

Longueville.

Next to this one part of my childhood, there was an extremely different one, which, although running parallel with the one described so far, did intermingl e with it suprisingly little. To me they look allmost like two totally different lives.

All this came about during one of my mother's frequent and long periods of ill health and ,perhaps, also partly due to difficult material circumstances at home, or important commisions having to be executed and delivered by a ^{specific and} very near date.

My godmother, and great aunt, who many times came to the rescue, used to spent part of her summers visiting with a wealthy lady friend, wi ow of a well known Dutch banker and who's life it was to entertain extensively at her Chateau, called Chateau de Chanteraine.

I do remeber but little of my first visit there, it is blurred and blended with other things in my memory. It is allmost as if I had allways known it and seen it gradually emerge from the surrounding greyish white mist. It obviously failed to greatly impress me, at first contact but later x on it was to become to me a second homestead.

The Chateau de Chanteraine was an enormous Place of the seventeenth century, covered by sombre green ivy. It was surrounded by a very well-kept and exstensive estate and was strictly separated from the outside world by hedges, barbed wire , rows of trees and several impressive double gates of caste iron in the shape of neo-roman lance points, shields, arrows and swords. These gates were continually under lock and key. The walls of the Chateau were over three feet thick and all windows were protected by heavy wooden blinds and which, by special order of the lady of the place, were to be kept close from sundown till sunrise.

Longueville.

There was a glass panelled ~~door~~ double door at the front of the place and five or six monumental grey granite steps leading up to it. On each side of these steps grey granite lions stood guard, in a last effort to impress and frighten off a more progressive age and people. The same grey granite stairs, plus the same forbidding lions, lead ~~the~~ to the entrance at the back of the place, leading to the same glass panelled double door.

At the end of the left hand wing ~~was~~ was an other stairs, more subdued and discreet leading to the huge old fashioned kitchen, with its red tiled floor and highly polished red copper pots and pans hanging on the walls, and the long, massive, natural colored wooden table.

The salle-a-manger was a sombre, majestic hall, with deep red mahogany, overly carved furniture of late italian renaissance, abounding in gaping lion heads, faunes, etc. Large mirrors extended over half walls. The sixteen massive, leather bound, mahogany chairs, also decorated with many lion h ads, were so heavy that, when the ladies sat down, a man servant had to push the chair in place.

The meals amounted to majestic rituals. The immense table set for from twelve to sixteen people and covered with massive ornate and monogrammed silverware. Each individual place was set with endless spoons and forks and knives for endless special purposes, cristal glasses for the daily, at least, two kinds of wine ~~wine~~ and water glasses. There was invariably some intricate kind of decoration at the centre of the table, composed of a silver late renaissance receptacle on top of which perched another cristal receptacle in which floated delicated roses. Massive looking, over-ornate silver saltcellars and pepper shakers wandered all over. A chandel er with many candles

Longueville.

hung over the table and was lowered by the man servant before the evening meals to light the candles. Half an hour before the meals the maid-in-charge-of-the-dining-room-and table service would open the back, outside door and sound a small brass bell, that could be heard throughout the whole estate and served as a first warning. This small, shiny brass bell was supported by an angel with spread out wings and around the bell was in relief the motto: "Quid me tollit, vocem meam audet." There was an arm extending from the top of the bell and from which hung the chain and handle by which the bell was set in motion. On top of it sat a yawning chimera.

A double door would lead from here to the salon, which was less formal in aspect and had a marble inlay floor. Here hung two full length portraits, by Wiertz, of the father and mother of the lady of the place. Here the ladies would spend part of their afternoons doing embroideries, petits points or some other ~~more or less~~ delicate and more or less useless needle work.

On the mantelpiece stood silver candelabra with manyfold arms. In the late autumn evening a petrol lamp would be lit in the salon and this new fangled innovation would seem shockingly out of place and almost sacrilegious in replacing the usual many candles.

At night time everybody would retire taking along four or five armed silver candelabra, with burning candles. There used to be a servant exclusively in charge of cleaning the candleholders and lighting and replacing the candles throughout the place.

The Lady of the House and our hostess loved me and had expressed the wish and intention of adopting me officially and making me one of her heirs.

Longueville.

She had a number of grown-up children of her own but these were rarely mentioned. One daughter, widow of a high officer in the French army, professional soldier and last scion and namebearer of an illustrious aristocratic family, lived at the ~~the~~ Chateau with her young daughter, Monique, who was about my own age then.

As a child I persistently called the Lady of the House "Mimisse", which name was from then on officially adopted in the circle of her guests.

When I first came to the ~~the~~ Chantieraine, Mimisse must have been in her early sixties and was one of the most beautiful women I have ever ~~seen~~ met. Though slightly haughty and righteous and difficult of approach, she ruled her estate as a good general in active service would. She was in control of every and smallest detail. She had brought with her from the Netherlands and from her past life as a fashionable hostess in Amsterdam for her late banker husband, a mania for order and exaggerated cleanliness and perfection in everything material. Mimisse would be up early in the morning to supervise the distribution of the day's work among the servants, chambermaids, scullery maid, gardener, assistant gardener. On laundry days two peasant women from the village of Longueville would come in and wash for days. The clean washed clothes and white sheets would be spread out in the blinding sun in the meadow and were regularly sprinkled with water. Once a week one village girl would come in and help the cook-in-charge to bake the bread for the whole population of the Chateau. The assistant-gardener would light the oven and scrape out the burning tinsels before the dough was ~~the~~ shoved in to bake on the hot stones.

The only two people who did not receive their ~~day~~ instructions from Mimisse daily were the cook-in-sole-charge of the kitchen, small, fat red-haired Charlotte and the chauffeur Victor, who was not required to do anything at all besides driving Mimisse to Brussels once every fortnight to do large scale shopping, bring back or fetch guests.

Longueville.

These two were at the top of the servant hierarchy and they were fully conscious of it. Between them and the ladies and gentlemen who-only-use-the-big-stairs and the front entrance stood the dame de compagnie, who was more or less bullied around by Mimisse and in turn was made to feel out of place by the other servants. She ate at the table of the Maitresse de maison but slept in the separate servant floor, accessible through the service stairs only. The children's nurse or nourisse was a sturdy village woman spending her days with us children in the Masters' part of the house, thus sharing onesidedly in the masters conversation and having many little scandal stories and inside information to share when eating at the servants table in the kitchen.

The gardener would report at the kitchen every morning and shuffle in after having left his wooden clogs outside the door. He would talk over with Charlotte the cook, which vegetables looked right for eating to him on the one hand and what Charlotte was planning for the days meals.

After having settled everybody's chores for the day, Mimisse would go through the house, perenially with her little basket with all the keys in use in the whole place, and she would wind up all the many grandfather clocks. There were endless of these statuesque clocks standing in their high wooden towers with a narrow, glass panelled door in the front through which one could see the restless pendulum swing its round shiny copper disk.

By this time the guests would one by one have drifted downstairs and would hang around in small groups half hostile towards a new and pointless day, but with reserved politeness due to the hostess. Some would over courteous to counter-balance the tense atmosphere. Mimisse's daughter, Madame Yvonne, was usually sulking cold and distant. She had an icy beauty, with her hair held up on top of her head and an elegant, long, thin neck and very white skin.

Some guests were allways late and some others allways impatient and critical of the latter. ~~But when everybody~~

Longueville.

When every one was ~~waited~~ assembled and seated at the breakfast table the mood became mellow with the smell of freshly roasted coffee and "croissants".

After breakfast the guests would disperse again, some would retire mysteriously back to their private quarters. Some to write letters, long conversational letters passages from which would be read out confidentially to friends at the receiving end, quoted and repeated. Facts about which the writers were painfully but conscientiously aware.

Mimisse would put on her long elegant gloves, put on her large brimmed straw garden hat, take her special garden scissors and go to do her daily work in the rose garden. This rose garden had the shape of the central motif in those beautiful old Cashmere shawls; something like ~~an elegant~~ outline of an elegant pear with a slightly curved narrow ending.

At eleven a few of the guests would casually gather for a glass of advocâtes, strictly for reasons of health.

Lunch would be announced and everybody would rush in from everywhere looking jovial busy and animated. There were two hot meals a day with soup, hors d'oeuvres, entree etc with one kind of wine at noon and two in the evenings. After lunch curacao or benedictine would be served in the salon.

Then followed the much needed and deserved siesta. I have never known, in all the years of the siesta period of Mimisse to be disturbed by any incident ever.

Around three o'clock all the guests assembled again and in small groups would spend the afternoon in various ways. The more notable ones and dignified among the ladies would go and do some petits points in the shade of a cluster of red beach trees where garden chairs and tables were installed for this purpose.

Some would go to the Sunhut and among those were invariably Mme Yvonne, the haughty daughter of Mimisse. The sunhut was a little ~~and~~ very neat wooden pavillon

Longueville.

with large windows on three sides and completely open on the other. It stood on a pivot and could thus be turned towards the sun and would be adjusted frequently by us to the sun's position. It was painted a creamy white with grass green borders. Just behind this hut was the sandpile where Monique and I were supposed to play, but we rarely did and when we did it was done forcibly and without our enjoying it. Not far from there was the grove of sapling chestnut trees, which had a mysterious appeal all its own.

Some fifty yards from the right wing of Chanteraime were the numerous outbuildings. First the garage with next to it the repairshop, with its enormous supply of spare parts, smelling of grease. Farther down was the barn with the carriages of different kinds and the sledges and upstairs the hayloft where we children sometimes would go to play in autumn; when the new, odorant hay created a new climate an atmosphere unsuspected ever. I often wonder at the power of evocation of smells. Next to this were the stables for the cow, the three goats and the one clean, pleasant and well kept pig, called Oscar. Oscar, as I have already said was very clean and pleasant. He would be washed and sprayed several times a week. While the sty was being cleaned Oscar would roam around freely in the paved yard. So on one of the occasions I mounted the pig and rode on his back from one outbuilding to the other to the servants' joy. However, after a few times of these riding bouts Mimiée heard about it and forbade us to roam around the stables and barns any longer. To satisfy our legitimate longing and need of riding exercise she bought us a donkey. Monique was very fond of the donkey from the beginning. For a long time I did miss Oscar.

From our yearly winter trips to Paris and the French Riviera Mimiée always brought back swings, gymnasium installations and the sorts but Monique and I much preferred to make bows and arrows, to build huts in the brushwood, to make masks and perform spontaneous plays with them, to visit the stables, haylofts, or Victor, the chauffeur in his mechanics workshop. We liked to take distant and when he managed to rummy himself better with the up, keep
of the ^{own} Rochelle-Schneider car.

Longueville.

adventurous trips beyond the chestnut grove, through the extensive vegetable garden, passing through the narrow wooden door in the huge brick wall which separated the estate proper from the potatoes field and the many hotbeds with exotic flowers and exotic vegetables which Minisse, at that time, liked to import from everywhere. There also stood the huge hothouse with the vine producing Royal and muscatel grapes in quantities that were the pride of Chanteraigne.

Beyond this stood a small whitewashed peasant dwelling with low smoked ceilings where the gardener lived with his wife and many children. Beyond the small gate closing this part of the property were the pine woods and the boundless expanse of furs. There it abounded in wildlife and an occasional family of wild bears ^{went only} that would destroy whole potato fields on the fringe of the woods.

After such a disastrous event the farmer Mayor of the village, Monsieur le Cure, and a select delegation of the notables would request an interview with the Lady of the Castle. They would be let in ceremoniously. Monsieur le Cure and the Mayor ^{farmer} alone would be allowed to come in via the main entrance. The mayor would do this with lowered head and clumsily. The others would come through the kitchen door and a long parley would start. They would humbly ask if Monsieur le Baron Eberhart would do them the favor and the honor of ^{leaving} joining the great hunt.

Monsieur le Baron, uncle Eberhart to us, was a prussian and a brother-in-law of Minisse who divided his time between Longueville in the summer and Venice, in Italy in winter.

The great Hunt would be preceded by a few days of feverish preparation and then all the men would bravely and noisily disappear across the fields of seed beats into the the furs and underwood. A great excitement and expectancy would grip the whole village and would last several days, until the Hunt was over and all the men were safely back, boasting of danger and brave deeds. They all would

Longueville.

bragg about their hunter Monsieur le Baron, who could walk on for days without a sign of fatigue and about his accurate shooting and about his dignified and dry sense of humour.

Oncle Eberhart had one dear friend of olds living far away and isolated in the woods and whom he would go to visit every year within the first few weeks of his arrival at Chanteraine. This man was Desire Longre, a "professional hunter" whose hundredth birthday the entire village celebrated during my youth.

He lived in a delapidated hut in the woods with his second wife and their two goats. He was reputed to have 19 children and 47 grandchildren at the time.

Every so often a child, young girl or woman would bring them food. He then would jokingly tell the Baron, whom I allways accompanied on these visits, that he could not possibly remember who the said person actually was nor in what relationship there might be between them, though it was bound to have been one or other of his grandchildren.

The only enjoyable part of the day and which was considered the day proper was limited to a few hours only stretching from after siesta till suppertime.

After supper we children were never allowed to go out because of the "unhealthy effect of the night air". After supper everybody sat around reading, knitting stockings for the poor, parctissing "patience" or "solitaire" or less entertaining new guests.

The few hours of the afternoon were too often spent in gathering raspberries or strawberries or similar occupations which were done collectively by all the guests who all claimed to love to do it and in fact this became a real ritual, with previous distribution of straw garden hats, walking canes and little baskets, followed by a long walk in little politely chattering groups to the fruit growing part of the estate. There was something akin in the mood to that of a boring but courteous and fashionable Spa.

Longueville.

The picnic expeditions into the neighborhood meadowlands in search of mushrooms were most enjoyable but rare in occurrence. Fences had to be climbed, angry and charging cows had to be avoided. The excitement of leaving the protective estate to venture into "terra incognita" of peasant villages with their smelly compost heaps in front of huge farmhouses; with rustic looking, and slow moving countrymen. Every man, woman or child we met on the way would greet us with a loud and distinctly spoken salute. I clearly remember the social barrier building tradition, rigidly enforced by Minisse, of having to be called "Master Jean", from the age of four years onwards, both by the servants at the castle and by the peasants many miles in the round. The peasants would make it a point of honor to keep distance from what they considered the rightly and divinely established ruling class of land-owners. As a child I felt much attracted to the rural population but found it impossible to establish any contact with them beyond the casual, servile or submissively polite. They were a strange, suspicious people. Most of them spoke reluctantly and surprisingly poor french. The current form of speech being an exclusive and local brand of Walloon.

Without the thorough knowledge and practice of this language and its changing idioms and puns one was automatically cast out from social intercourse.

My persistently repeated efforts to learn the local language and customs was considered by the local population as a, for me, degrading unorthodoxy.

I eventually succeeded.

Minisse would never make one step outside of the lands of Chanteraine except on Sunday morning when going to Mass marching at the head of all her guests.

Two whole rows of chairs were reserved "pour les gens du chateau" in the little village church. During sermons through some strange arrangement we, of the castle, sat facing all the other people, who looked stiff and unhappy in their special Sunday attire.

Longueville.

and they would hastily lower their eyes whenever theirs would cross ours. As a matter of habit the men would all go out for the duration of the sermon and one could hear them talking loudly outside the church porch, squatting on their heels or leaning against the low, decrepit wall of the graveyard, where for an immemorial period the sacristan had kept and fed his domestic rabbits untill Mimiisse put an end to this practice, by very undemocratic means.

On one occasion elderly Monsieur le Cure became very inspired during a ^{sunday} sermon of his about retribution and the fires of hell and therefore extended considerably the length of his preaching. Although expressed in a kind of primitive ~~et~~ cliché it did have a lot of impact and was one of the greatest moments I can remember about Vieux Monsieur le Cure.

Mimiisse looked at her watch. The sermon had to stop rather abruptly and there was a great sigh of relief but everyone suffered from the anticlimax. The following ^{sunday} the little church of Longueville could pride itself of a brand new, loudly ticking clock. This useful and worldly present was from then on to remind and warn the village priest against the excesses of enthusiasm and mysticism.

After Mass all the people would mass at the church entrance to greet Mimiisse and all of us. They would stand around with lowered bare heads, possibly cursing under their breath.

Mimiisse had been and kept on trying to bring improvements of many kinds to her tenant farmers and to the village of Longueville in general. In many ways she must have been right and she certainly achieved remarkable success seen the stubborn ignorance and opposition and impossible circumstances.

She reminded the Cure of his ^{constantly} pastoral duties, giving him many useful hints and advice. She would harass the farmer mayor about the cleanliness of the village or rather about the lack ~~tax~~ of it. She would impose her demands forcibly concerning sanitary conditions

Longueville.

She did encourage and inspire the introduction of revolutionary changes on the young school going girls through the one and only woman teacher and head of the village school for girls. Mimiisse could not make her influence felt on the male teacher, except perhaps negatively, and through him on the boys because he happened to be one of the most implacable, if any, enemies of the castle. It was said that he had studied and lived in the Big City and had returned to his place of birth as a "scientific atheist" and progressive revolutionary. It all boiled down to a mild and lazy indifference to everything, including his job as an educator.

The village constable also belonged to the anti-castle fraction though this was due to matters of a more personal nature. Mimiisse was dissatisfied with his way of enforcing the law against game poachers, several of which, among the better known ones, were his two brother-in-laws.

For a while Monique and I had a private tutor but after having pleaded insistently Mimiisse, who loved us both very much and was very good to us, let us go, for a trial period to the village school. So one day Monique and I passed the heavy iron gate of Chanteraine and feeling very small we walked all by ourselves to the school house at the other end of the village.

Mimiisse had decided and made definite arrangements for my going also to the girl school and the safe influence of the woman teacher. I was then five years old.

There were over sixty girls in the one and only huge Hall, and only one woman instructor to do the teaching and all the supervising. She was an energetic little person with a severe face and a strict disciplinarian. She made use of an extremely long and flexible rod to indicate her displeasure and to rectify unruly conduct among her pupils. She would teach the older girls who in turn would try to teach the smaller ones with ^{rather} often surprising scholastic results. Between the two large black boards in front of the class was a narrow green painted door. During the morning sessions the teacher, referred to as "Mademoiselle" would disappear frequently, which was the signal for an immediate and general uproar, ^{which monotonously} each time and every day was repressed by iron discipline.

Much later I was to learn the secret of these disappearing acts.

On the other side of the black board happened to be "mademoiselle's" kitchen and simultaneously with her teaching she did carefully supervise her pots and pans on the kitchen stove.

At the back of the classroom stood an enormous glass-faced cupboard filled with the paraphernalia of the teaching of Natural History. I was specially impressed by a beautiful but stern looking stuffed Royal Owl, that, having lost one of its original two yellowish-brown glass eyes, seemed to wink at some esoteric private joke.

Further there was a collection of bird eggs and nests, fossilized plants, rock crystal, exhibiting both in color and texture, a dried out snakeskin hung realistically from a dead branch of a display stand.

A few yellow and faded photographs taken by missionaries in Africa and South America depicted and suggested to these young peasant minds this outlandish, unreal and pagan part of God's world that

seemed to most of them as remote and frightening as hell itself.

Most of the children had never left the territory of Longueville itself. A few, whose sisters or aunts had married in one of the adjoining hamlets or villages, had been that much further to visit those relatives, at the local fair. They came back self conscious and slightly uneasy about this weird experience. Some of the girls had overheard whispered conversations about the Big City where older brothers young uncles or cousins had been on some or other rare business trip with cart and horse, and who there mysteriously had remained for a few days, to come back with a strange mixture of sophistication, uneasiness and unchristian nostalgia which only became apparent in a peculiar, quick bashful smile whenever the name of the big city was mentioned by a third person.

Monique and I had been to Brussels, Paris and Southern France by that time and therefor in the eyes of these pupils we belonged to a different race, a race to be respected by right but that by fate would remain inaccessible and misunderstood.

Mademoiselle tried to connect most of the teaching with farming and cattle raising and kindred problems but even so she failed to a great extent to interest the majority of the farming parents who felt that once they had reared daughters to the age of ten or twelve they consequently had the paternal right to the full use of their service on the farm until an eventual marriage agreement would take them away again, maybe even outside of this present community.

Education seemed so superfluous to them, all this trouble about learning how to read and write and all the rest of it was pure waste of time, waste of their precious farming time. The girls should be strong and sturdy and have stamina. They should milk cows, feed swine, churn milk, make cheese, and cook for the farmhands. They should help gather hay and plant potatoes. They should be willing to weed and to use the hoe.

Therefore a working rule had been established that whenever work was pressing and a shortage of hands on the land could be claimed, the children were released from school duty.

Mademoiselle, I do remember, introduced many reforms of more ^a domestic kind also. She painstakingly introduced and forcefully supervised the obligatory wearing of underwear among her pupils. No underwear was worn ever by the girls and young women and this innovation for a long time kept half the community up in arms. Mimise financed and procured the necessary garments wholesale from the Big City. Many an embarrassing situation grew out of this. Much swearing too I am sure.

Next to this Mademoiselle started a vermin extermination ^{at} campaign, with a general class check up every Friday afternoon. Here again many parents objected and tried to interfere.

Shortly after these two revolutionary moves by the schoolteacher, I left the Village School to go back and live again with my parents in my hometown of Antwerp.

For me the Chantersaine period has a dreamlike quality, by this I mean that it has the value of experience but actually somehow lacking in reality.

34 *dimanche*

Chanteraine represented and enclosed a world strictly of its own. With material fulfilment that were afforded before the actual need for them ever arose, or even preventing material needs of any kind to be expressed, with an ensuing lack of physical hungers eliminating in a plaid sophistcad boredom. Everything was planned and regulated and prearranged and proper. Everything was clean and dull and well meaning. Life at Chanteraine did not tolerate of any excesses. It was perfectly balanced, but on a lower and trivial level.

Mimise had an extensive assemblage of cactus that were kept in an even and slightly overheated temperature at all times. The cacti were watered with moderation once every day with monotone regularity.

Once in many years one of them had the courage to produce a bloom with a paradoxical apology and egocentric conceit.

The bloom never was followed by fruition; it remained ornamental, polite and symbolical.

So also is to me life at Chanteraine: decorative, polite empty, polite and lacking in purpose. We lived and ate well, traditionally worked little and par excellence produced nothing.

In the economic, cultural and spiritual life of the neighboring peasant community Chanteraine was or wanted to be the stabilizing factor, the indelible imprint of stale respect of a stagnating and pointless hierarchy.

It had lost all creative urge, all humanity and taste of earth and blood. It had no hope, no goal no archaic will to live.

At a certain point in the History of Chanteraine the enmity of one fraction of the peasant in the neighborhood, hamlets and villages grew to such an extent

extend that we lived psychologically in a state of siege.

Around this same time over 250 choice chicken were stolen from Mimise's model chicken farm, during a well organized marauding raid.

The consternation was great when the spot^{light}ration was discovered. Mimise proceeded at once to fortify the defence of Chanteraine. The whole estate was fenced in and barbed wire was electrified. Besides this an impressive number of wolftraps were dispersed all over and also hidden shotguns that would go off automatically. An intricate system of anti burglar alarm was installed at high cost. Besides the loud and shrill ringing of the alarm bells it would automatically light a vast number of searchlights, thus surrounding the entire castle with revealing light. Loaded shotguns and Browning automatic revolvers were kept hidden handy at all times here after, with the intent to shoot to maim.

Dramatic signs were posted on poles and trees all over the place, warning everybody not to venture anywhere of the gravel tracks and into the grass or underbush. We lived under an entirely artificial created emotional high tension as if living in the very midst of a mine field, or if projected in time, we were living in full high noon of a hypocritical, dreaded and much talked of extremist revolt of the masses.

Victor, the chauffeur and I rejoiced at the opportunity afforded us to practise extensively practice target shooting at all times of the day. It all was very silly and thought me much about climate, creating imaginings of enfeverished brains and defeatist thinking.

The hostility and suspicion created on both sides of the fences of Chanteraine, between the peasants and the lady of the Castle never really simmered down again.

Mimise refused to patronise the village shop any longer and cut down to a

very minimum all economic dealings with the surrounding villages.

The Castle of Chanteraine became geared to near complete autonomy. In the cellars beneath the Castle, built of massive grey stone extensive provisions were build up gradually.

Life at the Chateau was overshadowed by mythical, all pervading and permanent fear of the demoniac plottings of the Internationale in Moscow and the obsession of anarchist extremist, maddened nihilist, leftist terrorist and bolshevics.

This vague undefinable distant treat was intensified anew by conversations with, or letters from the friends of the white Russian^s aristocracy exiled at the French Riviera.

Besides this, rumor about Nazi militarism helped upset and eventually destroy the idyllic late nineteenth century survival of life at Chanteraine.

The germanic treat soon cristalized into an paralizing emotional reality which grew so much out of proportion that there did not appear to be much ^{them} will to resist or oppose it.

Bloody old tales about the atrocities of the german occupation of 1914-18 were revived and persistantly retold with hate, fear and fanaticisme and with a touch of defeatist cynicism^c, as if saying in^o other words; all this will be again soon.

At the extreme end of the estate there was a small, low build, whitewashed farmhouse, where a man named Istace, lived with his family. Monsieur Istace was reputed to be a healer by touch and a person possesive great magical powers. No need to say that Mimise and this man were in a perpetual state of perpetual and open warfare. Peasant and farmerswives came to him, travelling many, many hours distance by horsewagon, cart or horseback. He never touched ~~any~~ money but accepted remuneration in natura. Strangely enough the mainkind of

currency he favored happened to be bottles of beer, brandy or wine. To keep his healing powers at their best in the service of suffering humanity he seemed to endeavour to live on the straining regime of perpetual ^{alcoholic} semi-intoxication. Some of his chickens at times, infiltrated through the intricate electrified barbed wire, thick thornbush hedge and chicken wire into the soft and lush meadows of Chanteraine. As soon as such an invasion, on any scale was discovered the alarm was given and a wild chase was on till the half starving animal had been brought to ground and annihilated to be sent back to monsieur Istace, by the consternated gardener with "the compliment de Madame".

At Chanteraine there was an extensive, well planned and strictly supervised program of extermination of pests.

A faithful old man called Flemalle, would come from the village of Longueville and spent weeks at Chanteraine, building, placing, improving and maintaining traps; special trap for weasels, for hamsters, for foxes, for rats for blind groundmoles, and snares hidden in the hedges to intercept incoming wild rabbits. In the attic there were of course the indispensable grey wire mesh mice traps, with their cheese bait. Those in the cellar were subtly baited to catch the long tailed brown field mice. On the window sill there was an ingenious and cruel glass contraption of an impressive size, containing honey and beer. This was a one way wasp exterminator. Lured by the honey, they were drowned in the beer.

In the kitchen and pantry there hung the inevitable, ugly, sticky fly tapes. The plants in the garden were continually sprayed with chemicals against pests, bugs, butterflies and worms.

Till extermination became a fulltime mental preoccupation and grew into a real complex of never ending exposure to contamination and unknown

dangers.

Victor these chamberlains concentrated his efforts on shooting and trapping those birds proclaimed a nuisance by madame du Chateau. The both of them obviously enjoyed the extensive and practical study of wildlife in order to better and more ruthlessly destroy it. I learned much from these men about the existence of animals and birds, notwithstanding their way of destructively misusing their understanding of the animal world. Later when living with the gypsies I was shown a different approach to life and nature and animals for which I am thankful.

The endless many grandfather clocks were always on time. It was painful to have so many clocks and all of them so obsessingly on time with each other. They were my first personal discovery of the Robot concept. My reaction was an intimidated distrust for it and a strange unformulated apprehension.

All through the day and the night they would noisily clamour passing time and conditioned and in vain they would do so, until one either grew insensitive and conditioned to their sound or one became neurasthenic with its obsession, or still and more wisely so, one found the right place and importance for them. I still would have preferred them not to explode periodically with such multisonous clangor.

Though many, many years after, when I/ hearing similar clock chimes it does awake far away, and not unpleasant echo in me.

We were taught repugnance for the ways of life of the peasantry. We were taught to scorn their living and sleeping and breeding and dying in dark smelly, holes, close to their cattle and the earth.

We were taught to see nothing much else in them besides their limited capacity for work, for slow, heavy, archaic work of the fertile glebe soil.

They slept over the cowsheds, to stingily make use of the warmth of the animals till they smelled themselves like their animals.

In the farmyard there was the w^g huge dunghill in front of the house, where geese, ducks and piglets would play in the dark brown pool which formed around it. Pigs would roam around freely and grunt with excitement. The heavy, titanlike bull would with the iron ring through the nose, would be solidly attached in a darkened shed; awaiting the very few days of comparative freedom and purpose given it every year.

Shaggy dogs would bark ferociously, pulling at the end of a long, rusty chain. Dirt and smells would be everywhere.

We were taught to ^{see} mainly this side of their life, till gradually and on my own I started out to discover an other side too, the human side: their little complicated loves and joys, their hopes and sorrows, their fears and incertainties about supernatural life, their inarticulate^d emotions, their steadiness and earthlike courage and tenacity, their sense of purpose and duty to the land.

Up in the woods lived wood cutters, who lived in still more primitive conditions in rudimentary huts build from branches, tree trunks, dead leaves and red clay earth. They drank wildly, mostly home brewed stuff, seldom visiting the parish, never came to church outside of Easter Sunday, or to attend the burial of one of their own folk.

They occasionally would sell pelts and animal skins and charms. The woman folk would sell baskets and make brooms.

At the village Fair they would come in strength and loudly make themselves at home. Not infrequently such Fairs would end in violent brawls, where

crooked knives were flashed and thick glass ^{beer} bottles used to hit.

The backwood people lived in swarms and were loudspoken and fond of swearing, whereas the farmers were more isolated individuals.

They lived on with and for the land, ploughing, sowing and reaping in seeming taciturn dissociation with their human environment. They talked little and where they did it was as against their own will.

Their need of communication was mostly directed towards the soil, rain and sun. Their thoughts were centered around germinating grain they had entrusted to the lap of mother earth and the sprouting potatoes, barley and oats.

They lived with the life cycle of their cattle, mating, gestation, milk production, fattening and slaughter.

There seemed to be relatively little else to communicate about among themselves. A bashful gauchery dominated most of their more intimate relations, or was switched into crude ribaldry of a few spoken words.

Once a year there was a village Fair in the parish of Longueville and all would stop work and worry to rejoice, eat well, drink plentifully and joke and dance enough for a whole further year to come.

The Mid August Sunday morning would be announced by the roosters.

The land would smell strongly of sunheat claydust and ripening harvest.

After a late High Mass, as the culmination of many weeks of preparation,

The procession in its full glory would leave the beautiful little grey church

The two parallel roads, running in a straight line, starting and ending abruptly extended only by a narrow winding earthpath, had been raked of cowdung.

The girls and children had strown basketsful of colored papersnipping

and spotless white sand. In the windows of the houses churchcandles burned in front of a crucifix or the image of the Blessed Virgin or some Saint protector of this particular household.

The women looked clean and shiny in newly starched long dresses and aprons.

It is a strange sight to us all these familiar looking farmer families at their ceremonial best, self conscious and impressed by their own attire and behavior, introvertily watching their own every move.

This is a great day for the lady of the Chateau and for her large menage, because the procession will stop at the Chanteraine for a ritual service after their solemn march through the one street to afterwards return to the church again via the other and parallel road.

This is strictly the only day of the year that the great iron gates of Chanteraine are swung open to let villagers in unrestricted.

An provisional altar has been build, blocking the front entrance. The granite steps, flanked by the alerted lions are covered with a burgundy red carpet and is kept in place by a number of huge national rocks that have been guild and reguilt trough the years for the purpose and are kept in a special section of the attic behind lock and key with all the peraphenalia for this occasion.

From the balcony of Minisessuit a enormous canopy has been suspended with ful burgundy red drapes reaching down to groundlevel.

The inside of the canopy is azure with golden stars.

All the endless windows of the Chateau facing the front are decorated with a dozen small flags with the papal and with the national colors.

Garden tables are put in a long row where the palibearers rest the heavy wooden and painted plaster statues from the church, which are carried in the procession.

One of the two store keepers is bearing a grandious banner of Saint Michel fighting the Dragon. Embroidered ribbons held on by young cow keepers on either side keep it in balance.

Proudly representing the population of the Chateau, I carry a much smaller child size banner with a beautifully embroidered and studded with semi precious stones image of Mary and Child. Two ribbons on either side are held by little girls all dressed up.

The march back to the church is less solemn and slow. People are hot, tired and over excited by all the liturgic beauty and solemnity. They feel exhausted by this ritual and estetic nearness to heaven and God.

The procession is disbanded and all the little white clad angels take off their artificial wings and dirobe.

Jeanne D'Arc gets out of her shiny armour and rides back to the farm on the heavy hoofed plough horse.

The older men deposit their long extincted white wax candles, all sticky bent and twisted from the heat.

They feel as if starting life anew. They long for the idle plow they passed by, earlier in the day, when walking stifly in the procession past their own lands.

That part of the land which had been plowed over only the day before, was flaming red. Some patches were drying out under the August sun and turned

into deeper shades of reds and purples with sometimes a dark brown line running straight through parts of a land. Complicated patterns of hedges stood out in dark green and redish brown.

The dusty earth roads are yellowish grey. Some fields are orange or deep oker yellow with the harvest of barley and oats and wheat.

Along the horizon is a strangely vibrant line, mysteriously separating land and sky.

The whimsical silhouette of the somber forest adds a dissonant note to this landscape.

The cows stand near the barbed wire fences in groups looking with big humble soft brown eyes at the unusual happening.

The houses, brick outbuildings and stables have been freshly whitewashed and have a sharp gripping little smell.

Everywhere around, as if a grotesque obsession, one can see the same kind of newly done haircut, following a not too subtle and uniform pattern.

Every hair is cut away below a predecided point about one inch above the top of the ear and this is one straight consistent line all around the head. The result is stunning and many of the victims look stunned. There is something humiliating and pitiless about these areas of exposed scalps.

Some women have their hair curled up in a most unexpected fashion and look perfectly hideous, trying in a gauche manner to imitate the ladies of the Big City. They forgot how beautiful they look in their unsophisticated sturdy everyday selves, with slow, broad and essential movements milking cows, binding sheaves and suckling their little ones.

In the eyes of every peasant and girl good intentions are to be read as to a renewed and intensified affirmation of piety.

A white robed Missionary has come from a distant eloquent father community

to preach the sermon.

This is also the only Sunday of the year that a collection is taken in the church of Longueville.

Several of the notables sent their strong hipped and sturdy daughters to
with
the castle apple, plum and cheese pies the size of an average cartwheel
as a gift to Madame who reciprocates by sending back the ritual one bottle
of red and one of white wine.

At the Chateau everybody returns to the daily routine of bored sophistication
and condescending reflections about the ways of the simple villagers.

I loved to go and bring bottles of wine to our neighbour and tenant
Guilleruin. They worked the biggest farm miles in the round. Everybody
called them le père et la mère Guilleruin. Some parts of the barns, stables
and sty were modern, up to date and convenient. The Guilleruin couple had many
plough horses, and the best and many milking cows with heavy udders.
They were considered very rich and their reputation as such was solidly
established.

They dwelt in an enormous barnlike kitchen, right next to, and under the
same roof as the cowshed. The floor was beaten earth, sprinkled with
clean white sand and freshly cut green twigs. The ceiling was supported at
small intervals by massive and hand hewn beams darkened by age and smoke
from which hung a quantity of smoked ham and home made garlic flavored
sausages. The rough brick walls were whitewashed with a sprinkling of blue
colorant added. On big nails hung the hayfork, sickles, wooden rakes, shears

Longueville.

and axes. ~~In the corners~~ Several sacks of wheat flour slump in the corners.

In the large vessels quantity of creamy milk is getting sour and spread a softly, intoxicating smell, mingling with it I can detect the smell of yeast and rising bread dough, strong coffee perpetually on the stove and cooking. Half a dozen big grey cats are lapping their milk from a deep earthen bowl. They live in the haylofts and feast on mice and birds. In the heavy copper chaudron the mash for the pigs is being cooked, it is made of potatoes, beets, cornmeal, chaff, beerdregs and leftovers of the farmers table.

Chickens come inside the house in quest of crumbs.

Against the outside wall is the waterpump and wedged behind it is the cheap blue enamelled small washing basin and a piece of soap. A broken piece of a damaged mirror held by three rusty nails serves the farmer for shaving his occasional.

Besides this typical old fashioned hand operated waterpump there is a small stone bench where the old woman sits in the early evening to pray, with the black rosary tied round her left wrist in order not to lose or drop it when dozing off.

In the hangar with its silvery corrugated iron roof stand the wagon, carts and agricultural machines. Here it is that the farmer dries bunches of tobacco leaves for his own use and for the use of his extensive household of farmerhands. It is illegal to grow one's own tobacco and punishable under the present law. Once a great while a farmer is hauled away to the

Longueville.

big city and to jail for illicit tobacco growing or for poaching and he does not seem to resent this too much as long as it does not happen around harvest time. He does not understand these ways of the world at large, nor does he care. He just accepts grudgingly trial and condemnations by city judges, the enforced payment of taxes and long compulsory military training for his sons. He views with mounting suspicion the social convulsions. He ^{dimly} longs for changes, especially when feeling miserable nonetheless. In the meantime he churns his juicy tobacco leaves and dyes his land with profuse brown spittle. He lets himself be permeated with an earthy contentment and he lives on.

Somewhere behind the hanger two hired hands are sawing logs for the winterfires. There is always urgent work aplenty on the farm and life makes sense. There is the land to be attended and manured and coved for, at all times. There are roofs to be repaired, outbuildings to be painted, tools to be kept, fences to be looked after and one thousand things to do that are not foreseen.

One has constantly to adjust to nature's changing circumstances and this keeps men in a dynamic relationship with his environment and helps him to renew his perspective on life and on himself. It promotes equilibrium between sanity and introspection.

It is in Longueville that I had the blessing to discover for myself and to experience extensively some of the basic and culture making crafts. In many subtle ways defying the conceptions of life of the lady and

longueville.

Master of Chanteraine and the various household rules established by her. I intuitively tried my hand at many kinds of manual labor and skills. I was initiated in the gay mysteries of pottery by an old and wonderful craftsman, in a small village in the neighborhood of La Roche. He worked in an ancient and dark little workshop near a running brook, where the very young and the very old of the village would sit in hot summer evenings and fish.

The humid, homogenous grey clay would be kneaded in a shapeless mass, then thrown suddenly on a slowrevolving potter's wheel. A strong and compelling thumb, squeezing the clay would make it grow up and up and force it down again and a little/ more up. Then the newly formed shape would remain static on the turning wheel till I started wondering why the wheel was kept turning and why the shape just created remaining static form although whirling around or why the strong and compelling thumb did squeeze no more.

Suddenly the strong fingers were forced down from the top of the clay shape and delved inside it. The old and clever man put both thumbs in it and thus creating- he worked hard creating inner space. His body did hardly move. His hands seemed motionless in their selfcontrol; only the clay hump seemed to jump up and down in a mysterious dance of creation.

The bare feet of the potter moved the wheel in short, rhythmic steps.

Back at Chanteraine I would for a long time work work with clay, building up all kinds of pots and large plates without potter's wheel.

Mimise disliked those ventures of mine and did much to discourage those

Longueville.

tendencies in me.

I managed to convince Charlotte the cook to let me secretly use the huge kitchen oven for firing my clay objects, receiving unexpected technical suggestions from her, such as the use of plain kitchen salt for glazing.

I had found a little open space in the grove of sapling chestnut trees and build there a primitive shelter of dead branches and leaves, where I could work undisturbed and unobserved. There also I could leave my clay experiments to thoroughly dry before bringing them subrosa to the kitchen for firing. It was also there that I would bring back and store up the more or less successful examples.

To show my gratitude to Charlotte for the privilege extended I modelled baked and glazed beads few which I then threaded together into a necklace for her. She sweetly expressed her appreciation.

The village of Longueville had the benefit of having an old and experienced blacksmith, as one of the members of the community, and they were envied for it many, many villages in the round.

The smithy was only a stonethrow removed from the church and the ancient boneyard. Next to the village forge and part of the same business (outfit) was the public house where the farmers would wait while their horses were being hoofed or while ploughshears or other agricultural implements were repaired or adjusted. There it also usually is that prices are haggled about and chalked up till final payment day.

There it also it is where all equine affairs of the entire parish are

Longueville.

discussed and upon by the giant hoofsmith.

The huge anvil stands at the mouth (entrance) of the cavelike smithy, blackened by soot and smelling of pungent horsesweat and rusty iron.

Deep in the darkness of the cave a fire is glowing almost white,
and

Huge powerful bellows are heaving and moaning under the effort of the apprentices. The swarthy smith, with blackened leather apron, works at the anvil, the brutish hammer is thrust down with rapid and emphatic movements in a deafening cadence.

Each angry hammer blow spits forth a discharge of irascible sparks.

The iron is being beaten while it is hot.

Whenever I could manage to slip away under any acceptable pretext from the castle Chanteraine I would go and watch this awe-inspiring feast of fire, sound and power.

In front of the forge stood a sturdy wooden structure that for some unknown reason reminded me of a french guillotine, which object I obviously never had seen. The heavy built ploughhorses were both coaxed and beaten inside this four pole construction and chained to it. Then the red-hot iron shoe would be forcefully fitted to the hoof and nailed to it.

The horse would whinny wildly and shudder. A foul smell would gripp you as the hornlike substance of the hoof was calcinate d and impregnant everything around for a short while.

Not unseldom oxen were used for working on the land. Poor people would use

Longueville.

or rather misuse their only milking cow. These animals were then specially hooped for the purpose at the smithy with queer looking cleft foot irons. In his off moments the smith would work on springs for wolftraps and on sharp, long spurs for fighting coqs.

In the evenings he would preside over the drinking in the public house, sitting on his chair and with legs wide apart, and in rears.

The community of Longueville also boasted the availability of a master carpenter whose service were sought by many a distant farmowner.

Flemalle, this was his name and his wife owned the one and only village store for countless years. One day a new general store was opened in Longueville for no apparent good reason of necessity.

Flemalle was one of the very few villagers who were welcome at the Chateau. He was a grey little man of small stature and he prided himself of his technical resourcefulness. Eventually he disclosed to me his life ambition and project of supposedly endless years of intermitted research.

He would indulge in reverie, sweet and forcefully, about having solved at least speculatively, certain obstacles presented by physical laws to the material hoped for realisation of the perpetuum mobile.

He was haunted by his often declared need and subsequently intended quest for a certain quantity of quicksilver which he urgently required to make this scientific miracle come through.

I strongly suspect that he loved to make us believe he worried and fretted about his invention.

Longueville.

He had a brother who was a missionary father somewhere in the steaming jungle of South America. Flemalle would translate for us graphically and colorfully the infrequent missives from this brother of his. I remember best the huge atrocious, other-worldly carnivorous plants that would devour man and beast alike. I remember one important day in Flemalle's life and in the life of the peasant community of Longueville was when the missionary father came back from the mission fields. He was old, thin, tired and unhealthy looking with a strange, absent stare in his eyes. He gave the painful impression of not belonging here evermore. He ^{told} ~~would tell~~ stories about far away pagan lands and would look young and inspired for a short spell.

He came on a Friday night. The Lady of the Castle had graciously provided the use of her car and chauffeur for transport. She therefor enjoyed the privilege of a few hours of his time on the night of his arrival.

The following Sunday he preached in church. While listening to him I saw him grow in size, faded out into a blurry mass of light and become into normal focus again, transfigured into the Peter the Hermit. His sermon on the urgency of evangelisation of the pagans subtly changed its meaning to a call to war against the Moors, a bloody crusade in the name of the Cross of Christ. The following Monday morning he had left his native Longueville, never to return.

Longueville.

The lands surrounding the estate of Chanteraine were all cultivated or used as pastures on a wise agricultural rotation system, cultivation of the soil being the main occupation of the local people.

Rue West of Longueville and many miles away there were the stone quarries of Englebert. About once a year, sometimes in midsummer, uncle Eberhardt would take me there to watch the stonemasons at work. We would climb a peaceful looking hill slope covered with intense yellow blooming mustard plants.

Arriving at the top we would unexpectedly be greeted by sharp angry wind gusts, rising vertically along the steep granite cliff of the stone quarry cut by man into the side of a peaceful looking, flower covered hillock. Deep below us endless antlike workers were moving in all directions. The rusty wagon rails formed an interesting overall pattern. Not the depth, but the breathtaking expansion of this enormous pit made me feel dizzy. It made me feel infinitesimal and crushed by this overwhelming awareness of grandeur and beauty. It in turn made my whole being sing in exaltation and gladness. It must have been many hundreds of yards in diameter and on three sides the walls cut into the solid stone mass were straight and steep. It varied in color from a stubborn looking bluish grey to vicious sulphur yellow, appetizing deep oranges that made the stone appear soft and malleable and somber, rusty reds. Sometimes a long, horizontal black streak would show slanting downwards.

I remember wondering at some small patches of whitish, crystalline formation

Longueville.

On the far side of the quarry we could see two insect size figures, clinging to a vertical stone surface the height of several houses, one was holding a long steel shaftlike drill at arm's length. The other man would swing a sledge hammer in slow movements. The sound of the hammer on the steel shaft, a surprising little dry tone without power, would reach us a little time after we had seen the action itself.

The disconnection between sight and sound, however slight, gave something unreal to the scene.

The sun was hot and vibrant over the crater. Notwithstanding the din and noise of the stonemasons at work it created a cathedral-like muteness of its own. Near us bees would hum on the intense yellow mustard flowers. From far down came to us the high pitched strident shriek of the steel sawblade as it ate into the rock, it gave a faint needling sensation in one's spine marrow. The wind would blow in angry fits and the sun was hot.

Deep holes were strenuously drilled and hammered in the rock mass for many weeks. Then one day, after dynamite charges had been stuffed in the holes and properly wired, they would be detonated.

Long beforehand red warning flags would be displayed all over the open cast mine surface and the place would be hushed and empty like on a Sunday morning. Every worker was taking shelter.

A series of unevenly spaced conflagrations could be heard, followed by a tremor and the sound of tumbling rocks,

After waiting for a few minutes as safety margin and having made sure by counting the successive explosions that all charges had gone off, the quarry workers would eagerly emerge from the shelters. They would look around

Longueville.

dazzled and try to discern through the thick dust clouds the new appearance of the explosion ripped wall surface.

We would walk around the upper edge of the crater and come to the narrow canyon entrance cut in the hillside. There the sturdy little wagons, laden with rough rocks would be pushed along the one track leading in and out the quarry. We were always welcome. The laborers would display a touching if superfluous concern about our safety.

Many of the stone layers were of inferior quality and would be smashed with sledge hammers into pieces that one or two men could handle.

If I remember rightly it was transported to a factory where it would be ground up and used in the processing of cement.

The laborers of the working at the stonecutting were as distant from our peasants of Longueville as if they belonged to a different race of men.

On the other side of Longueville lay the parish of Boulé, hidden away among the evergreen pine woods. This was a favored hunting ground. Many were the picnics we enjoyed there. Before the actual hunting season started our donkey would be laden with huge provision baskets full of foods, too excellent and plentiful to describe and we would penetrate deep into the woods. We would walk for hours at the time through shady woodlands, spellbound by the abundant plant and animal life. The most capriciously shaped and colored mushrooms and fungi would surprise us, attracting and repelling us at the same time. We were amazed at finding ever new and unknown spheres of life.

Longueville.

It would elate us and fill us with wonder at the unlimited joys and mysteries life has in store for us.

This elation and wonder is still expanding in my soul to day and the joys and mysteries of life grow more inexpressively bewitching for me.

Suddenly a mass of sunrays would explosively penetrate the cool shade of the woods and right ahead of us stood, in an open space an astounding pink fairy tale castle, backing in the sun. This was the castle of Boulég.

Besides being a vivid pink and looking like a fairytale it was renown for its trout hatching project, covering extensive grounds of the domain, which grounds were most severely restricted to any and all outsiders, thereby creating an inexpressible atmosphere of mystery.

Halfway between the two villages stood a dilapidated chapel in the midst of a field. It was known as the "chapelle" de Chinault and persistent stories told of a gold treasure hidden beneath it.

Once a year at the time of full moon, of the "Lune Rousse" the young men of both parishes would meet there to brawl and scold and fight.

Each group claimed the good intention of wanting to protect the treasure from the other gang of village youth.

Legally the land on which the chapel in question stood, belonged to Monsieur the Notaire, jurist and notary. Monsieur le Notaire, a dignified, thin, country esquire, lived with his family, poor relatives and servants in a castle of lesser importance as the Chateau de Chanteraine, it therefor was referred to plainly as "La Baclaine" or as the Manor House, "le Manoir" to the