I shall be busy here at Auvers on a picture for several weeks and you may address me there.

Awaiting your reply, please accept my eager civilities,

R. J. W

“Guarantee deposit!” Lacem the millionaire, the great corset manufacturer, to be called upon for a guarantee deposit as if he were a sort of dead beat! “Common merchandise!” This phrase putting art so far above everything else seemed to place his own impeccable corsets into a low unspeakable category, at the foot of the ladder. It stuck in his throat. Foot of the ladder, forsooth! His corsets were as good as any work of art by -- penurious painters. As proof of this, witness the public’s approval, made manifest in his bank deposits. “That’s more than the lot of them own,” exclaimed he, alternating from the paleness of anger to the purple of rage. Mad as a hornet, he replied under date of Nov. 7, 1899:

Dear Sir:

I am astonished at yours of Oct. 24. Firstly there was no question regarding conditions of payment between ourselves as I am well known to you. Having repeated dealings with you in art matters, I had every right to expect more consideration on your part and your request is a most unpleasant one. For, in this case, it was not question of jockeying for a position as to who would get the better of the other. After all, when I was in Paris I could just as well have used others to make this copy for me. They would have done so with alacrity. As I accepted without question the price you set I was far from expecting that it was a favor on your part to do the job. If I judge your letter one might think you were actually doing me a favor, neither more nor less. As to myself I gave you the work for the sake of our acquaintance.

You have certainly paid me well for it and I assure you that you could easily spared yourself the trouble.

Further error on your part, were you not hired to do this copy for 750 francs? Why then do you claim 1000 francs? that’s putting a fast one over, I congratulate you for it! I doubt greatly that this sharp practice should serve you better than you deserve.

Respt.

Lacem

“Used” by a corset manufacturer! Was he a tool, a slave? Hired for the copy! Like a common hack driver!

Father was furious and in the heat of the moment wrote under date of December 1st::

Replying to your letter of November 7th. The price of one hundred and fifty dollars was a “friend’s price” for a picture of 35 or 36 inches, at the most, in width. Afterwards, in your letter of July 8th you mentioned a much larger space for it and I replied on July 19 that such an increase in size would necessarily mean an increase in price of fifty dollars, which you accepted by your letter of August 11th.

After careful calculation I arrived at 48 inches as the net size to fit your space. But,

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

in view of all my démarches⁶⁴, the guarantees I had to give to the City of Paris, the great difficulties in doing the work, I cannot accept less than the increase agreed to by yourself.

I did not measure my efforts by the price accorded you nor did I spare myself to give you a work quite out of the ordinary.

If, however, you want to squabble about a few dollars, francs or cents, there is no way of coming to an agreement and I prefer to keep the picture. I shall therefore hold it at your disposal under the foregoing conditions until January First, 1900. Past this date I shall consider myself as freed of all engagements towards you and as having the right to dispose of the picture as I see fit.

Respectfully yours,

R. J. W.

It was enough to muddle anyone. One day five feet by five feet, the next, day forty-eight inches by forty-eight inches. Of course 48" x 48" meant a picture 5' x 5' with its frame, but Mr. Lacem in his present mood did not or did not wish to understand this, nor was he going to help unravel the mix-up. The net result therefore was that, in trying to secure an earlier payment, Father had seriously delayed it. Now he was ditching the whole business.

To the above outburst Mr. Lacem replied, 12 Dec. 1899:

I am in receipt this morning of yours of the 1st. I regret very much to tell you that I have been obliged to exchange more useless correspondence regarding this famous picture than if it were a mine in the Klondyke.

The size was to be, at first, frame included, 44 to 47 inches in width. Later I mentioned 72 inches width and now you inform me that you applied the width originally arrived at. This is all I know at present. Now, this morning I learn that the picture is to be 48 inches after all. I have no objection to paying the extra \$50.00 as long as the picture is delivered. I am not accustomed to do business otherwise; doctors, artists or merchants are all the same to me. In your last letter you mentioned a price specially based on our friendship, at the same time you accuse me of penny-pinching. Thanks for the compliment. Furthermore this kind of flattery would have insulted me had I thought you were an authority in so judging me.

I think that I have sufficiently patronized your works in the past to deserve better though, now that I am aware of your mental condition, I realize, too well, that it may not have permitted you to judge me better.

No, Mr. R.J.W. I do not squabble for sours, neither do I make prices for friendship's sake, my motto is "Business all the time and friendship when it is time for friendship."

Once more, hand over the picture and you'll get your money; not otherwise.

⁶⁴ Procedures, steps or moves to obtain something.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Your devoted,

L.

Things were at a complete impasse. From needing money the artist was actually refusing to do the necessary to collect it by keeping a picture he did not want. As to Mr. Lacem, he who had spent a lifetime solving fickle women's whims and fancies, he, whose wise mind even knew the answer to Mona Lisa's smile, was up against a major psychological problem. His desire to obtain a copy of "Hymn to Earth" was all the greater because of these troubles. Yet he was refusing to send a picayune cheque of two hundred dollars which would have brought it at once. Both, artist and merchant had maneuvered themselves into the position of cutting their noses to spite their faces.

It was then that Mr. Lacem remembered a friend of his, Mr. Wisdom, now in Paris. This friend was also a patron of Father's. Mr. Lacem cabled, giving Mr. Wisdom practically carte blanche.

The New Year had come. Early in January this gentleman called at the studio. Father was glad to see Mr. Wisdom. They went to dinner together. Gradually the story came out.

"...and I'd be delighted to get rid of the whole damned thing altogether," concluded Father.

"Would you?" queried Wisdom. "Why not? Trust me with the picture; I'll settle it for you."

So Father gave the picture to his friend and washed his hands of it.

Three weeks later, in the Paris studio, Father is completely absorbed in his picture for the 1900 World's Exposition. He is going to give these Frenchmen something to think about. He is going to give them a vision of America, the advance guard of generations, clearing the land, raising its sustenance, aye and that of the whole world too. He is going to paint the Woodsman wresting his living from the somber Forest.

"Ah, Ah!" Signor Giuseppi, the model, has the lofty look of a fearless pioneer -- black mane of hair, black moustache, a torso fit for a Hercules, flat feet perhaps, perhaps also a skin of alabaster. Nevermind, he holds up a headless axe-handle as if he were going to beat the life out of something -- Father sees that something clearly, though it be thin air. It is an imaginary shaggy barked pine, some thirty inches on the stump. That much clear. As Father handles the charcoal, the words of Walt Whitman keep chanting in his mind.

"Pioneers! O pioneers!"⁶⁵

What is this? Someone tapping his shoulder?

"Yes, Aristide?"

The Janitor hands a letter. Shuffles out grumbling. No tip. Father takes the envelope, stares at the American stamp, the corset insignia. Where has he seen this before? Mechanically he slits it open. A check. No bad news, thank God, no interruptions. The whole thing is rumped into his coat pocket to be forgotten

⁶⁵ The author quotes in this and the concluding Chapter various lines from Walt Whitman's poem "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" which was first published in 1865 and later included in various publications of "Leaves of Grass." The foregoing information was derived from and the author's quotes were checked against the 1986 Penguin Classics edition of Walt Whitman -- The Complete Poems edited by Francis Murphy (1975).

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

instantly as he catches a light on the forearm of his model.

“Come my tan-faced children.
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,
Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes?
Pioneers! O pioneers!”

At this unintelligible grumble Giuseppe is rather uneasy. He is also worried about the little stove. It seems to be getting rather low, but he daren't move. Is it getting colder on this late January afternoon?

“Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground,
Pioneers! O pioneers!”

Though his flesh is getting goose-pimply, Giuseppe hangs on to the axe handle.

ROMANY PATERAN⁶⁶

To organize a studio was nothing new to Father. In a jiffy, the barest, most unpromising garret in Paris assumed an appearance of grand style and luxurious comfort, partly illusory, partly real. His furniture was somewhat on the lines of stage properties. With his trained hands and eyes he could derive unbelievable effects with the aids of a few rags and boxes, a touch of paint here and there.

81 Boulevard Clichy was no exception. In the jumble of papers of that period I found a receipted bill for a stove to be delivered at the new studio. This was not merely a comfort but a necessity when models posed. With this stove he bought a few chairs, a table, all second hand, of course. To this he added his own collection of stretchers, canvases, easels and portfolios. Around these he draped odd rags originally looted by the French or brought from Oriental or Arabian bazars⁶⁷ of the Barbary Coast by French merchants. They were profuse and cheap in Paris at that period. Gorgeously colored, ragged and dusty, they nevertheless gave a tone of splendor to the most elemental room. A packing box under such fragments of cloth could look with hauteur at period furniture.

And it was “de rigueur” that packing boxes should be kept in the studio, covers, nails and all, ready for the next inevitable move.

Father inherited the restless preparedness for moving of his race. Goings and comings were second nature to him. Wherever we went, the impermanence of human affairs was impressed on our daily life. Nomads we were. The decision to go would come. Moves were not feared although packing was an annoyance; but once all was boxed, parceled and loaded, once we ourselves were on the road, exultation replaced tiredness, expectation killed misgivings, excitement blotted out completely repinings for loved scenes and haunts now being left forever. There were no morbid desires for return. Father was built that way and so, wherever he went, the old packing cases stayed near. They seemed to say. “If things go well we shan’t do any harm but then they go wrong or peter out -- here we are, ready for a new try and another move.” Father derived great comfort from their presence. He hated blind alleys, cul-de-sacs, places where he might be stuck. If fate appeared unkind, he would try it elsewhere. When he headed for new localities, although he might be worse off, he would at least have the satisfaction of having done it of his own volition. Between the frying pan and the fire he would gladly chose the latter if he felt circumstances forced him to stick out the frying pan. A most independent spirit, withal gentle, always relishing his own decision, albeit unexpected or unpractical. This resoluteness always saw him through all emergencies and trials. We should feel glad to have inherited this facility of manœuver. In these days of upset we must be prepared for change and have the elasticity of outlook of nomads, with their freedom of action.

Soon after Father set up his studio at Paris he received the commission to paint “Hymn to Earth” of which I have told the story in the preceding chapter. Needless to say this whole episode was one of great distress to Mother and all of us, as Father would fairly throw a fit every time he returned home to Auvers with some new tale of woe.

Fortunately other commissions came from America which more than kept him busy -- portraits, among which a miniature, sales of various pictures to patrons who called, gentlemen and ladies.

⁶⁶ Webster’s New International Dictionary (1922) states that “pateran” is an incorrect spelling of “patrin” which itself is noted as being archaic, derived from the Gypsy patrin meaning “leaf” and from the Sanskrit pattra. It is defined as “a handful of leaves, grass, or the like thrown down by gypsies at intervals to indicate their course to other gypsies.”

⁶⁷ “Bazar” is accepted as an optional spelling to “bazaar.” Webster’s New International Dictionary (1922) states that the word’s origin derives ultimately from the Persian bāzār.

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

He kept receiving letters from Canada, from the Roman Catholic clergy whose witty style he always enjoyed. Among other reminders from them was an invitation from a worthy abbé to have a “*petit verre pour la grande occasion.*” News came from American artists that business was good. Another friend wished him success in Paris and told him he was best off there. But Father knew better. He realized too well that all the money he earned came from America, none from France. Another friend, writer, poet and art lover mentioned that there were hundreds of artists and students at Quebec. He rather deprecated tastes in art and, in regard to Cornelius Kreighoffs’ paintings, stated:

“Twenty years hence Kreighoffs will be found in garrets...”

What an erroneous prophecy! True, Kreighoff’s style and technique were naive, but they were his own. The result is that his paintings are far from being in garrets. They are worth their weight in gold. By a strange play of fate this wandering painter, without training, achieved a growing fame in Canada long after his death while trained artists are on the road to oblivion and their works on the way to attics. This is a case where the public was right and the artists wrong. It all comes back to my former remarks that technique is largely a matter of style. If a method succeeds and pays all will follow or try to follow it. Artists are many, but original technicians are few.

Two pictures went to the Paris Salon of 1899, three to the Montreal Spring exhibition but as reported by a friend there were no press notices. Eminently practical and realistic in such matters, Father knew that one must be on the spot to secure such things.

However his principal reason for the studio at 81 Boulevard Clichy was to paint a picture for the World’s Fair to be held at Paris in 1900. As stated before the idea he had in mind for this composition was to depict a Pioneer or Woodsman clearing land for his homestead.

Emphasis on the importance of Agriculture as the Mother of all arts and human activities was the main concern of his thoughts during his whole lifetime. Anything that had to do with the labor of raising humanity’s food was the subject, not merely of his interest, but of a respect that became often reverence if not an almost worshipful attitude.

His copy of Hymn to Earth, for all the difficulties he met doing it, perhaps also on this account, made a great impression on his mind and its inspiration rather helped him in crystallizing his own creation, the “Woodsman.” Gone were diffuse patterns of Grecian maidens and shepherds of a few years before, gone the vague poetry of a vanished Arcadia. Here was the reality. Man felling the Forest. Man making Land. Man feeding his family. The ploughman of “Hymn to Earth” had inherited his fallow. The Pioneer had to make his. All the thoughts of the Past which he had absorbed regarding the Earth as a nourishing Mother from Hesiod, Virgil, Montaigne, to Millet, Le Breton, Dupré and others surged in his mind. His own experience with his bit of land at Auvers gave life to all this. Copying “Hymn to Earth” unified his thoughts. When it was finished he turned his entire mind to the creation of his own composition and promptly forgot about Mr. Lacem and his corsets as Walt Whitman’s lines resounded in his head:

“We the primeval forest felling.
We the rivers stemming, vexing we and piercing deep the mines
within,
Pioneers! O pioneers!”

Nevertheless he had to be practical about it. He called for men models and soon picked out the one he wanted, a muscular swarthy Italian who looked somewhat like the type of Canadian he was thinking of. The early sketches were patiently done to determine the general composition. The early brushings were smeared

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

on the large canvas and the work was launched. It grew gradually, full of energetic action. His woodsman figure, in flaring red shirt swings his axe with unswerving glance upon the notch already showing in a large pine; the chips fly, the trunk will soon fall in the yet restricted clearing. The forest closes around everything; the sky shows through tree tops but the dominant figure is Man. This picture is a commanding one, well worthy of the Quebec Parliament Buildings where it is hung; a fine piece of the Art of North America.

At the same time he painted a smaller canvas, the "Voyageur" showing a canoe-man paddling over misty waters into a rosy sunset. This picture is yet the dream. The Woodsman its counterpart, is the dream carried into reality by determination, work and sweat.

Nevertheless he had to push the placing of these works in the Canadian Pavilion as there was no provision there for a Fine Arts exhibit. Among other proposals regarding his pictures was one to group them with the British exhibit. Apparently the distinct Canadian individualism was as yet in a nebulous state and the colonial complex was still strong. At any rate there was much correspondence. One letter dated March 13, 1900, by a friend in Quebec recommended the pictures to Honorable Sydney Fisher at Ottawa. In it, it is mentioned that Father intended to come to Canada for the future of his family. His centre would be Montreal but he would get a country place later. The outcome was that both pictures were finally accepted. In addition to this work he finished his lithograph of Cardinal Taschereau which was accepted by the salon. The truth is that along with his artistic work he was maturing his projects to move with wife and children to America. If any lingering doubts still remained, they were pushed aside by actual facts. Since his return to France that Spring of 1899, not a cent had come from French sources to pay for his household expenses. Moreover there was a feeling of precariousness due to the eternal problematic relations between France and Germany and between France and England. As Ulpiano Checa said, business was poor in France and anything in America was better than in France. His remarks that living in America would save travelling expenses showed that there was no income from French sources.

He decided that the 1900 International Exhibition at Paris would be his deadline and to leave France after its start, in the spring of that year. The move itself would be simple enough once the house was disposed of and funds secured.

It was with these ideas in mind that we celebrated our last Christmas at Auvers. It did not feel as if it were to be the last. Jules the Chick, as usual, brought his mistletoe which we hung up in the dining room. It never occurred to me that it would not witness our meals for all of the coming year. The little pine was dug up, placed in its tub and decorated in the little parlor where stood the old fireplace flanked by its bake oven. As usual, at dinner, curtains were drawn when brandy's blue flame was kindled on the plum pudding.

Father and Mother were thoughtful. I was alarmed by the absence of their former spontaneous gaiety. They were in reality going through the hard process of giving up the place they loved. Perhaps a lingering temptation to stay was considered. But what would it mean? To live here in the beautiful atmosphere of Daubigny, Corot, Millet, year after year. Year after year to greet the same spring, summer, winter. He had seen them, lived them, painted them. Living them once was living them one hundred times.

To go to America, to return, go to America again and again. And the sons, what? The daughters, what? To become bourgeois or small-salaried professors, working towards their retirement on rentes, followed by cabbage planting? Repetition, repetition, repetition.

Better break -- better the harsh winter of North America -- the North winds, the virile winds:
". . .not for us the tame enjoyment,"⁶⁸

⁶⁸ "Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment."

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

Pioneers, O pioneers!”

Necessity had become Romance. Somewhat silent then was our contemplation of the little candle-lit tree that last Christmas evening with Father, Mother and us five children staring at it.

The blowing out of the Tree candles was a moment for thought. It was the sunset of a happy decade.

What was the result of it all? These trips, sales laboriously organized with successful or unsuccessful results, quarrels flaring up, quarrels patched up, friendships made and friendships dissolved, purchases, studies of paintings, visions of pictures, some carried out, some not, all for the nest come true in the old, old, stone house that sheltered love, children’s birth sickness, health, joy, sadness. The last louis, the last franc, the last chicken for the pot, where were all these things ending. What was the object of it all, now it was all gone?

In the crucible of time, there were pleasant memories, unrecorded it is true, but how many generations had preceded us here in centuries past and left no record, the same as for the billions of human creatures on this earth? Why a record? A joyful minute is worth a day, a year, even a lifetime. Its recording is in the minds of those it has made happy. Come life, come death, come rain, come sunshine, it is all the same --

“Eat, drink and be merry...”

The symbols of the Christmas ceremonies had subconsciously activated our new thoughts. As for the Tree, the glow of new brands was relighted within us and the next day saw us eagerly active.

Mother was reading up a book published some thirty years before, entitled “The Settler’s Guide.” It was full of recipes, tricks, counsel for the New Land. It was a panacea for the wife of “The Settler” and treated everything from soup to colic.

And Father? He was more absorbed than ever in the vision of his Woodsman, painting of which the holidays had interrupted. His mind became filled with the grandeur of it all. The sweep forward of population into lands untrammelled by the tyranny of Europe.

“We to-day’s procession heading, we the route for travel
clearing,
Pioneers! O pioneers!”

As to myself, I quickly dropped all ideas of the past. Glowing in my mind were tales of large spaces, unbounded woods, Indians, rivers, lakes, hunting, fishing. This last reminded me of a cardboard box. I was preparing for America. I opened it and went to work sorting out long horse hair obtained from the tail of an old grey mare of Monsieur Vassar’s, the farmer. These made excellent mounts for fish-hooks. When plaited they might be strong enough to stand the tug of the whales I was going to catch.

Regarding the projected move, Father’s concern resumed itself into one word “sell.” Sell the house, sell pictures, sell anything. For disposal of pictures he had Monsieur A. Cousins, his dealer. This latter did very well, eventually bringing us several thousand francs.

In regard to the disposal of the Auvers house, Father’s plans became simplified. After trying in vain to make a sale by advertising and looking up various leads, he decided upon a public auction. Large posters were printed giving the description of the house and adjoining land, each stamped and each illustrated by a lithograph. Up went the posters all over the village and some adjoining towns. Soon they all were minus the lithographs. For peasant villagers it was surprising how many people were art collectors. Their unerring

Castle in Bohemia

Memoirs of Robert John Wickenden and Ada Louise Ahier by Alfred Ahier Wickenden

French artistic sense spotted the original lithographs and cut them off. Father was at first provoked; then he became quite flattered. This was the best tribute of spontaneous appreciation which he had ever received from the French public. As a matter of publicity I believe the blank hole left by the picture attracted as much attention as the picture itself as it turned out afterwards that many people planned to bid above the upset price; eighteen thousand francs. Father inserted a few classified ads in Paris daily newspapers. One of these caught the eye of a Paris contractor, Monsieur Josserand. He wrote to Father who sent him a copy of the poster. Monsieur Josserand visited the house with his pretty wife and daughter. We gave him a bang-up lunch. He was so pleased that he closed the deal for the upset price giving a cash down payment of ten thousand francs. "En affaires, je suis tout rond,"⁶⁹ said he. Furthermore he purchased the furniture which we did not wish to take with us. He was to occupy the house on June 1st. He decided to call it Villa Corot. As francs rated before the wars this was not much more than \$3,600, but the value of this sum at that period was ten times greater, all money being still on a real gold basis. At any rate here was a fixed asset turned to cash.

Added to Cousins' sales this nest egg grew to over \$4000, from which had to be deducted mortgages, bills, etc. There was but a fraction left of the over \$40,000 made at the American Art Galleries some seven years before. The difference had all gone into travelling, into the pockets of French dealers, into living expenses, into property, etc. When to this was added some \$10,000 made in America, it will be seen that our modest establishment in France was after all a costly one.

The job now was to get ready to go. We packed. Some of the old prized pieces came with us -- the old buffet, bed, chairs. It was the usual job, seemingly unending, hurried at the end, packing, packing, packing. We were too busy to be sad. I looked forward to our journey -- adventure -- America.

We left in May, 1900. The weather was mild and sunny, a little hazy. At the last minute our cat Mini disappeared. I hunted for him as we wished to take him to Jersey, for my Grandmother. But the cagey beast could not be found. Like all felines he had more affection for place than for person.

This excitement over we gathered together in the yard, Mother, Father, Fiffille, Yvonne, Henry, John and myself. Félicie, our maid, was to see us to the station, to catch the morning train for Paris.

All the doors were fastened upon the little ghosts of our days there, joined to those we had sensed during our stay. Our patteran was added to those left by former generations of peasants -- someone else would come -- perhaps to recognize it -- perhaps just to pass it by, as in the song.

This over we walked through the scent of violet, hawthorn, anemone, down the Moutier Road, the Sansonne Road, to the Station. We smelt the smoke of the engine, of cinders blown up by the train's wind as it pulled in. We filled a third class compartment. A toot of the guard, and the train left Auvers Station. As it gathered speed I looked towards the slope where we had lived. A mile away, across a hazy flat our former home stood out of the side hill, a rosy tile roof, a graceful turret among elms newly broken into tender green. Castle in Bohemia --

Timed by the quickly revolving wheels of the train it caught the morning light.

Our life in France was over.

⁶⁹ "In business matters, I do a straight deal."