

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers* 2, 1886 – 1887 June 5, '86 to May 21, '87)

Monaco

The smallest, and one of the oldest principalities in the world is on the Mediterranean 9 or 10 miles north-east of Nice. It measures 8 square miles, and contains 1500 people. Bounded on one side by the sea, and on the other by the mountains, it consists chiefly of a commanding head-land, rising 200 feet high. It has the small harbor which once gave it naval importance and power. This head-land was the appropriate site of an ancient Greek temple dedicated to Hercules Monarchus, and is now the site of the town of Monaco, with its walls, forts, palace, and monastery.

The place is known to history from the 10th century, when it was under the control of the Genoese family Grimaldi, which produced several famous men. Rinieri, Prince of Monaco was a Guelph leader who entered the service of Philippi le Bel, became admiral of France, and gained a victory over the Flemish fleet in 1338, and fell in the battle of Crecy. Giovanni, a Genoese admiral, gained a victory over the Venetians in 1431. Onorio was a French Duke and a man of letters. There were other men of distinction.

In the 14th century, the harbor was noted as a refuge for pirates. Ezo near by was a strong-hold of the Saracens. The little principedom was under various protectorates until the 18th century, when the heiress married the count of Thoringen. In 1793 the French Republic swallowed it up, but in 1815 it was restored to its prince, and put under the protection of the crown of Sardinia, which acknowledged its independence, but reserved the right to furnish the garrison and appoint the military governor. It was easy for Sardinia to take away Mentone and Roccabruna, which she did in 1848. The prince protested in vain, and offered his rights for sale; but on his death in 1856 his son Charles III succeeded, and he in 1861 sold his claims to the detached towns to France for 4,000,000 francs, who had been acquired Nice, and the principality became land-locked in her territory, and passed under her protection.

The old town is dead: the people have no spirit, no patriotism, not even local pride. They are not curious about strangers, seeming to know that they are not admired. They are waiting listlessly for some change; doubtless they expect to become French, and when that occurs and public games are suppressed Monaco will share liberally in the prosperity of the riviera. Her situation is exceptionally fine; the climate is mild, dry, and warm; and though the surface is rough, the soil is fertile, and produces olives, vines, aloes, prickly pears, palm trees, oranges, almonds, figs, lemons, and a great variety of blooming trees and flowers. Monte Carlo is north of Monaco, where the head-land joins the main-land. The site was a barren rock until 1828, when cornice road was constructed over it, and the prince caused it to be covered with earth and planted with trees by convict labor and thus turned it into a garden park. Here a new town has grown up consisting of hotels and villas, Tables existed here in 1856 and in 1858, gaming having been suppressed at Hamburg, M. Blanc came to Monte Carlo and formed the Joint Stock Company with a capital of 1,500,000 francs, paying such a royalty as enabled the Prince to abolish all taxes.

The majority of travelers passing by, halt here only if between trains. Many sojourning at

Nice or Mentone make excursions to "Monaco," by way of Monte Carlo.

The prevailing motive is curiosity, and that was what controlled us. We were at Nice, and wished to see the smallest of principalities, and the largest of gaming establishments. We took the train for Monte Carlo. The railroad runs along the shore between the hills and the sea. It was a May morning, bright and warm, the landscape a blooming garden. Our Puritan prejudices were shocked to find the broad way so beautiful. The tunnels seemed to threaten us, but, renewing our good resolution to resist temptation as we rolled into the station, we alighted, and going up through the park, found ourselves at the Company's Hotel de Paris, near the Casino.

The magnificent building rose like a fairy castle. Among the shrubbery were grave gentlemen in black who seemed absorbed in thought. They were isolated, and each with a paper and pencil was figuring and considering, and figuring again. Then he would meditate, change place or position, walk a few paces, and then stop. At once indolent and restless, they attracted attention, exciting both sympathy and suspicion. They were players digesting and revising their schemes to beat the bank. Every old player has his own special plan which he deems infallible. When tested it fails, and then the investor discovers a slight defect which he proceeds to remedy and try it over, and so on till he breaks himself. It is said that some old players of limited means so manage by great caution to live on the bank. They bet very low, always fixing a limit on their losses inside of their holding. When they win, constraining themselves to stop ahead, while they govern their passion by these iron rules, they stand, but it is slavery.

Preferring duty to pleasure, we went first to the old town, finding it as I have described, and we crossed the marble threshold and entered the spacious chamber, and passed through into the concert hall, and the café. All are spacious; the walls are hung with mirrors and paintings, the lofty ceilings are richly frescoed, and tinted sky-lights mellow the scene. Every thing is superb. The only fault is extravagance; but this is in keeping. The music is exquisite. There are classic concerts twice a week, which draw large audiences from distant resorts. It is the fashion to play a little on such occasions. A regular orchestra is in constant attendance and the best performers and singers appear in season.

There is perfect order and decorum. There is not the slightest restraint; every thing is free. No person seems to expect you to wager, or to care whether you do so or not. Yet nearly all do, and there is intense attention to the games.

There are two tables in operation, the roulette and the rouge et noir. Not understanding the games, I can not explain them but the company attracted my attention. It was numerous, ranged through all ages and varieties of adults. There was a bright young man with a handsome, intelligent face, fine, dark eyes, black hair and mustache, and a venerable, grey-haired lady in rich, quiet costume, old-fashioned spectacles, and black gloves. The young man stood alone and consulted no body and seemed to see no one. He bet by method, persistently, and largely, and lost every bet. Several times his money was exhausted, and then he left the room for a few minutes, and returned with more money, only to lose that. He played for several hours, and then disappeared.

The old lady was seated by the side of the table. She was quite self-possessed and self-approving. She held in her left hand a little Russia leather book which she demurely perused. You might have supposed that she thought herself at her devotions had you not seen her other hand with an ivory rake hauling in her winnings which were large. On each side of her were admiring lady friends who took her advice and followed her lead.

The establishment there is charged with untold evils, including many suicides. There is a party at Nice which makes a crusade against it in the Press. These are met by apologists who claim that gambling is natural to man; they claim too, that if public tables are suppressed, private games increase. * A fair play being characterized by law, they insist that they are not to blame. They say the number of suicides is exaggerated, and that of the actual cases, the great number are of men who have become desperate from other causes, and go there to play, hoping to recover their losses, and if they fail, then they only carry out a pre-conceived purpose to abandon their hopeless lives.

However this may be, the effort to conceal the cases which occur seems a confession of weakness; and the fact that citizens of the principality are not admitted, and all minors, and all officers of any country who are custodians of public money are excluded, shows that they are conscious of some limits to the benefits they bestow on society.

The games are believed to be fairly played, but are said to have percentages in favor of the bank enough to prevent a prudent man from investing. The greater source of profit however is supposed to be in elements of human nature and the circumstances of the players. The enormous capital of the company enables the bank to stand against adverse runs, while few players can endure a long series of losses; and when the player's purse is empty, he is done. Generally a winning player is unwilling to stop. It is not easy for one favored by Fortune to turn his back upon the smiling goddess. So it happens that while much money is won, little is carried away. A story is told of a skillful sporting-man who went into the casino with a goodly purse. He played all day and into the night. He bet high and won so largely that the bank was compelled to suspend until it could get fresh funds from the manager, and these were nearly gone as the closing hour approached. It is charged that they advanced the clock; but at any rate they stopped without breaking, though the bank had lost millions of francs. Early the next morning the attendants awoke M. Blanc to tell him the news. They found him cool. He said "Where is the gentleman? Is he gone?" "No Sir, he is in his room at the Hotel de Paris asleep." "Then all is well."

M. Blanc drew liberally on Nice and the bank opened at the usual hour. The player re-appeared, resumed the game, and played until his winnings were gone and he had lost all he brought with him. M. Blanc loaned him money to take him home.

A bride-groom was more fortunate. He played freely and won; and became so infatuated that he forgot his bride. She, a sagacious Frenchwoman, thought the 30,000 francs he had gained a convenient sum to secure. She gathered his winnings into her valise, and seeing that she could not stop him, she pretended to swoon and fell to the floor.

* They said Nice is a hot-bed of gambling in the worst forms: and that the opposition centering there is prompted by jealousy.

The room was in commotion: only the bride-groom remained undisturbed. The dealer said to him, "But, sir, is not that your wife?" He seemed to wake as from a dream, and sprang to her assistance. She promptly revived, and they went together to their Hotel, she bearing the bag which she had probably never let go. Entering the room, she locked the treasure up, and put the key in her pocket, saying "we must not play anymore," ordered the bill, and they took the first train.

A young Cincinnati not a Solomon, illustrated an old saying by winning several thousand francs, and gaily quitting the table at a word from a friend.

Notwithstanding our good intentions, some of our party yielded to temptation (only your reader stood firm). We had among us one of those favored few who seem to enjoy what is called luck. As we stood by the roulette table looking on at the game, something suggested to our lucky companion that a certain number would win; down went the coin, round flew the wheel, and the number won, and the bet was counted out; soon after, the idea of another number came, but the player hesitated, and failed to bet in time that number won; this appeared to disgust Dame Fortune, and she gave no more suggestions, and the bets made without them were lost. We left, winners of a neat little sum, which paid expenses; and as we had something over, our generous companion proposed to spend that on a carriage-ride along the Cornice to Mentone. We thought the bad money should be spent, and sending our baggage by rail, we enjoyed the drive. Mentone was delightful but the season was over; the hotels were closing; there had been a death in the only good rooms offered us. The effect was depressing, and we preferred going on to Genoa. A Swiss coachman was ready with a great mountain carriage and four horses, to start back to the Italian Lakes for the summer season. He offered to take us and our baggage to Genoa for a nominal sum; little more than railway fare. We agreed, and found the prices of living on the road and our driver's choice of hotels astonishing. But the glorious ride over the Cornice is compensation for many swindles. The weather was perfect; our team was fresh and strong. We traveled leisurely, –going 30 or 40 miles a day according to the halting places; resting two or three hours in, & seeing a town. With the blooming shores and hills and distant mountains on our left, and the Gulf of Genoa on our right, we rolled up and down gentle grades, swinging round her ample curves now on the edge of the bluff, overhanging the sea, now traversing a tunnel or a deep fill, we had that combination of surprise and delight which gives pure pleasure, rising now and then to exhilaration.

The Cornice seems designed to produce this effect, and the name which the popular one is descriptive; the constant succession of country and town, with quaint churches and public buildings, and groups of natives in the old costume, no longer visible at railway stations furnished quiet amusement. Our driver took good care to give the people of the towns notice of our presence.

As he approached, he would tighten his reins, cheer up his team, blow his bugle, and then enter the principal street cracking his whip; and tearing along with such a roar as would summon the whole population to behold us. If we stopped in the town, the hotel welcomed us, and treated and charged us royally.

So we passed along the Riviere pinente, that wonderful riband which stretches from Nice

to Genoa, glowing with all the varied hues of nature. It lies under the protecting hills and mountains leaning to the south and basking in the sun and makes a winter paradise.

Foreigners flock here from every clime. The inhabitants profit by their coming in the value of their lands and town property, the home market for their productions, and employment of labor; they are gradually changing in character, but they were, and for the most part are yet, hardy farmers and mechanics, fishermen and sailors. The whole population has a natural inclination toward the sea. The land looks and leans that way; and before the new Turnpike and railway, boats were the only means of communication with the world, and Genoa was the world to them.

We passed the frontier at Ventimiglia, then Bordighera; and rested on the height above San Remo, whence the sea view extends to Corsica; then came San Lorenzo, port Maurizio, Oneglia, and so many towns and villages that I do not remember where we stopped for the night.

The next day we went on by Pietra Lignoi Finalpia, Finialmarina, Noli, Spotomo, and Vado, to the city of Savona which has 20,000 people, a branch railroad to Turin, a cathedral, and several good pictures, –one by Albrecht Dürer.

The next morning we passed through the village of Cogoleto, which claims to be the birthplace of Columbus. They showed the house where he was born with an inscription attesting the fact and his portrait. They are unanimous in the opinion that their town has unquestionable right to the distinction.

They have many rivals. Probably more than seven cities contest their claim, and recently a patriotic Frenchman has endeavored to prove that Columbus was a native of Corsica, from which he would conclude that as Corsica is now French territory, therefore Columbus, if born there four centuries ago, was a Frenchman.

Genoa of course denies the right of Cogoleto, and quotes the will of Columbus where he calls himself a Genoese. They were under her government, fought her battles, and enjoyed her protection. Cogoleto is only 16 miles from Genoa by land; probably 10 or 12 by water. Those who oppose Cogoleto concede that one of the family, – they say an uncle – owned and occupied the house and the better opinion seems to be that Christopher was born there. The probability is enough to give the house great charms for me. I went all through it, and was especially pleased with the little upper rear room, which they called the birth chamber.

The house stands on the rocky beach and the windows of this chamber look upon the sea with Genoa in view. It is brick on a stone foundation, one room wide and two deep sitting endwise toward the shore. As there is no tide, you can build almost into the water, if the walls are strong enough to resist the waves raised by wind.

The house was a fit residence for the father of Columbus who was an independent wool-carder, and might have carried on his trade and business therein. It is used now as a tavern and has good custom and gives good wine.

Whether born here or not, it is almost certain that Columbus when young often played at

Cogoleto on the shore and took lessons in seamanship with the boys of that day from the old fisherman and sailors, fathers of the men who are toiling there now. I gathered shells and pebbles on the shore behind the house, thinking of the wonderful story of the life and achievement of the great man: one of the greatest characters the world has ever produced.

We subscribed ourselves upholders of Cogoleto and drove on through Azansano, Voltri, and Pra to Pegli intending to sleep there, see the celebrated villas, and drives remaining six miles to Genoa next day: but as we entered the garden of the Grand Hotel de Pegli, the old Tornelli Palace, and found ourselves in a Park full of the magnolia Grandiflora in full bloom and fragrance, we considered the question of releasing our carriage and remaining there. A glance through the comfortable hotel confirmed us.

Stevenson [Job E.]

November 6th 1886