A VISIT TO MONACO.

Site of the City—Some Historical Reminiscences—Court and Family in Winter—The Gambling Establishment—Performance of the "Passion of our Lord."

(Correspondence of the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin.)

MONACO, Jan. 4, 1870.—Perched on a rock rising three hundred feet from the sea and stretching like a point into it, is the little town of Monaco, nearly all that now remains of the former Principality. Its origin is traced back as far as 1100 B. C. Hence it was in existence before the Great Pyramid; before any numbered heroes gathered around the walls of Troy: before David and Solomon; before Rome was thought of. Whether it owes its origin to Hercules of Thebes, as some authors relate, or to the Phœnicians, who raised there a temple to Hercules, cannot be certainly known. Yet the large number of palm-trees in the neighborhood indicates that the great maritime people of antiquity once held possession of Monaco and the parts adjacent; for it is well known that wherever they went they endeavored to introduce this tree in connection with the worship of Hercules. Indeed, that name seems to mean *the people of the palm-tree*, being derived from the Greek word φοινιξ, which is the name of that tree. But whether the name of the people was derived from that of the tree, or the name of the tree from the name of the people, is a matter of indifference to us as the presence of the Phœnicians at Monaco is concerned; for both went together in early days.

Various authors refer to the "Port of Hercules" of Monaco, as of considerable value for a harbor of refuge in the many contests which have had place on the Mediterranean; and Cæsar embarked from it for Genoa after his victory over Pompey's adherents in Spain. Augustus, too, left a lasting memorial of his presence near Monaco, in the famous tower at Turbia, which stands in ruined grandeur midway between Nice and Mentone, on the summit of the mountain, and commanding an entire view of the ex-principality of Monaco. The tower remained whole until 1706, when the French, considering it a fortification, destroyed it at the same time as the Chateau at Nice. Now but one-half is left standing, yet only on a near approach can one see that one side has been destroyed. The name of Turbia is said to be a degeneration of the name *Trophæa Augusti*, which became successively Tropea, Trapia, Turbia, and finally Turbia. A French Abbé, however, gave me another derivation a few days ago. He said that the tower was placed on the dividing line of Italy and Gaul, and marked the limits of the Provinces (since known as *Provence* in France) on the east. Hence it was called Turris vie, or Tur-vie, which naturally became Turbia.

The family of Grimaldi, of which the head is the reigning Prince of Monaco, has been in possession of the little State from 980 to the present time, and is therefore one of the most ancient in Europe. Their name is derived, for them by one Gibellin Grimaldi, a noble of Genoese origin, by a brilliant deed of arms and though many years elapsed before his title was undisputed, the original deed of gift has never been set aside. The occasion of it was briefly as follows:

The Saracens having possessed themselves of this part of the world, the Count of Arles determined to drive them from his dominions. His attempt was successful. The stronghold were taken and razed to the ground, until they were driven to take refuge in a range of high mountains, that, on one side were almost perpendicular, and on the other were not much easier of approach, and hence were considered inaccessible. They managed, however, by scaling these rocks, to gain a position near the sea, on which on them was of vital importance—and whilst gathering all their forces together in these desolate regions, hope, which had began to fade, revived among them. On the other hand, Grimaldi, in a most persistent opposition, ever moving, but gaining no ground, the Christian troops began to despond and to urge their commanders to give up so hopeless a contest. Gibellin Grimaldi, however, who had already distinguished himself on previous occasions, could not endure the thought of letting the Saracens remain at peace and liberty to go on with their cruelties. He made one more bold attempt, and imparted his enthusiasm to his command. In the dead of night he led on his forlorn hope. In order to surprise the enemy, he determined to scale the perpendicular side of the rock. This was successfully done, as there was no watch to give warning of his approach. In safety and unnoticed the summit was reached, and the result fulfilled the wildest hopes of the brave and valiant soldier. He gained a complete victory, and the enemy arose the whole of the Saracens had perished. Grimaldi's military services were recognised by the Count of Arles, who conferred on him as fief land the coast between St. Trapez and Frejus. The deed of gift was drawn up and executed in September, 980, and it was not until 1636 that a real Grimaldi could be said to be entire lord and master of Monaco. From this last date, however, the territory so given has formed a miniature State, with palace, and court, and mint, and army, and navy, and all the paraphernalia of its neighbors, repeated in little. It has been, alternately, the ally and enemy of France and Italy; for the former of which it has since given many famous and successful generals and admirals. Its harbor and port, for it is a ruler far beyond what its population or wealth would justify; hence its alliance has been courted by the most powerful States in Europe, whose rulers have sought by intermarriage with its royal family, and gifts and pensions to its distinguished members, to bind Monaco to their interests.

The territory comprising the Principality is hardly a low-shot across, and a modern rifled cannon could have rolled it from end to end even in its best days. It used to contain three towns—Monaco, the capital, Roccabruna and Mentone. These now contain a population of about 8,000; but the town which gives name to the Principality is the only one of any size, and now remaining to the Prince, the other two having achieved their independence in 1848, after having been oppressed for thirty years under a despotism more grinding, indiscriminate and comprehensive than was ever paralleled in modern times. That their independence should have been achieved without firing a shot or spilling a drop of blood, is the most remarkable event in the history of this State.

Though the territory is so small in extent, the passions of its rulers have been as great as those which have affected the destinies of larger States. The one was ambition, extravagance, vice, crime, folly and heroism alone in annals as are always recorded where men have rule. We have not to do with these now. We propose only to draw attention to one of the duties, as it is to be handled, on the European States; and one, too, if report speaks true, which will be handled, on the death of the present ruler, into the increasing empire of France.

Situated on the shores of the Mediterranean between France and Italy, with the Maritime Alps to protect it from the cold and cruel winds of winter, while the southern exposure gives it the full benefit of a bright sun, the Principality of Monaco offers the sight of tropical trees, flowers and fruits in the midst of winter. In the garden of the Palace, at this season when our own gardens are but blackened and iron-bound deserts, or heaps of snow, every flower that we know as glass house and frequently hot-house plants about Philadelphia is growing in the open air, and this during the depth of winter. Palm trees are there, and fig trees whose fruit has its full growth at the end of March. At Mentone, some of the palm trees even bear fruit, while the banana and prickly-pear both flourish out of doors; and other plants are to be seen which are only known in countries of much higher temperature. Lemons, oranges and olives are the staple commodities of the country. The lemons of Mentone keep better, and bear packing better, than those of Sicily or Corsica. The oranges are incessantly bearing, and you will see trees are incessantly bearing, and you will see them at once the bud, the flower, the young fruit, and the ripe yellow lemon on the same tree at one time. The fruit is gathered four times a year, and carried down in baskets from the hill to the town on the heads of the peasant women. The oranges are not so fine as those of Spain or Malta, but they are very good if left long enough on the tree; but they are not expected, nor, in fact, grown in the same quantities as the lemon. The bread-fruit and the mandarine both grow plentifully, as well as the bitter orange, the chinois and the citron. A good orange-tree produces about 3,000 oranges. Essences and scents are manufactured in large quantities. You will occasionally observe that whole region, meet, sheds erected or old buildings used for the purpose of peeling oranges for the use of the peasant, while the pulp is kept for feeding cattle.

It is hardly necessary to say that this region abounds in flowers of every sort. Yet even expectation the most enlarged is likely to be surpassed when one sees them in perfection. In January till the end of March the ground perfectly carpeted with violets and wild anemones, which continue to be recurn, growing in profusion wherever one may go.

Mentone is further sheltered that its climate is peculiarly adapted for people suffering from diseases of the lungs. The mistral ferring from diseases of the lungs. The mistral rarely penetrates here; and the mistral—a northwest wind, the coldest, dreariest, most suicide-engendering institution on record—is the preventive to the climate in the South of France attaining perfection.

There is, however, one institution—a modern one—which, while it renders Monaco attractive to mere pleasure-seekers, is the curse of the place to the more Christian and moral members of Nice society. We mean the casino or gambling house.

After the loss of the major part of his dominions in 1848, and with the consequent loss of the revenues of Monaco, now reduced to something less than three and a half miles in extent, the longest way of measurement, and with but 2,000 inhabitants, all told, would hardly suffice to maintain a very large imperial establishment. Accordingly, while in 1856 M. Blanc, director and proprietor of the gambling establishments at Homburg and Baden-Baden, proposed to the Prince to build a casino on the same principles and with the same success as those which exist at those places, the proposition was gladly accepted, and an arrangement was entered into by which the Prince was to hold a lease for sixty years of the land called the Spelugues, across the port from the town, where he was to build, or cause to be built anything else he liked, on the payment of 1,000 francs a year to the Prince and Monaco. The building is very handsome, though plain; there is a reading-room, with periodicals and journals of almost every country; a magnificent ball-room, where an Austrian band plays daily from two to five and from eight to ten. Balls are given occasionally, as well as concerts and theatricals. The grounds are delightful in the extreme, and the drive going to see. When the full moon rises out of the blue waters and casts a broad path of light across the horizon to the very feet of the bluff on which the spectator stands, and, bathing the peaks and cutting deep into the mysterious hollow of light, casts dark shadows over the recesses of the mountains in a flood of light, casts dark shadows over the recesses of the mountains in a flood of light, casts dark shadows over the recesses of the mountains in a flood of light, and sheds a most weird mystery to the dark olive groves in which the breeze restlessly murmurs, and nothing but the white sailing in the foreground appears hard to believe that estates are lost and hearts broken down in the gilded rooms near at hand; yet all the beauties of nature, of sky and water, of earth and heaven, are made subservient to this infernal institution; and for one comes down on the evening train from Nice, twelve miles distant, to gape upon the wondrous beauties of the place, hundreds come intent only on the excitement of the gaming tables, or the indulgence attendant upon the wild orgies for suddenly-gotten wealth.

First the casino is a new institution at Monaco. There is an interest in the place besides that which clusters around Spelugues. The people are neither rich nor poor, industrious as we see it in other places, does not exist here at all. The people will be for a week or more with habit than anything else; but all are well clothed, well shod, and well fed. Hardly any one exists that does not possess his own little plot of land, the produce of which is amply sufficient for his simple wants, and even when hundreds of olives will ask you for charity as persistently as those who perhaps can boast of a hundred times their gold, as they have the sign of want here.

Society there is none; a few retired officers and those who are found the resort of those and his family compose the better class. As the Prince is totally blind, but little hospitality is dispensed at the Palace, and none with his affection. We may add, however, that the present small suite does not exhaust the entire resources of the present ruler. As we have already said, the major part of the Principality was wrested from him in the wars of 1848, and claimed and obtained the protection of Sardinia. When Nice and Savoy were ceded to France a few years ago, Roccabruna and Mentone were also offered the opportunity of annexation; and though the latter was strong against the grain, it was the best solution of the difficulty which offered, and the result of the ballot was 636 votes in favor and only 54 against it. Of course, the deposed ruler protested against the act, and claimed his indemnity; he was, however, pacified, and put his dignity in his pocket by comfortably accepting 90,000,000 francs in French bullion. By this cession or annexation, the original estates were reduced to their present dimensions, and perhaps no better description of their extreme smallness can be given than the following account from the Times:

When the railroad company engaged in the construction of the road from Nice to Mentone began to enter on the question of purchasing the land for cutting the line in the territory belonging to the Principality, the people, well aware that France must fulfil her agreement for it to pass through Monaco territory, such exorbitant sums for their land that the company at once refused to pay it. The people, finding that they could get no more than would receive what they asked; till one day it was rumored that the railway line would not run through Monaco, would do so, but that they would found the line through the Prince's land. The feasibility of the plan was evident, and this cunning way of fulfilling their contract at once brought the Monaconese to their senses, and they accepted payment at the same rate as the Mentonaise.

In Good Friday a singular custom prevails at Monaco. It is the performance of the "Passion of our Lord." At nine at night the town is illuminated, and the chapel attached to the palace is decorated. A procession is formed by the people of the town, who represent the various actors in the scene. First comes a tribune on horseback, followed by soldiers with cups on their heads and spears in their hands. Then comes the Christ; he is weeping as if overcome with sorrow, and walks with his head bent down. Then a man approaches him and delivers him up to be bound and scourged, and covered with a purple mantle. The cock is then heard to crow. Herod is present, carrying an absurd looking umbrella over his head. Peter is seen to brandish his sword, and Malchus rubs his ear and threatens to be Philadelphia.

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