

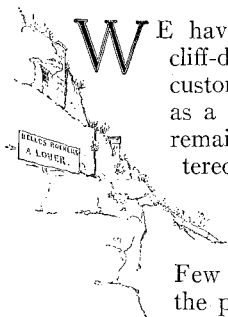


A street among the cliff-dwellers. A wall on the left.

CLIFF-DWELLERS

By E. C. Peixotto

ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR



WE have often heard of the cliff-dwellers and are accustomed to think of them as a pre-historic race, the remains of whose few scattered dwellings are a matter of curiosity to tourists and a prize to antiquarians. Few people know that, at the present day, there are whole communities in France whose only habitations are hollowed in the rocky hill-sides and whose entire business life is carried on in caves.

We had seen in Normandy isolated instances of people living in habitations half house and half cave. But they were in far-away towns and villages, and only the very

poorest class of people lived in them. Our first real cave city came as a great surprise, for we had just left Tours, one of the most highly civilized cities in France. We were riding on the road to Vouvray when suddenly, at a turn near Rochecorbon, this first town of cliff-dwellers burst upon us.

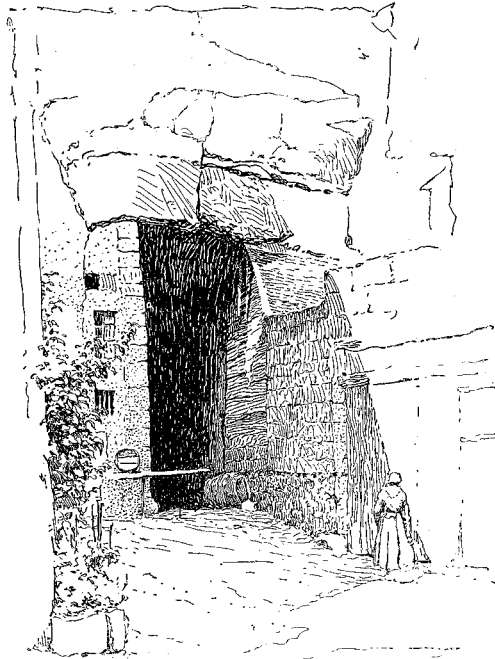
High above us towered a huge mass of overhanging rock, strata upon strata, bearing upon its summit a most peculiar tower, supposed to have been a watch-tower in ages gone by. Its foundations hung over the rock upon which they were built, and it seemed as though it would crash down at any moment upon the village beneath.

Scattered over the face of the cliff, doors and windows, narrow stair-ways and little belvederes could be seen, habitation upon habitation, in most picturesque disorder.

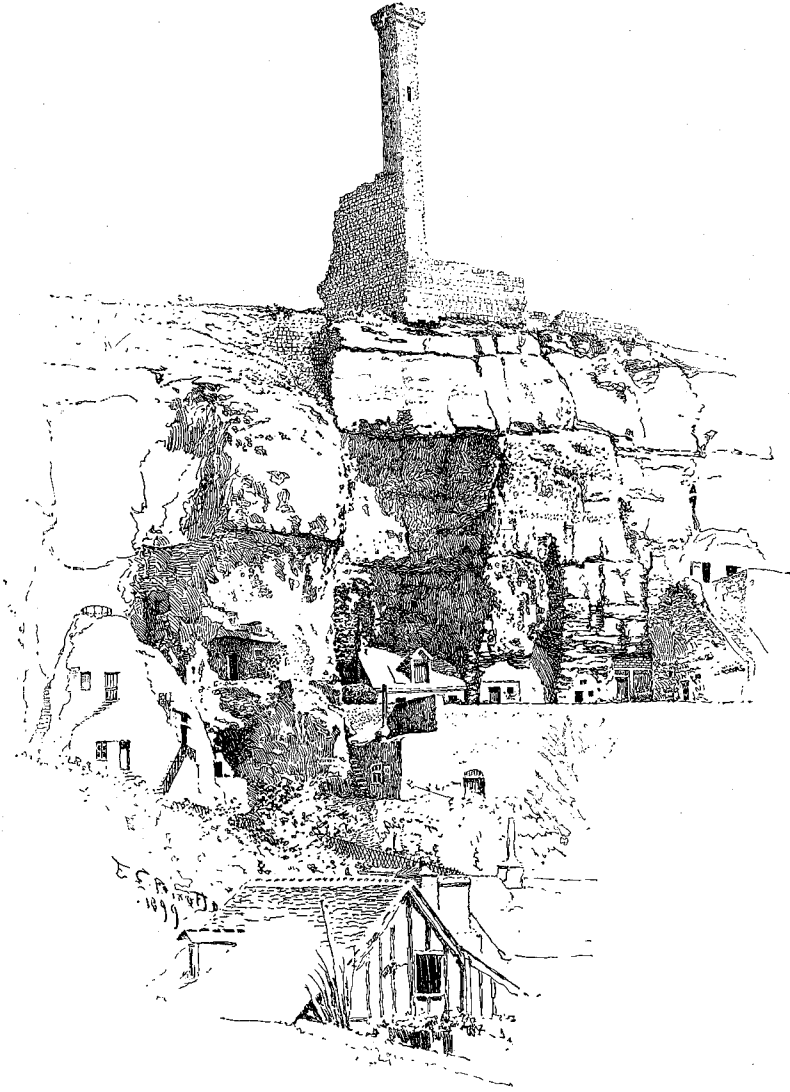
Walls along the high road hid the immediate foreground, and we looked in vain for an opening by which we could have a nearer view of this strange community. At last we found an open gate, and, peeping through, were greeted by a dear little old woman, whose wrinkled, smiling face was surmounted by a snowy white cap. Her door-way was a bower of flowers, hollyhocks, asters, nasturtiums and deep June roses. By its side was an old well and a little out-house for her wood and gardening tools. Her cheery "*Bon jour*" was an invitation to enter, and we gladly accepted her cordiality. We followed her across the little yard and were soon seated in her one and only room. This room was cosiness itself; a large canopied bed occupied the far corner; a great open fire-place filled one side, and around and on it were grouped all her lares and penates; her wedding-wreath—ah, so old!—her little crucifix, little china jars to hold her flowers; photographs and tin-types of all her family and

of her son in his soldier's uniform; cane chairs, a huge armoire and a long, low chest completed the furnishing of this little home. Spotless muslin curtains hung in the tiny windows and tempered the glaring red of the geraniums placed on the sill outside. Our hostess was only too glad to tell of her life and her home. Our first thought was that these cave houses must be damp and unsanitary. She told us, and we afterward found that her opinion was shared by all cave-dwellers, that these houses are very dry and healthful. Certainly, if we judged by the number of old people whom we saw living in them, they do not shorten the lives of the occupants. The peasants say, too, that they are cool in summer, and in the winter, on the contrary, they so moderate the cold that a fire is scarcely necessary.

The houses that are built at the foot of the hills are inclined to be damp, but those cut high up on the hill-side are extremely dry and mould is never known in them.



Entrance to one of the great caves.



High above us towered a huge mass of overhanging rock.

These upper caves are reached by special staircases cut in the rock up the face of the cliffs, and, if the houses have more than one story, the stairs still wind up on its façade to reach the upper floor!

I have even known these houses to be superposed one upon the other, each approached at a different angle by its individual stairway. These cliff-dwellings often contain three or four rooms and are sometimes floored with tiles and roofed with huge wooden beams. Often the only

light is through the door, though there is usually a small square window, and, frequently, when the house is built in an abrupt angle of the cliff, it has as many as four and five windows.

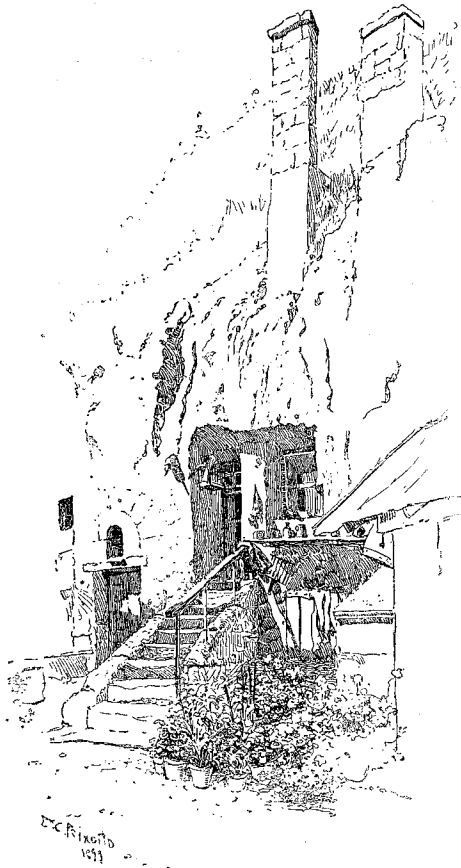
Sometimes, too, a house has been made in what was a large opening to a regular cave. In this case masonry is used to fill up the mouth of the cave, leaving the door and window openings. The long chest of which I have spoken, is found in every dwelling, and is used for provisions. In it

are kept the great loaves of bread which feed the little ones, the butter, cheese and comfiture, if the family is well-to-do. The vegetables are brought from the little garden, for each house possesses one; and if it be cherry season or grape time each *bonne femme* will proudly offer you of her prized fruit. But the comfort of the home is the open fire-place, wherein always hangs the great iron pot, blackened with the smoke of years. The peasants rarely have a match; if the fire be dead they go with a shovel to their neighbor and return with embers, as in the days of yore. There is always a well not far off, whose opening is closed with a little locked door, so that no one can use the water save those entitled to do so.

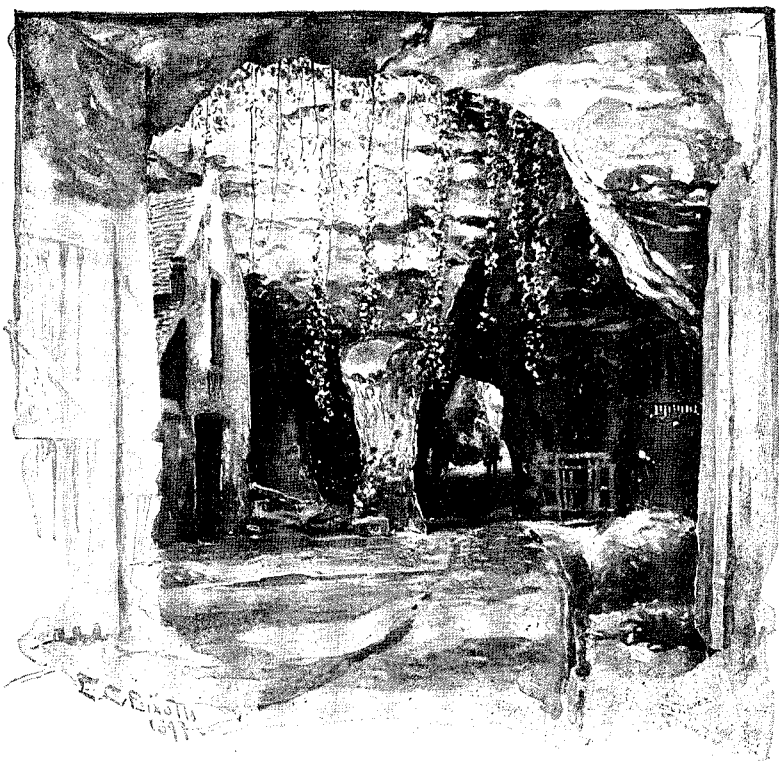
The rents paid for these little home-

steads are really amusing; \$5 a year and you have a snug little place with a garden in front, and a view—oh, a view such as M. le Comte in his château below cannot boast of. Eight dollars a year and you have a house of three or four rooms, with a stable and a store-house in a great cave not far off. We remained for several weeks among these cliff-dwellers and became thoroughly interested in their life.

A place that had great charm for us was bought outright for \$20! To think of providing a shelter for a lifetime at such a price! The owner, fancying to enlarge her domain, purchased an adjoining garden for \$12. In it she raises green peas, cauliflower, lettuce, beets, and carrots, and a number of cherry and apple trees give her their fruit. With the pears she makes



A cliff-dwelling.



Entrance to a series of caves.
House on the left and stables on the right.

a drink of which the peasants are very fond.

The animals are kept in stables, also cut in the rock, the mangers and water-troughs being hollowed out of the solid stone. In these dark interiors glimpses are caught of cows sleepily chewing their cud; of horses eating their evening meal; of donkeys, who loudly bray their welcome as the door is opened. The peasants tell us that in such stables the animals never suffer from heat or cold, as Mother Earth tempers the extremes of the outer world with her own genial warmth.

So are the caves near the surface utilized, but another world exists in the great labyrinths which tunnel the hill-sides to their very centres. Here strange trades are carried on, and here the wines, for which this country is famous, ripen and become mellow in their cool cellars. The high caves were used as ateliers for the drying of hemp and the making of linen, and many

of the great rafters on which the hemp was hung still remain. Often these quarries are forty feet high at the opening and lead into an interior chamber nearly one hundred feet square, with rough columns left to support the great weight overhead. Sometimes a house is built within this darksome chamber, vine-clad and moss-grown, and to such a home many a peasant bride has been taken to spend her honeymoon.

The strangest of these underground worlds which I visited was one devoted to the raising of mushrooms. Its limits seemed unbounded, as indeed they were, for it pierced the hill-sides in every direction. We entered through an opening under an orchard of cherry trees. About ten feet inside the entrance was a well, and near it a lantern, which my kind guide lighted. We had proceeded but a few steps when suddenly the air became very close and warm and a dense white mist shut

us in. I found this was heat and steam rising from huge piles of manure, stacked in an adjoining passage. When brought from the cavalry barracks near by, it is here "worked" by the admixture of water until it attains the required consistency. We soon passed this steam and heat and entered caves where the air was dry and cool.

In these manure is laid out in rounded hummocks along the walls, and in the wider passages, in lines down the centre as well. Sometimes there are as many as five of these rows. The mushroom seed is then placed in these manure piles, and the date of the "planting" is written on the wall above the section.

The mounds are then covered with a fine powder obtained by sifting the tailings from the quarried limestone, just as coal dust is separated from coal. The mushroom is now planted and the hummock is left undisturbed for three months, more or less, when the first growth begins to appear. The mushrooms continue to sprout during

three months, but then engender a certain poisonous gas which kills their own seed. The whole planting must then be removed and the place thoroughly cleaned.

During "harvest time" a crop is gathered every twenty-four hours. Three men with their great baskets, make the rounds of this underground farm every morning, and every day in the year can count on an immense crop which they ship to the large cities near by, and even several miles away. The discolored and inferior mushrooms are sent to the canneries, but for his best growth the producer receives only twenty cents a pound!

There is occasionally great danger connected with these mysterious dark worlds. I saw the awful result of a cave-in of gigantic masses of stone crushing all beneath it—house and stables. The clear light of heaven shone down through the great gaping hole and tons of débris lay where they had fallen, completely blocking the cave entrance. The peasants point it out with a shudder.



Interior of a cave dwelling.

A MOTHER IN INDIA

By Mrs. Everard Cotes

CHAPTER I



HERE were times when we had to go without puddings to pay John's uniform bills, and always I did the facings myself with a cloth ball to save getting new ones. I would have polished his sword too, if I had been allowed. I adored his sword. And once, I remember, we painted and varnished our own dog-cart, and very smart it looked, to save fifty rupees. We had nothing but our pay—John had his company when we were married, but what is that?—and life was made up of small knowing economies, much more amusing in recollection than in practise. We were sodden poor, and that is a fact; poor and conscientious, which was worse. A big fat spider of a money-lender came one day into the veranda and tempted us—we lived in a hut, but it had a veranda—and John threatened to report him to the police. Poor when everybody else had enough to live in the open-handed Indian fashion, that was what made it so hard; we were alone in our sordid little ways. When the expectation of Cecily came to us we made out to be delighted, knowing that the whole station pitied us; and when Cecily came herself, with a swamping burst of expense, we kept up the pretence splendidly. She was peevish, poor little thing, and she threatened convulsions from the beginning, but we both knew that it was abnormal not to love her a great deal, more than life, immediately and increasingly, and we applied ourselves honestly to do it, with the thermometer at 102° and the nurse leaving at the end of a fortnight because she discovered that I had only six of everything for the table. To find out a husband's virtues you must marry a poor man. The regiment was under-officered, as usual, and John had to take parade at daylight quite three times a week; but he walked up and down the veranda with Cecily constantly till two

in the morning, when a little coolness came. I usually lay awake the rest of the night in fear that a scorpion would drop from the ceiling on her. Nevertheless we were of excellent mind toward Cecily; we were in such terror, not so much of failing in our duty toward her as toward the ideal standard of mankind. We were very anxious indeed not to come short. To be found too small for one's place in nature would have been odious. We would talk about her for an hour at a time, even when John's charger was threatening glanders and I could see his mind perpetually wandering to the stable. I would say to John that she had brought a new element into our lives—she had indeed!—and John would reply, "I know what you mean," and go on to prophesy that she would "bind us together." We didn't need binding together; we were more to each other, there in the desolation of that arid frontier outpost, than most husbands and wives, but it seemed a proper and a hopeful thing to believe, so we believed it. Of course the real experience would have come, we weren't monsters; but fate curtailed the opportunity. She was just five weeks old when we were told that we must either pack her home immediately or lose her, and the very next day John went down with enteric. So Cecily was sent to England with a sergeant's wife who had lost her twins, and I settled down under the direction of a native doctor to fight for my husband's life, without ice or proper food or sick-room comforts of any sort. Ah, Fort Samila, with the sun glaring up from the sand—however, it is a long time ago now. I trusted the baby willingly to Mrs. Berry and to Providence and did not fret; my capacity for worry, I suppose, was completely absorbed. Mrs. Berry's letter describing the child's improvement on the voyage and safe arrival came, I remember, the day on which John was allowed his first solid mouthful; it had been a long siege. "Poor little wretch!" he said