# 7
# Summers in Europe

Summers in Europe. A black eye. A $6,000 Renault. Marion buys a painting. Suspected of espionage, and guilty too. A scoop for Mr. Hearst. The cold shoulder in Paris. St. Donat's. A snake in the Thames. Millions of dollars in antiques.

**MD:** We went to Europe every summer—for at least eight summers in a row. Of course I had been there before, when I was a youngster.

**TC:** Except for Marion's first trip to Europe in 1922, made somewhat surreptitiously through Hearst's efforts, she and W.R. and their friends went to Europe during five summers, first in 1928, followed by sojourns in 1930, 1931, 1934, and 1936.

Fred Lawrence Guiles leaves little doubt that Marion's purported trip to Europe in her childhood is without foundation: "As a young film actress, Marion would tell interviewers that she had been taken abroad by her mother at the age of eight [in 1905] and placed in a convent school near Paris. Her preoccupation with France, even though in fantasy, is of some interest." *Marion Davies,* p. 30.

**MD:** We generally had from twelve to twenty-two guests, and it got to be a routine. We would leave about the first of May or June. We'd get on the boat, and we always followed the same route. We'd come back in September or October.

Except for one diversion: we went to Spain one time [in 1934]. But generally it was the same route: London, then France, then Germany, then Italy; then we would go to St. Donat's Castle, which is in Wales. Sometimes we went to Scotland. But I never went to Ireland. It was a general routine, and I got to know it so well.

I used to like to wander around by myself. You take a Baedeker [guidebook] or you hire an old guide who really knows the place and you say, "Take me to some places that people haven't seen." Then you

go and enjoy yourself, and you can say, "I've seen where Michelangelo is buried." You can only do that by yourself.

With a party of twenty, it was different. My maid would sit in the front of the car with the chauffeur, and we would sit in the back. We'd go ahead of the others, and sometimes we'd have to sit and wait an hour for the rest. We'd look around, and then we'd go on and leave word. W.R. would say, "I'm not going to sit here waiting for the delinquents."

It was awfully hard with a big party. There'd always be arguments. Some guests wouldn't like each other, and they'd want to change cars; we had that all the time. I would be dead tired, and the bickering would go on and on until I'd go crazy.

We'd leave Paris and go to the Chateaux district [southwest of Paris, near Orleans], and then our guests would all go off to Deauville [northwest of Paris] to gamble. They'd leave a note behind. Then W.R. would say, "I don't know how to control people like that." The only way was not to take them along. But that was his constant annoyance. The only one in the parties we had traveling with us who wanted to see everything was Harry Crocker.

W.R. always maintained that if people wanted to go to Cannes or Biarritz or places in Paris to have fun, they could just as well do it in New York or any restaurant. He thought that if you went to Europe, you had to see Europe and understand educationally what the history was. There was no time for any jollities or frivolities in Europe.

If anybody wanted to go to a nightclub, he'd say, "This is an educational tour. If you don't appreciate it now, you never will." So everybody would pretend to be on their toes, but I'd know they weren't listening.

W.R. would be saying, "This is a wonderful fresco by Filippo Lippi, painted in the fifteenth century. Notice the colors . . ." And such and such. I couldn't blame him for being impatient with people. He was trying to teach us something, and we didn't want to learn. He might as well have been hitting his head up against a stone wall.

He took the trips to Europe very seriously. He was intrigued with Versailles, but mainly he liked the little villages. Like Rotenburg [in northwest Germany], a big decaying wall around a little bit of a city. There was a little hovel or a hotel and a tiny restaurant. Nothing there but a cathedral with loud bells at night. Plain, but solid, and with history behind it. W.R. thought that was enchanting.

He was crazy about Florence. We'd plan to stay three days, and it would turn into three weeks. There was so much to see.

Rome is the most wonderful place in the whole of the European continent. I even found the little church where Fra Angelico was buried. I just accidentally hit on it when I was walking around by myself. It was on a side street. I went in, and next to the altar was a gray slab. It said, *Fra Angelico.* He was an artist, one of the greatest we ever had. And I saw where Michelangelo was buried, in some little church that they don't have in the guidebooks.

**PP/KSM:** *Fra Giovanni Angelico da Fiesole is buried in the large Gothic-style church of the Dominican friars, Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, in Via dei Cestari, at the Piazza della Minerva, behind the Pantheon in Rome. The memorial is in the first chapel to the left of the entrance.*

*Michelangelo Buonarroti (Michelangelo) died in Rome but was buried in Florence in the Church of the Holy Cross (Chiesa di Santa Croce) in the Piazza of the same name near the center of the city. The floor of that Franciscan sanctuary is paved with the tombstones of Dante, Machiavelli, Rosini, Galileo, and the wife of Joseph Bonaparte. The décor is by Donatello and Giotto.*

**MD:** We'd stay at Claridge's in London and at the Excelsior in Venice. I always liked Venice; it was fascinating. No automobiles there, or anything like that [there]. You arrive at a party at night in a gondola, and you don't know whether the tide is up high or not. Usually you land on a level with the main entrance. The steps are underneath the water, and the whole first floor is usually vacant. The people live above.

It is a lovely place. Every once in a while you do see dead rats floating around. But in all the little houses the people sing. They sing like mad. The Italians love to sing.

Princess Jane San Faustina, an American married to an Italian prince, was a very good friend. She was the social hostess in Venice for everybody. She was a widow and very outspoken; she would say whatever she wanted to say. She didn't like the Italians at all.

She was about seventy, and everybody looked up to her. They thought she was just marvelous and everything. But she would snap them back into line if she thought they weren't doing right.

One time I was supposed to go to a party over in Venice at the Grand Hotel. But I went swimming in the afternoon, and then I was starting up on one of those athletic bars and this thing hit my eye. It gave me a black eye, which I did not know how to explain.

I had to go to the dinner, so I wore a black veil over my face and made up my other eye in black. My new way of going out. And they all said, "My, what a new innovation. A wonderful idea."

I said, "Well, I'm just playing the black ghost. It's a new idea I got from Paris."

It was always the beach in the morning, then luncheon on the beach. The Excelsior has an enormous restaurant right on the Lido [Island]. Then after luncheon we'd go into Venice and look at the various historical places. The Bridge of Sighs and all that sort of thing. And antique shops, of course. Then tea in the evening, around six, and a dinner party at night. It was a very restful place, I must say.

Once we were driving in France. There were about twelve cars. W.R. had a chauffeur named Hall [and that day he got a little drunk] over the wine at lunch. We were passing through a small out-of-the-way village near the coastline when he hit a goose.

Mr. Hearst said, "You're fired. But first take the goose and go back to the house and say that it was killed. Then I'll drive." Well, I would rather drive with Hall drunk than W.R. sober, because W.R. was a wild driver. But we waited and watched, and when a woman

answered the door of the farmhouse, W.R. got out of the car and went over. I was left waiting. The others [in the party] had stopped and were wondering what was happening.

I said, "We ran over a goose."

They said, "Well, how silly. This is the road, and if the goose comes down from the house . . ."

Well, I refused to argue that. When they came back, Hall rode in another car, and W.R. drove to Bordeaux.

I didn't find out until we got back to Paris that W.R. had arranged for that woman to have a new car, a Renault. He had it delivered to her with a goose inside.

I only found out because they called him to ask what kind of goose to put in the car. He looked at me kind of sheepishly. But that was what was done. It was his way of making the poor woman feel better about her goose. He didn't even send his card, just a new car, a $6,000 Renault. That was his way.

**TC:** Six thousand dollars was a lot of money at the time—the equivalent of about $21,000 in 1975 and at least $85,000 today.

**MD:** In Paris we stayed generally at the George V. Once in a while at the Hotel Crillon, but usually at the George V. It was the more modern. It was very nice there.

I had to lay out the rooms every time. Joe Willicombe and Harry Crocker would help a great deal, and it was a hard job. Believe me, laying place cards is a hard job. We'd try to keep everybody in a good mood when they were tired from traveling.

**TC:** On at least one of the "big five" trips to Europe (1928, 1930, 1931, 1934, 1936), Joe Willicombe remained stateside: in 1934. He may have done so in certain other years also. A close check of the William Randolph Hearst Papers at The Bancroft Library may narrow the possibilities, thus helping to date this part of Marion's narrative better.

**MD:** When we were in Paris, they had a habit of serving orange juice after dinner. You could have all the wine you wanted at dinner, but afterwards they would serve only orange juice. They still do it.

We were in the living room of Barney de Castillene's home and they were having some entertainment. The [9th] Duke of Manchester [William Montagu] and Mrs. Otis Belmont [Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont] were there.

**PP/KSM:** *Mrs. Belmont was the former Mrs. William R. Vanderbilt. In August 1923 she sold her New York townhouse at Madison Avenue and 51st Street to Arthur Brisbane for an estimated $500,000.*

**TC:** More accurately called Boni de Castlellane (1867-1932), the Count lived in Paris on the Avenue Victor-Emmanuel III. Marion was alluding most likely to the trip in 1928 or the one in 1930.

**MD:** Now the Duke was supposed to be a dissolute sort of character, but because he was the Duke, everybody showed him respect. He said, "You know, I'm roaring thirsty."

"I am, too," I said.

But there was only orange juice, so he said, "I know where the pantry is. Would you like to go with me? We'll crack up a bottle of champagne."

"Don't you think you should ask your host?"

"Why should I? I'm not obligated to him in any way. I merely came here because I thought he was an interesting old dodo, and he has a crazy bulldog who tries to bite but has no teeth." Then the butler came around with more orange juice, and the Duke said, "Never mind that, just bring out a bottle of champagne, and I'll open it myself." He got one, and we went into the pantry, and he popped the cork and poured it out.

I couldn't stand to drink very much; I just wanted one glass. But he kept pouring and pouring, and finally Barney de Castillene [the aforementioned Boni de Castellane] came in and said, "I thought I sort of missed you. And you know, if you had asked me for champagne, I could have given it to you. I don't think that's very nice of you."

So the Duke of Manchester said, "I say there. You've taken my money without asking me, so why can't I take your champagne without asking you?"

The next day we went to Joseph Duveen's place, a very nice place. He had a house on a large farm estate and it was beautiful. I was looking at various different things and I was interested in one picture.

**TC:** The errant implication here, based on the last several paragraphs, is that Duveen's country place was in France, not in England, where the "large farm estate" in question was outside of London.

**MD:** Duveen was an art dealer, and I liked the [Thomas] Lawrence painting of the boy called Arthur Atherley. I knew it was beautiful, but he was asking more than I thought I could afford to pay. He said, "Mrs. Horace Dodge wants that picture."

So we were leaving, going down the stairs, and in came Count Barney de Castillene with his old bulldog, who was almost as old as Barney [b. 1867: properly Boni di Castellane, as on p. 6]. The dog went "Growwlll," at Joe Duveen.

Duveen said, "But your dog knows me."

Barney said, "He knows all of the art dealers in Europe." They had gone to every shop, and as Barney and his wife [Anna Gould] learned art, the bulldog also learned.

The next day Joe Duveen had gone to London with the painting, and later I saw him there. He said, "Mrs. Dodge is still following me around. She's offered me much more money than you. And that painting is worth at least six hundred thousand dollars."

**TC:** The equivalent today of nearly 8 million dollars, minus appreciation.

**MD:** I said, "Has Mrs. Dodge the love for that painting that I have?" So we got very artistic [in the negotiations]. "You know, there's something about me. . . . I'm really so much in love with that painting. I'll just die if I don't get it.

"Mr. Hearst will be so sorry," I said. "I don't think he'll ever buy anything here anymore . . . but that'll be all right."

So then he said, "You've got me."

You see how smart I was?

"How much do you want to pay?" he said.

I said I'd pay a hundred thousand.

He said, "You're torturing me. I can't do it."

I said, "Think it over." I thought he was putting on an act. And he called me the next day.

"One hundred fifty," he said. "I'll just take a big loss on it." Well, we started to bargain. I offered a hundred forty. I knew I was going to win, and finally he said, "All right."

**TC:** Marion may well have learned to dicker from W.R. In Germain Seligman's *Merchants of Art: 1880–1960: Eighty Years of Professional Collecting* (New York 1961), W.R.'s propensity toward dickering over art prices is given its fullest airing by any dealer—an episode like many others in Hearstiana that calls into serious question Marion's repeated statement that he didn't care about money. In fact, he did care; very much so.

**MD:** I wanted to see that painting again, but when I got over there, he [Duveen] was quite upset. He said there had been an accident. Mrs. Dodge came over, and when I told her the painting was sold, she was so amazed that she started to run down the stairs, and she fell and broke her leg."

**TC:** Mrs. Horace Dodge (Anna Thomson Dodge) is the subject of a large monograph, *The Dodge Collection: Eighteenth-Century French and English Art in the Detroit Institute of Arts* (New York 1996).

**MD:** I said, "Oh, oh. That painting's bad luck." Then he was very nice. We had made a bargain, and he said, "Someday that painting will be worth much more than even six hundred thousand dollars. It will go into the *Pinky* class; it will be priceless." So that was the painting that I gave to a museum.

**PP/KSM:** *The Los Angeles County Museum of Art now has the painting, a gift of Hearst Magazines, Inc. It was done in 1790 by Thomas Lawrence, who was later knighted and became president of the Royal Academy.*

*The Lawrence painting* Pinky, *a portrait of Miss Mary Moulton Barrett, is now in the Henry E. Huntington Museum in San Marino, California. Duveen paid $377,000 for* Pinky *at a 1925 auction at Christie's*

*in London [akin to 4.6 million today], before the California pioneer family acquired it.*

**TC:** W.R. and Marion acquired *Arthur Atherley* from the London branch of Duveen Brothers in September 1928. Hearst was always exceedingly fond of the painting, and so was Marion, as she herself revealed in a message to a close friend in 1941: "Cannot sell the Lawrence. It is too precious to W.R. & me." *The Unknown Hearst: 1941,* p. 148; see also *Hearst and Marion: The Santa Monica Connection,* p. 531 (online edition).

**MD:** Another time W.R. and I went into the Duveen's shop in New York. Somebody I'd never seen before was there; it was Joseph Duveen's uncle [Henry] or his brother [Benjamin], and I had a book under my arm when we said hello. He said, "I have many things to show you, and your daughter." Well, did I feel small. And W.R. didn't quite like it, either. It didn't really mean anything. It was the sort of thing that happens lots of times.

**TC:** Henry Duveen died in 1918. His brother, who died in 1908, was Joseph Joel Duveen; the name of the firm, Duveen Brothers, stemmed from them. Joseph's eldest son, Joseph (b. 1869), took charge of Duveen Brothers after Joseph Joel's death; the latter-day Joe Duveen had numerous brothers and sisters, one of whom was Charles (b. 1871), who went by the name Charles of London in the art trade.

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**MD:** I was having some hats made at Le Monseigneur's [in Paris] when Harry Crocker and W.R. arrived and said they had been asked to leave France.

W.R. said, "But there's no reason why everybody else has to go."

"What happened?" I asked.

I found out later, in the newspapers. It was so terribly involved. W.R. had discovered [on the trip in 1928] something no one was supposed to know. There was to be an international pact. It had been an official French secret. At first, I didn't realize how much I'd had to do with it.

W.R. said, "I'm really the only one asked to leave. You can all stay behind."

He left within half an hour. He said to me, "You stay. It would only be decent for you to get your fittings." I'd ordered twelve thousand dollars' worth of clothes. "It wouldn't be nice if you walked out."

I thought that was very kind of him, after he had been asked to leave. I would have said, "To hell with them," but they had the most wonderful hats there, and so I stayed behind with Maury Paul and my sisters. Everybody else left, going right to London.

Maury and I had booked some engagements for one full week in advance. I was surprised at how many people phoned and said, "Very sorry, but the party's off."

I got the cold shoulder from people who had known me very well just a few days earlier. I said to Maury, "The air's getting very [frigid]. I can't stand the atmosphere around Paris." I was trying to get my fittings done in a hurry, and everywhere I went there were gendarmes [French policemen] following. I had gendarmes outside my door, and so did my sisters. It turned out that Harold Horan had been arrested. We were all under suspicion. They thought we must know something, and they wanted to find out [how and when and] where we were.

**PP/KSM:** *[Horan was] the Hearst newspapers' Paris correspondent.*

**MD:** The only two who didn't snub us were Mrs. Otis H. P. Belmont [Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont (Oliver Hazard Perry Belmont)] and Mrs. Abraham Lehr. I only went to Mrs. Lehr's party. She was supposed to be one of the social leaders of Paris and her husband was quite fabulous. They were very wealthy.

**TC:** Marion had a film-industry friend named Anna Lehrer, whose husband, Abe Lehrer, was associated with Samuel Goldwyn.

**MD:** Mrs. Belmont really stuck with me. She even stayed in the apartment with me and tried to get the gendarmes away from the door.

Every place I went I was followed, so we stayed in the hotel for a week and waited—Rose and Ethel and Maury and myself. I decided that I would have the dressmakers come to the hotel for my fittings. I finally said, "Here's my money. Send the stuff to America."

Mrs. Belmont got me out of Paris on a plane. My sisters came right over to England after me, but they had an awful time dodging those gendarmes.

We never went back to France.

**TC:** On the 1934 trip, "Hearst and his guests left St. Donat's [in Wales] for Germany, going via Belgium and Holland to skirt hated Gaul." W. A. Swanberg, *Citizen Hearst: A Biography of William Randolph Hearst* (New York 1961), p. 443.

**MD:** W.R. got the most wonderful reception when he arrived in London. There was a big dinner party for him; I think Winston Churchill was there. The English weren't angry with W.R.; they agreed with him. They thought he was just one hundred percent for discovering the pact. [The moratorium was all to their benefit.]

I didn't know what it was. I was just one of those silly, giggly idiots who don't pay much attention to politics. But it was some sort of a pact.

**PP/KSM:** *It was a French proposal for a pact between France and England. The secret design to strengthen the navies of those two countries was a violation of agreements signed at the end of World War I. But with the rising threat of another confrontation with Germany, this was viewed as a necessary step for the welfare of France.*

*There were rumors that the foreign minister of France even set up the leak of the secret memorandum, which would have been a double-double on Marion, and on the police. Still, its publication was a clear journalistic scoop for W.R.*

*The cool English reaction to the memo reflected their traditional desire to be aloof from Europe, uninvolved in its wars and specifically unattached to France. The English had enough problems maintaining their empire.*

*While it seems likely that W.R. was asked to leave France in September 1928, as Marion says [above], it was not a binding order. W.R. was again in Europe [two years later], taking the baths in Germany, and*

*passed through France in August and September 1930. This time, the French government cited his "hostile action" of 1928, and he was formally expelled. The order was delivered to his apartment at the Hotel Crillon in Paris, and he left the country immediately, to return again only once—by chance [in 1931].*

**TC:** This complex episode, details of which from 1928 and 1930 may be partly conflated here, is best traced through Swanberg, *Citizen Hearst*, pp. 406-409 and 418-421, and through David Nasaw, *The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst* (Boston and New York 2000), pp. 401-402 and 406-408.

**MD:** The pact was between France and England. It was very important and definitely detrimental to the United States. The French were frantic to find out who had released the news. They put [Harold] Horan in jail, and all kinds of strings were pulled, but nobody could get him out. They wouldn't believe he hadn't done anything. He was held for months, although he was just one of the correspondents there.

Horan had not gotten the pact anyway. I knew that, but the police looked down the whole list of people we had gone out with. They figured it must have come from the American embassy. I didn't pay much attention at the time, but, looking back on it, I could really have been in trouble.

It had happened at a luncheon at the Elysees Palace in Paris. Ganna Walska, the opera singer, who was married to Harold McCormick, was there. And Dolores de Rio [a film star] and her director, Edwin Carewe, along with several counts and others.

**PP/KSM:** *Carewe was also Dolores del Rio's husband.*

**TC:** Carewe was married to Mary Akin from 1925 to 1928; he and Dolores del Rio were never married, but he was known as her discoverer; he directed her in such films as *Joanna* (1925), *Pals First* (1926), and *Ramona* (1928). (IMDb)

**MD:** As I remember it, I was having a conversation with a person whose name I do not wish to mention. We were in the dining room, and I noticed a half-opened door. I wanted to see what was behind

that door. I opened the door. There was a huge safe behind it. One of the doors of the safe was open, and I just happened to look through. I saw something written in French, and I thought: Just for fun, I'll sneak this thing.

I know I shouldn't have stolen it, but I was in a gay mood and I was curious.

I put it in my sissy-britches. I was too smart to put it in my bag, and I didn't want to be caught with it. I knew it was thievery, that if I got caught I would be thrown in the Bastille.

I thought it might be fun to read it. Then I'd mail it back anonymously. I'd say, "You left this hanging around."

We left and went back to the hotel. I had forgotten about it until I started to take a bath and the darn thing fell out. I thought: Oh, what a nuisance.

When I saw W.R. I said, "Look, I stole something. What am I going to do with it?"

"What did you do that for?"

"You know me, curiosity."

I was no kleptomaniac, but this had intrigued me. I had a great urge to learn French as it is written, not as it is spoken, but I'm darned if I could understand one word of it. I left it with W.R. and went over to get my hats fitted.

The next thing we heard was that the document was missing. W.R. was told to leave; the French thought he'd taken it.

They said to him, "Did you take any documents?" Of course they searched his apartment like mad; they looked every place. He took it very nicely. Then they said, "We will give you exactly one hour to leave."

He had it, but what he had done with it, I do not know.

W.R. never said a word about it afterwards, and I didn't either. When anyone would ask him how he got hold of it, W.R. would say, "I haven't the slightest idea." He'd give them a pale stare and he would shut up, like a clam.

He did say to me, "Thanks for the scoop." A newspaperman loves that kind of thing, and the means was justified for the fact that the pact was against America. W.R. was astonished by it. He did explain it to me in full detail, but I do not remember any of it.

**PP/KSM:** *Marion said a lot about her travels, as well she could. She traveled a lot, and lot of people traveled with her. But travel is a hard experience to define.*

*They say it broadens the mind. But most people travel only when they have business or when they want pleasure. Some travel not at all. They say the word travel is derived from trouble.*

**MD:** Mary Carlisle went with us one year [in 1936]. Buster Collier [part of the 1934 group] and some of the [other] Hollywood people did. Otherwise most of them would be family or some guests from New York. We would pick them up as we went along. We'd meet somebody going the same place and we would all go together.

**TC:** For the trip in 1931, Joe Willicombe alerted the Hotel Warwick in New York ahead of time, saying that the entourage would be arriving from California five days later. In addition to getting things "shaped up in apartments there" for W.R. and Marion, the couple would "require also reservations for Mr. and Mrs. Townsend Netcher, Miss [Alice] Head, Miss Lenore Bushman, Harry Crocker and Edward V. Kane, also room for Joseph Jelinek [Yelinek], who is Chief's new valet, and rooms for three maids." (G&RH)

**MD:** We always traveled by car [in Europe]. Once in a while by airplane. The last trip by airplane, we got caught in an awful storm between Madrid and London. We landed about five hundred miles outside of London, in a hay-field. They had signaled [from Croydon], "Would you like to land with rockets around?" We didn't. Who would like to land with rockets going up through the fog? We went on our merry way and we were miles from London and it was raining like mad.

We had to walk for hours and finally we managed to get some cars and then we stopped at a little inn.

**PP/KSM:** *The landing was less than 60 miles from London, near Lympne, a seaport near Dover. The* New York Times *reported the adventure on June 21, 1934. The plane was registered in Holland, chartered by W.R. for the trip.*

**MD:** In the meantime there was a newspaper story, "Plane crashes with party aboard." And all our names were in it and everybody was in a dither. When we arrived in London about eight in the morning, were they glad to see us. They thought certainly we had crashed.

Eileen Percy was on that trip [in 1934], and so was Harry Ruby, but she wasn't married then. To him, at least. It was right after her divorce [in October 1930] from [Ulrich] Busch, of the Anheuser-Busches. She married Harry Ruby [in 1936] after that trip, and she was just as frightened as I was. When I get frightened, I can't say anything.

Unless I get really frightened. Then I let out a tremendous roar. But on that plane everybody was frightened. One time you could reach your hand out and touch the English Channel waters and the cliffs of Dover. I thought we were sure going to crash into them a few times, and once would have been plenty.

That was the year [that we didn't want to land in France. The year] before, we had that problem about the French Pact and we were going to fly to England by the ocean. But we did land in France, at Bordeaux, to refuel. We didn't get out of the plane.

**TC:** In this instance the ten bracketed words are Bobbs-Merrill's doing—to make much-needed sense of Marion's account. She'd begun this paragraph by speaking of "the year before we had that problem about the French Pact" (as though she meant an erroneous 1929). Suffice it to say the French diplomatic episode belonged to 1930 and the landing in Bordeaux to 1931.

**PP/KSM:** *The trips to Europe invariably ended with a visit to England and a stop at W.R.'s largest house, the 135-room castle of St. Donat's in southern Glamorganshire County, Wales, seven miles southwest of Cowbridge. St. Donat's was named for a man of Irish birth who had*

*made a pilgrimage to Rome in the ninth century. He became the Bishop of Fiesole and was later canonized.*

**MD:** St. Donat's was way out in the country, about fifty miles from Cardiff, which is a coal-mining town. It is a beautiful place, right on the Bristol Channel. It was built in the eleventh century and was terrifically big.

W.R. added two tennis courts and a new, modern swimming pool about two hundred feet long and a hundred wide. We'd go there at the end of our trips, and we'd stay as long as we possibly could—take life easy after the tour. That constant routine of getting up early, motoring all day long, resting at night and seeing the town the next day was really hard on the system.

When we arrived at St. Donat's, about forty Welsh singers, wearing high silk hats and lace dresses, sang for us.

**TC:** "On one occasion, probably in 1934, a Welsh ladies' choir in national costume welcomed the party." Howard C. Jones in Roy Denning, ed., *The Story of St. Donat's Castle and Atlantic College* (Cowbridge, Wales 1983), p. 79.

**MD:** W.R. kept St. Donat's open all year round. There were numerous guest apartments. We used to have visitors from London, and there was a staff of about thirty or forty.

While W.R. went to St. Donat's, I sometimes spent the weekend at the Sutherlands' house in Kent [southeast of London]. On one such occasion [in 1931] we were supposed to play golf in the morning—Harry Crocker and I and Eddie Kane and Leonora Bushman [Leonore Bushman Marxer]. And Eddie Clark was to play with the Prince of Wales and Prince George.

Harry had one room and I had another, with a bath between. I had a very beautiful bedroom. But on the other side were Leonora Bushman and Eddie Kane. Instead of putting two girls together, they put a man and a girl together. They wanted you to have a nice, happy weekend. But it was not for me. Harry was always in the bathroom reading the *[London] Daily Express.*

The hostess, the Duchess of Sutherland, didn't realize that we don't do that in America. They only do it in England. It's a habit there. They want you to have a nice weekend, so if you brought a friend along, you were together. It sounds very salacious, but they mean it right.

We'd been up late the night before. We'd had a wonderful party. We were playing Pyramids and were having a lot of fun, but we had to be off at eight in the morning. I tried to get in the bathroom, but Harry Crocker was in there [again]. He'd locked both doors and was reading the paper; I could hear the pages rattling.

They had one of those little washbasin things, so I used it. Then I washed my hands and I thought, If I ring for the chambermaid, this will not look so good. I thought: I'll throw [it] out the window.

I got ready—and then I heard voices below. It was the Prince of Wales and Prince George, right under my window. If I'd thrown it down, I'd have drowned them.

I didn't play golf. I went punting [boating] in Geordie Sutherland's launch. He said it was a new boat, but it wasn't. We went down the river [the Thames] about ten miles past the locks and got stuck.

**TC:** George Granville Sutherland-Leveson-Gower (1888–1963) was the 5th Duke of Sutherland.

**MD:** Geordie said, "I think the motor's gone out."

I said, "Maybe it's some weeds in the propeller."

He said, "I'll see." He reached underneath and said, "Yes, that's what it is."

I said, "Lean over. I'll hold your feet." And he pulled the weeds out. We started out again. The wind was fine, but there were no sails. And the boat stopped again. I said, "Is something radically wrong?"

"Well, this happens all the time. I can't understand it."

"If this happens all the time, why do you run it?"

"Well, the only thing we can do now is row. You take one . . ."

"Look," I said, "we're miles away and it's getting late."

The Thames at that point wasn't very wide. There were all kinds of weeds over at one side, and we jumped out, into the weeds. Something stung me on the foot. It felt like a snake.

We had to walk two miles to find an inn. By the time we got to the inn, I didn't feel any too good. I said, "Call up Arlene and tell her to send a car over here so we can ride back. My foot hurts. And get me two double whiskeys."

**PP/KSM:** *[Arlene was] the Duchess of Sutherland.*

**MD:** I got them down [the two whiskeys], and it saved my life, I think. When we got back to the house, they were all waiting. The Prince of Wales said, "Well, what a happy holiday! Where have you two been?"

As if we could do anything in a little boat.

I was limping, but I put on an evening gown and we had dinner. Everything was fine when I went to bed, and then suddenly I had needles and pins all over. I called for Harry Crocker, in the next room. I said, "Get me back to London. I'm terribly sick. I think I've been bitten by a snake." My foot was all swollen and pus was running out.

He said, "I don't know how we can get out of here. We're supposed to spend the weekend."

The Duchess came in and looked at my leg and said, "Marion, that's pretty bad."

"I'm terribly sorry, Arlene, but I think I'd better go back to London. I think a snake bit me."

"No," she said. "There are no snakes in England."

"There are none in Ireland either. St. Patrick drove them out. But something bit my leg." It was getting bigger and bigger.

She got the car for me, with a chauffeur, and Harry and I made the long drive to London.

**TC:** Ideally, the length and direction of the "long drive" could be told here; but it can't be, based on the vagueness of Marion's recollections in this part of her narrative. The dating of the Sutherland story as 1931 stems from her mention of Leonore Bushman, who's also mentioned in Jones, *The Story*

*of St. Donat's Castle and Atlantic College,* p. 75. Of the five trips made to Europe, 1928 through 1936, details of the one in 1931 are in many ways the least known.

**MD:** We got to the Savoy Hotel about four in the morning. I said to Harry, "Call up Sir Thomas Hoarde immediately and tell him to come over and see me." He was the Prince of Wales's doctor. Well, he wouldn't answer the phone.

So I said, "Get me a plane. I've got to get back to St. Donat's. There's a good doctor there. And my foot's getting worse."

Well, he only pretended to call. Then he said there were no planes that night. But I saw him; he had the receiver down. I knew he was skunking me, and that he didn't want me to get on a plane with a leg like that. So I said, "Send for Leonora [Leonore Bushman, the wife of Dr. W.L. Marxer, a Beverly Hills physician]."

Leonora was Francis X. Bushman's daughter, who was very nice. She came in, and we got a car and went to Sir Thomas Hoarde's house and woke him up.

He said, "You've been bitten by a snake.

I said, "A water moccasin?"

"I don't know. Where've you been?"

I said I'd been in the river.

He treated my leg. It hurt a bit, but I didn't mind. I had some brandy. He said, "The best thing for you to do is stay in bed for at least three weeks. And keep your leg lifted up."

I said, "There's a Dr. Wilson down at St. Donat's."

He said, "You don't attempt to go there with that leg. You stay in London, and I'll look after it."

I said, "All right." But I wanted to go home, and home was St. Donat's. You get that feeling [of wanting to be home] when you're sick. In the morning I said, "Get me reservations on the train." I knew Harry Crocker wouldn't let me fly, because W.R. had told him not to let me fly, but when his back was turned, I'd asked the operator about the trains. I knew there was a train at five-fifty, and we took it.

I was in bed for three weeks, with Dr. Wilson taking care of me. My leg was hanging up high.

So that disproves the theory that there are no snakes in England.

Afterwards, we went to Germany, to Rotenburg, I was in the stable grounds, and I suddenly had the most awful pain in my leg. A big horse-fly that had been eating horse manure had banged me on that wound. It got infected again, and I was back in bed for three more weeks.

I had a miserable time in Europe [on the 1931 trip].

Later the Duchess [of Sutherland] said to me, "You know, Marion, I should have warned you beforehand. I must tell you something funny. Geordie always does that trick with his boat. It's just a gag of his."

I said, "Yeah?" ["It's not funny to me."]

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**MD:** Anyway, everything else was pleasant. We always had a good time at St. Donat's.

There was an oubliette [a type of dungeon] in the castle. It was way up high, and there was a tower, and the oubliette went way down beneath the house. It went right into the Bristol Channel.

That was where they put the criminals. Down the oubliette they went and right out to sea. That was the eleventh century. A magnificent place, and we had a lot of fun there.

W.R. had remodeled St. Donat's, but with all the old things.

The dining room was the largest room in the house. It looked like Henry the Eighth's dining room. It was enormous.

It had one of the finest ceilings I had ever seen. W.R. had gotten that ceiling from the Boston Museum and had it sent to England. Of course I think the Boston Museum had bought it in England first, but the museum didn't have room enough for it, so W.R. got it and built the whole dining room around the ceiling.

**TC:** The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, initially comes to mind; however, "the fine wooden ceiling" that was placed "over the dining hall"

came from "the nave of the church at Boston, Lincolnshire [in east central England]." *The Story of St. Donat's and Atlantic College*, pp. 74, 75.

**MD:** He bought Bradenstoke Abbey and had it moved and put in. And everything in there was old. Old brick, for instance. Nothing modern. And the English people liked that.

**TC:** W.R. also acquired the Bradenstoke Tithe Barn, which he planned to use at Wyntoon as part of the Spanish monastery that was slated to be reconstructed there. The barn is now in San Luis Obispo, California, having been purchased from the Hearst San Simeon warehouses by Alex Madonna (of Madonna Inn fame). *Building for Hearst and Morgan,* index listings on p. 564.

**MD:** Bradenstoke Abbey cost five hundred thousand dollars, and that only made one room. If they had stopped to realize it, W.R. knew more about English antiques than they did. They should have appreciated his gesture [in reconstructing Bradenstoke]. That castle had to be taken from Scotland to Wales, a long trip. And it was an enormous big banquet room—made, I think, of gray stone. Every brick was from the twelfth century, and they were all brought to St. Donat's and added to it.

**PP/KSM:** *Bradenstoke-cum-Clacke was in Wiltshire County [England, east of St. Donat's], not Scotland, and was less than fifty miles away. The abbey served as the assembly room at St. Donat's. And the castle now serves as the campus for the Atlantic College.*

**TC:** According to Julia Morgan's master inventory, the "Pacific Coast Register," W.R. paid $17,500 for the Bradenstoke Tithe Barn in 1929 (the barn was separate from the abbey—both as a building and as a purchase).

**MD:** W.R. was very clever doing that. This was something he enjoyed doing. He was very immersed in antiques and old things.

Of course the bathrooms were different. They were all done over in marble. They couldn't possibly complain about it [the bathrooms] being modern; it was all old stuff [otherwise].

But he was always on an even keel. He was very interested in the newspapers. That came first. Maybe I came first, but he used to work very hard on the newspapers.

And he was very concerned about his antiques. If anyone was a little careless, like they knocked over a lamp or something, he'd say, "I don't think it's very nice for people to come in and break things in your house when they don't even know the value. It shows discourtesy."

About everything else, he was very generous. You could have all you wanted, the horses [at San Simeon or Wyntoon], anything to eat or drink, but the moment you broke something, he really wouldn't like that. His mother gave him that feeling for antiques when he was a little boy. She took him to Paris [on their two trips in the 1870s] and she used to take him to all the shops and he never lost that feeling. He bought millions of dollars' worth of antiques. He would go into a shop like Charles of London [run by Charles Duveen, mainly in New York] and they would say, "Here is a beautiful table from the sixteenth century."

He would look, and say that it had been restored. They'd say, "Where?" He would show them something way down underneath, in a corner, and they would be amazed. He didn't like paintings so much. It was antique furniture, then armor, then tapestries, and then paintings last.

He had difficulty in getting a lot of his things [because of import restrictions]. But he was persistent. A Frenchman, Comte de something or other, said, "You are the man who comes to the countries and takes the ceilings away from the people and leaves them roofless."

But if W.R. had his heart set on something, he'd get it; it didn't matter how much it cost. He bought a cloister in France, and it ended up at San Simeon in the warehouse; it was never unpacked. He wanted to give it to San Francisco, but I don't think they took it; they were afraid it would cost too much to put up.

**TC:** The Spanish monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila comes readily to mind. Originally slated for Wyntoon and, at least briefly after that, for Tuna

Canyon near Santa Monica, W.R. gave the monastery to the city of San Francisco in 1941. It has since become the property of the New Clairvaux Abbey in Vina, California, north of Sacramento, and has finally been reconstructed. A similar Spanish building that W.R. bought was rebuilt in North Miami Beach, Florida, in the 1950s (the cloister of Santa Maria de Sacramenia).

**MD:** He had so many things, we had them catalogued. He had volumes cataloguing the many priceless things he owned.

**TC:** In addition to standard cataloguing by index cards and the like, two deluxe sets of oversized, leather-bound "Photograph Albums" were compiled for W.R. One set remains in the hands of the Hearst Corporation on its San Simeon ranch.

**MD:** There was quite a bit of difficulty about one room. It was done by [procured by] Charles of London and was simply beautiful. It was an English room, and W.R. had it on show in New York. The English wanted it returned to them for their museum. They created quite a bit of fuss, but he was determined they were not going to get it [repatriated]. I don't know what became of it.

**TC:** Some of the antique architectural woodwork in the Santa Monica Beach House came from Charles (as he was known for short).

**MD:** Everybody always wanted things back. The French wanted him to return the Gobelin tapestries so they could hang them in the Louvre. All four of them, together.

In the last few years [of active collecting: mainly the 1930s], W.R. could hardly buy anything in England. They said they didn't want anything more to go to America. He would buy things, and not only would they not have them delivered, but they wouldn't return his money, which amounted to thousands of dollars. They seized his things *and* his money, which I didn't think was quite fair.

When he didn't have any more warehouse space to hold things, he sold some stuff at Gimbel's [in New York, starting in 1941]. They got rid of the debris and they had a hard time talking him into that sale.

He finally consented to it and then he went and picked out the things himself.

**TC:** Awkward bracketing would be required to show how Bobbs-Merrill converted Marion's last two sentences to their appearance in 1975 (which see in *The Times We Had*, p. 132).

**MD:** He knew every piece he'd bought since he started buying antiques [in the late 19th century]. He told them what could go. It was all right if the museums wanted things, but when something was going to be sold [privately] to somebody else, he would say no. He wanted everybody to have a chance to look at the things and to acquire an education and a feeling for things.

There must be five or ten rooms full of his things in the Metropolitan Museum. And he gave millions [of dollars' worth] away to museums in the United States and England. Probably he gave away much more than even [Andrew] Mellon did [for the National Gallery in Washington, D.C.]. He spent all his time browsing for antiques, and W.R. knew the best when he saw it.

There were so many dealers that to find anything, you had to stay in London or Paris. There was nothing left in the little towns. They had picked it all up.

Well, we always traveled in Europe in a group. There were always people around. I guess I had more than one duenna [a retainer or lady in waiting]. There was never any chance to be alone.

That was my impression of Europe. Like when you're hit on the head with a hammer. It feels so good when it stops. I liked coming back and seeing the Statue of Liberty. Home sweet home meant an awful lot. I could rest and relax, and I always liked a pause.