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Lausanne, le 15 septembre 1922

Impressions of the journey from Vevey to Lausanne.

Dear Voltaire,

Cully, midway between Vevey and Lausanne, is a little town of 1,100 inhabitants. It can look back very far into the past, for there was a time when the lounger on the beach of Cully would have seen in the bay a lake village, an amphibious camp made up of thatched roofs and huts on a submerged field of piles. Later on the idler would have seen Roman legionaries and Roman merchants halting by the road, since Cully seems to have been a posting station or wayside caravanserai of some significance.

Cully, from its earliest days, has been devoted to the making of wine. It has probably made wine ever since wine-making was known in Europe. It makes wine still and makes it well and, indeed, does nothing else. Grapes and the winepress are the symbols of its being, the subject of its thoughts and the mark of its ambition. A bunch of grapes on a branch constitutes the ancient arms of Cully. They are grapes, it may be noticed, of such size and quality that they would seem to proclaim to the world, *these are the grapes of Cully.* Someone, inspired by a sense of the fitness of things, has surmised that there was once a temple to Bacchus at Cully, but unfortunately the suggestion is unfounded. There are, however, other memorials which may prove as significant. One day in the year 1832 a man digging in a vineyard by Cully unearthed a little bronze statuette of a Bacchante. It would seem to tell the story of a Roman wine-grower whose admiration of Bacchus was such that he kept this figure in his house. When the barbarians were seen to be swarming over the hills above Cully one can imagine him taking the image from its niche and hiding it among his vines. One must further suppose that he was killed or made prisoner, since certain it is that he never came back to claim the figure he cherished. So for nearly two thousand years a votary of Bacchus lay hid in the vineyards of Cully.

The records of Cully go back to the 10th. century. It once belonged to the bishops [1], who did little but quarrel about their claims since the town was in the

1. The bishop princes of the old regime.

ecclesiastical parish of Villette. It seems to have been only feebly fortified, but possessed in 1577 both a *carcan* and a *virolet*. The former was a collar for the neck of criminals exposed to public view, and the latter a cage in which they were confined for convenient exhibition, to the delight, no doubt, of the boys of the place. [2]

Cully is an interesting spot in many ways. It has, in the first place, the most picturesque promenade on the Lake, a wide, leisurely promenade dignified by a row of fine old Lombardy poplars. On this parade is a monument to Major Davel, who was a *bourgeois* of Cully. The gallant Davel raised the standard of rebellion in 1723 with the forlorn hope of ridding Vaud of the dominion of Berne. He failed, and was executed at Vidy, near Lausanne, on April 24th, 1723.

A still more charming feature of this unpretentious town is displayed by the number of old houses that it contains, and especially by their beautiful doorways. Close to the church is an old building called the Sordet House. It, being very antique, is smothered with stucco, according to the Swiss custom. Its main feature is a square tower, on one angle of which — almost buried in plaster — is a fine Gothic niche. The doorway in the base of the tower is of handsomely carved stone, and bears the inscription, "1521. A.S." The letters are the initials of Aimé Sordet. The door opens upon a wide stone stair, the walls of which are ornamented at intervals with elaborate and curious pieces of carving, representing heads, coats of arms, reptiles and a man playing the bagpipes. The arms of the Sordet family, it may be noted, were a serpent with a gold crown. On the south wall of the house, which looks into a quaint courtyard, is an escutcheon, with on it a figure, helmet and lambrequin carved in stone. The house is now divided into poor tenements.

In the courtyard is a remarkable mediæval bench fashioned, or rather dug out, from the trunk of a tree, for it is in one solid piece. Wood can show its age in many ways. It may become black ; it may become grey ; it may be friable, riddled with worm-holes and covered with snuff-coloured dust. This bench is, how- ever, as hard as a stone, as sunburnt as a summer fisherman and free from evidences of decay. Age shows itself in the extraordinary degree in which it is wrinkled. No shrivelled-up centenarian could show wrinkles so intricate nor furrows so deep.

The Sordets were great people in Cully in the 16th. century, and by reason of holding the *seigneurie* of Ropraz (near Mézières, north-east of Lausanne) had the status of noblemen. Aimé Sordet was one of the representatives, on the side of the Reformers, chosen to take part in the famous Religious Conference held at Lausanne in October, 1536.

There is another beautifully carved doorway in the town, bearing on the lintel the inscription, "1520. A. IESVS MARIA. S.," the first and last letters being the initials of the same Aimé Sordet. Among other notable stone entries in the town may be mentioned one with the date 1525 and the Sacred Heart in stone, another with the year 1598 over a round arch very curiously ornamented, and a third of much dignity marked by the date 1684. One humble doorway — a simple square

2. *Carcans* of various types are to be seen in the Vevey Museum.

entry of stone — must not be overlooked. It is crowned by a little head, the head of a nun with a pretty face and a most becoming coif. Her story would be interesting to know, for she must have been, at one time, the beauty of Cully.

The interiors of certain of the ancient houses in the town have changed but little during the last three or four hundred years. There are still to be seen the worn stone stair, the great carved beams in the ceiling, the 16th century windows and the doorway that would seem to pertain to a convent cell rather than to a modern kitchen.

Yours Faithfully,



Sir Frederick Treves
Sergeant-Surgeon to His Majesty the King

copie à: All Smiths in London
Mademoiselle S. Curchod
en annexe: Tourist guide to Switzerland.
Plan of Cully.