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THE ENCOUNTER OF MISS S. S. WITH A PROVENÇAL SAUVAGE

In her book **Willa Cather, A Memoir**,[1] Elizabeth S. Sergeant several times refers to a friend of hers, a French painter of Provençal origin, endowed with a strong and exceptional personality, judging from the following words:

> I must have written Willa about my walks with Provençal artists and writers in the dry Alpilles; and how my portrait was painted by a Cubist from a vineyard — **un sauvage**, a wild man, he called himself, a "Fauve" who had already exhibited in New York. (p. 98)

When she returned to the United States she again mentioned the painter to Willa Cather always eager to learn new things about Europe and France especially:

> Willa was intrigued, especially by the Cubist. She determined I should expound modern art to her. (p. 98)

Later, adds E. Sergeant rather unkindly, "nothing interested her less than what the French call **le mouvement**, in poetry or novels. The **avant-garde** . . . But in 1913, the story of **le sauvage**, as his mother called him, and above all, his new way of painting, piqued her interest. (p. 114)

Perhaps E. Sergeant had first met **le sauvage** in Paris. In Provence, at any rate, she certainly developed a close friendship with him. From France she brought not only fashionable dresses and scarves, books of Provençal poetry but also paintings and drawings by the "Fauve" (p. 111). She even "showed Willa the abstract drawings mostly on the back of menus" (p. 115), a precision sufficient to let us imagine intimate **tête à tête** in Paris or Avignon restaurants. Was Willa Cather just teasing her friend when she joked, as reported by Sergeant: "you'd better write a book on Cubism . . . but what if you marry the Cubist?"

"Portrait of Miss E. S. S."

Whether or not the **sauvage** had any share in it, the fact remains that E. Sergeant tremendously enjoyed her Provençal stay. She talks of her "Provençal daze," of her "whirling head". (p. 111)

E. Sergeant, for reasons known only to herself, does not in her book disclose the identity of this fascinating French painter. She only ascertains his Provencal origins: ". . . the wild man from a Provençal vineyard, a **petit bourgeois** by birth, who had got to painting in this new and startling way". (p. 114) The biographical details she gives conjure up the traditional image of the young artist faced with the hostility of philistine parents:

> I had told Willa that the artist's parents had opposed

his study of painting until he ran away and shipped as a sailor. That act of rebellion had made his family allow him to study at the Beaux Arts, but soon he had military service to do, and he had begun to paint in his head, for lack of another chance. When he got out of the army he found he was a Cubist, **malgré lui** — he'd never heard of Cubism before he started practising it. But the Cubists had a formula and that had alienated him. So he threw away Cubism and started hunting for his own style.

Intrigued by the identity of this mysterious Provençal painter I thought of Auguste Chabaud (1882-1955). The excellent work by Raymond Charmet, **Auguste Chabaud** (La Bibliothèque des Arts, Paris, 1973) together with information kindly provided by Monsieur Louis Malbos, Conservateur du Musée Granet in Aix-en-Provence, who personally knew Chabaud and admired his works and Le Chênier, a Provençal painter, reinforced my intimate conviction. What we know indeed about Chabaud fits with E. Sergeant's version of her friend's life and personality. Auguste Chabaud, born in Nîmes, belonged to the small bourgeoisie. After an unsuccessful start in business, his father had taken a modest teaching job. However, in 1890 the Chabauds' situation improved when they inherited the fine estate of Graveson south of Avignon including an important vineyard (cf. Sergeant: "the wild man from a Provençal vineyard"). But contrary to the Sergeant version, Auguste's parents did not oppose their son's artistic vocation which the child manifested at a tender age. His father was himself a **peintre amateur**. He was also fond of literature and music. Charming, good-natured, with Bohemian dispositions, he certainly was the kind of person who could understand the child's aspirations. Madame Chabaud, the daughter of a Cevenol minister was more strict. A woman of exceptional energy, she had the heavy task of managing the estate, fields and vineyard. She had a genuine sense of dignity and at the same time she was extremely generous and kindhearted.

Even if we may suppose that she would have preferred for her son a more settled position, she did not attempt to discourage her son's calling. Often, when the young artist in Paris ran short of money, she would send him welcome subsidies. In 1896 or '97 Auguste's parents allowed him to leave high school and take, instead, the courses of the local School des Beaux Arts. In 1899 the young man left Avignon for Paris where, as mentioned by Sergeant, he attended les Beaux Arts and also worked in the studios of painters like Carrière where he met promising people such as Matisse, Derain, Laprade, Puy.

Around 1900 the Chabauds' vineyard suffered heavily from the phylloxera disease which badly affected wine crops in France at that time. No longer able to support their son in Paris, they asked him to return to Provence and find a job less hazardous than painting. Auguste complied with his parents' wishes as reported by Sergeant (but not as an act of rebellion). He shipped on a boat owned by the Fraissinet Company. His boat plied along the shores of Africa and during the six months his career as a sailor lasted the young man sorted in his mind lores of violent colors and impressions he was to use later in his paintings. Upon the death of his father at the end of May, 1901, he returned to Graveson. Letting his mother take care of the estate (as she already did) he preferred to take long walks in the country around, drawing innumerable (and often remarkable) sketches on sheets of brown paper. Chabaud was not exactly the kind of rebellious young man depicted by Sergeant, though, no doubt, her romantic version of the artist bent upon the pursuit of his ideal had much appeal to Willa Cather, herself totally dedicated to the cause of art.

Later, as indicated by Sergeant, Chabaud did his military service (from 1903-1906) in Tunisia. In an unpublished narrative in which he represented himself as the painter Michaud (**Le Tambour Révolutionnaire**) his recollections curiously echo Sergeant's report [p. 114] ("he had begun to paint in his head for lack of any other chance"). Chabaud indeed writes of his alter ego that during military drill or marches he learnt to memorize what he saw and select essential details, because he could not use his sketch book. E. Sergeant dates Chabaud's cubism back to the end of his military service. Actually, what Chabaud inaugurated at that time was his "Fauve period," certainly the most creative and the most original one in his career. He did not exhibit at the 1905 **Salon d'Automne** at which the art critic Louis Vauxcelles was reported to exclaim "**Donatello chez les Fauves!**" upon noticing a small statue by Albert Marqué surrounded by the flamboyant paintings of Vlaminck, Marquet, Derain and Matisse. But as early as 1906 the vigor and intensity of Chabaud's colors and volumes entitled him to be recognized on of the Fauves and to take part with them in the **Salon des Indépendants** and the **Salon d'Automne** of 1907.

In the recent past several international exhibitions dedicated to the "Fauve" painters included a number of works by Chabaud (Aix-en-Provence, 1960: Tokyo, 1965; **"Le Fauvisme Français" Musée National d'Art Moderne**, Paris, 1966; New York, 1968). What is especially interesting about Sergeant's discussion of Chabaud's art is that, as early as 1913, she was stressing his "Fauve" characteristics which were little known until 1950 the year when several major paintings were discovered in Chabaud's studio at Graveson.

Dealing with portraits of prostitutes or interiors of **maisons closes** Chabaud did not want these paintings exhibited for fear of embarrassment to his family. Bold, superb, they unmistakably bear the mark of a Fauvist temperament. E. Sergeant had ample opportunity to get acquainted with this original aspect of Chabaud's art during her prolonged stay (several months altogether) in southern France in 1913. She indeed visited the French Riviera in the company of her friend, Mrs. James F. Muirhead, the wife of a Scottish publisher. Then she settled in Avignon in early spring as evidenced by the following passage:

> Springtime really is merry, sensuous, expansive in Provence . . . If I wrote [Willa Cather] of the yellow irises flaming in the ditches, and the tall black cypresses piercing the blue like arrows, she matched me with the yellow mustard in the tragic theatre at Arles and the little willows of Avignon resting their elbows in the flooded Rhone. (p. 96)

Judging from what she writes (p. 97) she met the Provençal élite during that stay in the Midi:

> There **was** plenty more, especially about the Provençal poets, artists and writer whom I met through my French literary friends in Paris; or through my Scotch hosts at the Avignon **pension**.

Regarding these Provençal personalities, one cannot fail to mention Sergeant's encounter with Frederic Mistral at his house in Maillane. In the company of two curés and a nun, she left Arles where she was staying with the **Soeurs Gardes Malades** and dressed as an Arlésienne, paid a visit to the old poet. Mistral "with his goatee and his sombrero on the back of his head" was sitting in his garden drinking **eau sucrée**. Sergeant was presented to him as a true Arlésienne by the two curés. Mistral was so pleased with the deception that he invited the young American to the fêtes given by the Félibrige, his literary group writing in the Provencal language.

A picture of E. Sergeant in Arlésienne dress can be seen in **Willa Cather, A Pictorial Memoir**. (p. 56) It conforms to the description she gives of herself in her **Memoir** (p. 98) as "a perfect counterfeit of the native article, headdress, fichu, black bodice . . . and Roman nose included." This picture is of considerable interest when confronted with a portrait painted by Chabaud entitled "Portrait of Miss S. S." This work is still in the possession of a member of the Chabaud family. A reproduction of it was given to me by Monsieur Jean Chabaud, one of Chabaud's sons when he kindly allowed me to visit his father's studio at Mas de Martin, Graveson some time ago. Undeniably the elegant model painted by Chabaud and the lovely Arlésienne of the photograph reproduced in **Pictorial Memoir** are the very same person, the young Elizabeth S. Sergeant. The mysterious **sauvage** Sergeant alluded to in the passage already quoted (. . . my portrait was painted by a Cubist from a vineyard — **un sauvage**, a wild man . . . a "Fauve" . . .) is then no other than Chabaud himself as definitely established by the comparison between the photograph and the painting. They both correspond to the year 1913 and to Sergeant's prolonged stay in the south of France. In the "Portrait of Miss S. S." the young American is painted side-face. Her "Roman nose" the curve of which has been softened in the three-quarter face photograph, is revealed by the thick outline technique used by Chabaud, so is the rather prominent cheekbone hardly marked on the photograph. In both pictures the hairdressing is similar, so is the shape of the ear, chin and the ample breast which in the **Belle Epoque** days embodied the very essence of feminity. In the portrait Sergeant is not in Arlésienne dress. She perhaps wears one of her fashionable Paris frocks. However, the armchair on which she sits is unmistakably of Provençal design. The portrait is infinitely more expressive than the photograph. The painter has captured a kind of inner radiance which illumines the whole face, intelligent and graceful. The attitude of the body is natural and supple, beautifully alive. It is certainly one of the best works by Chabaud.

E. Sergeant describes **le sauvage** not only as a Fauve but as a Cubist. Chabaud's admirers ignored this aspect of his art almost completely. Even during Chabaud's cubist period very few people mentioned the painter's experiments. In 1911 the critic Jean Granié included Chabaud among the only seven genuine (so he thought) representatives of Cubism such as Metzinger, La Fresnaye, Lhote. Later the poet Apollinaire ranked Chabaud with the cubists **instinctifs** such as Dufy and Jean Puy. So, at that time, Sergeant was one of the very rare persons familiar with this side of Chabaud's art. Later, of course, Chabaud's limited venture in cubism was practically forgotten all the more so as none of his cubist paintings were preserved, as far as we know. It is only fairly recently that photographs showing Chabuad's studio in Paris were discovered, clearly revealing cubish paintings along the walls. However, Chabaud's cubism is of a special nature. Today, art critics would perhaps hesitate to regard it as genuine. Indeed, contrary to what Picasso or Braque did, Chabaud does not disjoint reality to reconstruct it in an arbitrary way. He only resorts to geometrical lines and volumes. Persons and objects remain perfectly indentifiable. Chabaud knew Picasso's experiments. Berthe Weil in 1910 displayed in her gallery some of his works together with those of Matisse, Dufy, Marquet and Picasso. But Chabaud, as reported by Sergeant, did not find much satisfaction in the cubist "formula." So he "threw it away" to quote Sergeant again.

Yet if his cubist works have been lost or destroyed (but what about those Sergeant took back to the States?) some of his powerful sculptures bearing the mark of his particular conception of cubism can still be seen at the Mas de Martin, Graveson.

Apparently Chabuad forgot all about these sculptures, however impressive they might be, and left them in some dark corner of his vast studio there. When he returned to Provence, he wanted, as Sergeant writes, to "hunt for his own style": "You can't paint la Provence as if it were la Touraine — at bottom it's harsh, desert, has etched lines, nothing fluid or vague — spatial." (Sergeant, p. 115) He wanted as he was already writing in 1912 to live close to nature, to depend entirely on it and his own heart for inspiration. Life itself was to be his subject. It could not be rendered in abstract terms.

Did Sergeant see **le sauvage** again? Probably not. Soon the "Great War" was to break out. Chabaud was one of the first to be enlisted and sent to the battlefront. Though a confirmed antimilitarist he fought bravely and was several times wounded. He returned to civilian life and his dear Mas de Martin at the beginning of March, 1919, only. Sergeant cancelled a trip to France scheduled for October, 1914, and a contract for a book on Provence. She came to France, however in September, 1917, as correspondent for "The New Republic." She never wrote her book on the Midi and her friends there. This is why the few but vivid impressions of Provence she included in her Memoir on Willa Cather are all the more precious to us.

— Michel Gervaud
Université de Provence

1 Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant. **Willa Cather: A Memoir**. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1953; Bison: University of Nebraska Press. 1963. References are to this edition.

Nighttime View of the Palace of the Popes, Avignon.

— "Avignon," Casa Editrice Bonechi

AVIGNON TODAY

When Willa Cather first visited Europe in 1902 she said when she looked at a ruined Norman tower in Chester, England: "The temptation to attempt to reconstruct the period when these things were a part of the living fabric of the world is one that must necessarily assail an ardent imagination." (**Willa Cather in Europe** p. 19)

Throughout her years of visiting Europe, and within her imagination teased by ghosts of the past, she came to concentrate not on a Norman tower, but on the Palace of the Popes in Avignon, France. Edith Lewis says: "She had wanted for years to write an Avignon story. On her many journeys to the south of France, it was Avignon that left the deepest impression with her. The Papal Palace at Avignon — seen first when she was a girl — stirred her as no building in the world had ever done." (**Willa Cather Living** p. 190)

Therefore, in my endless search for Willa Cather, my husband and I accepted the generous invitation of Prof. Michel Gervaud to visit the Midi. We stayed in the Cardinal Hotel in the center of Aix-en-Provence. (Remember that Father Hector Sain-Cyr, that gentle, but "strong and fearless and handsome" priest in **Shadows on the Rock** came from "a noted family of Aix-en-Provence." (**Shadows on the Rock** p. 146-147)

M. Gervaud met our train in Marseilles and took us to our hotel where he left us to orient ourselves. The city fascinated us. We could walk without fear day or night throughout its narrow streets, and sit comfortably in its many sidewalk cafes. Just half a block from our hotel stood a church of the Order of Malta, an ancient, beautiful structure where now Dominican friars and congregation sing the Mass in Latin. The World knows the Monks of Malta for their beautiful music.

Beside the church stands the Musée Granet where I found some Picasso prints on display. They were having a Picasso exhibition. Just outside Aix looms Cézanne's mountain, **The Sainte Victoire**, but since the people of his hometown thought him only a humble, banker's son, incapable of doing anything worthwhile, they ignored his rise to an eminent place in the world of art. They have only two line drawings in their museum donated by American Francophiles. How true this rings to "A Sculptor's Funeral."

The Hall of the Consistory

This enormous hall is two stories high, and served in the 14th century as the place for the supreme council and court of all Christendom. Originally the walls were covered with frescoes by Matteo Giovannetti who depicted figures of saints around God, the Father, and the Coronation of the Virgin Mary. Fire destroyed the whole wing in 1415; and a rosy hue in the remaining stones is attributed to the infamous fire.

— "Avignon," Casa Editrice Bonechi

Every day M. Gervaud took us to some new historic place in the countryside: Picasso's Château at Nauve Nargues, Chabaud's studio, Daudet's Mill. But the most important day came when we drove to Avignon. We parked near the old Avignon Wall, originally made for protection. For possession of this high area of rock above the Rhone River, a prized fortress, a continuous series of battles raged. Always heavily fortified, the town has few Roman ruins (their having been destroyed by the numerous captures and recaptures of the fortress) but the Avignon walls seemed old enough, 1349-1470. A sign warned us of falling stones.

During repair of the wall some time back scientists were puzzled to find strange markings on the stones, and considered they had uncovered some vital information. On further study they found that the markings indicated the name of the workman who had cut the stone, and at the end of each day, he was paid by the number of stones which bore his mark.

The parking lot, deserted except for some young men playing some sort of ball, would soon be overflowing, for now Avignon has become the center for the best known drama festival for all France. Preparations for the opening appeared on all sides. One smaller building, once a part of the Papal Complex, and embellished on its facade with beautiful stone carvings, now serves as the College of Music where visitors could buy tickets for the various plays and concerts.

Upon lifting our eyes, we could see, at that distance, the whole Papal Palace group of buildings, including the Cathedral at the top of which stands an enormous gilded statue of the Virgin (1859). Before we entered the Palace and Cathedral, I wanted to see the Papal Gardens to find out how much they had changed from 1902 when Willa Cather first saw them.

We could have ridden a small train to the top of the four terraces, but preferred to stroll and enjoy the colorful beds of flowers, the many roses along the retaining walls, and the multitude of trees, even a bamboo grove. At each level we found new beauty, lakes with statues and ducks and ducklings swimming fearlessly. But most of all I wanted to know if the white swans still lived there. Cather wrote in 1902: "There is a fountain, too, and a lake with white swans on it." And we did find the white swans, possible descendants of those of eighty years ago.

Cather's 1902 description reads: "Avignon was the centre of the Catholic world. Today the papal arms are as much in evidence here as they were six hundred years ago, and everything centres about and is dominated by the papal palace. At the north end of the town there rises an enormous facade of smooth rock three hundred feet above the Rhone. This sheer precipice accessible from the river side only by a winding stone stairway, is crowned by the great palace of the popes. The palace is a huge, rambling Gothic pile flanked by six square Italian towers, with a beautiful little cathedral in front. The palace faces toward the town, and behind it, overhanging the Rhone, are the pope's gardens." (**Willa Cather in Europe** p. 136-137)

Cather uses the adjective "little" in connection with the Cathedral. In that word, she fictionizes. The Cathedral stands enormous against the sky and contains vast and beautiful chapels with exquisite stained glass windows and handsome carved wooden doors. French architects built the "six square Italian towers" and Italians painted the extensive murals. Although I tried, I could not see "six square Italian towers" only a five sided one and a sturdy square one.

The Papal Gardens, however, remain much as Cather describes them in 1902: "It must have been an undertaking of some magnitude to make an Italian garden on top of a bald rock three hundred feet above the Rhone, but there it lies today, as beautiful as when Clement VI planted and watched over it. Four successive terraces rise one from another, each walled with white marble and connected with the terrace above and below it by

White swans on a lake in the Papal Gardens, Avignon.

— Photo by Mildred R. Bennett, 1981

winding avenues overhung with feathery fir trees, brown with cones. The garden is really a little terraced forest, cool in the hottest noontime and black with shadows." (**Ibid.** p. 137)

"But all this is as nothing when one has reached the topmost terrace and once looked upon the valley of the Rhone. . . . Immediately below one lies the white town, with its narrow streets and red roofs and the big, rushing, green river." (**Ibid.** p. 138) "At the foot of the cliff, four great stone arches of the famous old Avignon bridge still reach out into the Rhone." (**Ibid.** p. 139)

The fragment of the Benezet bridge still stands, and with it comes a legend of how a young boy, Benezet, who had never left his own hillside, heard a heavenly voice which told him to go to Avignon and build a bridge across the Rhone. On the way he met an angel who took him to the Bishop of Avignon.

The bishop asked the child to lift a stone, so heavy that thirty men could not move it. Young Benezet lifted it and put it in place remarking that it was the first stone for the bridge. Started in 1177 the bridge was finished in January, 1185. Only four spans are left, the rest having been destroyed by invaders, rebuilt, and finally abandoned. Cather mentions the little chapel (Chapelle Saint-Nicolas) where once the remains of St. Benezet lay. These and many other relics and treasures perished in the French Revolution.

As we stood at the top of the Papal Gardens, looking towards the Alps, which we could not see that day on account of haze, we could look down on the back of the cliff where undisturbed rock lay as it must have looked on the whole cliff before the gardens were planted. And possibly here, in this barren, rocky incline Cather might have seen the first setting for her last, unfinished novel. The bleak, rocky side of the cliff certainly contrasts with the lush, well-kept gardens.

I found myself reluctant to leave those beautiful gardens, particularly an ancient tree, propped up by poles to prevent the wind's destruction. So old this tree appears, it may well have been one under which Cather sat eighty years ago.

The Palace itself could entice a visitor to wander about it for days. One of the spots which, according to the notes we have left of Cather's last manuscript, must have fascinated her, is the kitchen of the Palace. In order to reach it, the visitor must go out from an enormous third-story hall (where the food was served) along a short curving stone walk high above the back garden, and into an immense room with a round open chimney reaching to the sky. Looking up we could see the hole out of which the smoke soared, and all the vast tapering chimney walls which still bore a coat of soot from ages past. Open fire cooking would have been done in the center of the room, just below the opening in the top. How marvelous to picture the magnificent banquets thus prepared, carried around the outside passage, and served.

The rooms of the Papal Palace stretch to enormous distances. On the walls still remain murals painted over six hundred years ago. The Popes (and there were seven of them — the last two reigning in Avignon while rival popes ruled in Rome) lived in luxury and power. They tended to be lenient with prostitutes and accepted their gifts along with those of the rest of the population. Rabid bands of marauders roamed the area; the Papal policy was to forgive them, pay them off, rather than tangle with them.

We ate our delicious lunch which Madame Gervaud had prepared and sent, sitting on a bench not far from the Rhone. The wind (reminiscent of Nebraska) whipped across us, but we did not notice it. My imagination kept trying to construct what Cather had seen and what any history-minded person must see in the misty shadows of the ancient past so very much present in the riverside hills.

After lunch we again went back to the Papal Palace, and saw the courtyard now filled with a temporary stadium for the crowds that would soon gather for the Cultural

Festival. The improvised seating did not look secure and I asked M. Gervaud if the bucket-like seats were safe. He told me that a couple of years previous, his wife's seat had upset and she had broken her foot, but the authorities had declared no such thing could have happened, as the structure embodied safety. (Shades of Bureaucrats everywhere!)

I could imagine Cather's agony over the present (albeit artistic) use of the Papal Courtyard.

We climbed countless stairways in the Palace and viewed ancient murals, present for six hundred years. We saw painted portraits of the seven Avignon popes. The guide (who spoke fair English) said, "If you wonder why all these popes look alike, the same model was used for all the portraits."

Security must be maintained, although guards were not particularly in evidence, but recently a whole room of tapestries had been stolen from the Palace. Those remaining hung timeless on the ancient walls.

I could have lingered until sunset about the Palace, the Cathedral, and the Gardens where people strolled all day long. Every turn of the road brought new splashes of color, new evidences of constant care. As I looked out over the Rhone River and the red roofs of Avignon (they are of red tile) I could not believe I was standing where Willa Cather stood eighty years ago.

How much we have missed that she did not live to complete her story of those early days of life in this historic and fascinating setting.

Viola Borton, president of the WCPM and Mildred R. Bennett, chairman of the Board, attended the Governor's Travel Industry Conference, 1982, in North Platte on February 4 and 5. The Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial received a Merit Events Award for our 1981 annual Spring Conference featuring Maya Angelou.

THE STUDIO OF AUGUSTE CHABAUD

Before we had made certain plans to visit Provence, Mr. Jean Chabaud, son of Auguste Chabaud, Mas de Martin, Graveson, had invited us, through Professor Michel Gervaud to visit his father's studio.

On a beautiful, warm afternoon we drove into the yard of a Provençal farm. Madame Chabaud apologized for taking us through a part of the house that was being replastered, but we soon emerged into a sunny backyard. Would we like to visit Monsieur's studio? We certainly would.

A large structure, two stories high, stood in the backyard of the premises. We entered through an unpretentious wooden door and looked around. On all the walls hung paintings of M. Chabaud's work, and by the staircase winding to the second floor stood a work of his sculpture. The display room was large, the paintings impressive.

But what we wanted to see was the portrait of Miss S. S. as it had been so listed in the art magazines. M. Jean Chabaud brought it out and stood it in the right light for us to admire. Certainly the portrait was that of Miss Sergeant. As we were talking M. Gervaud went over and picked up the painting to look on the back. Much to his and our surprise, the inscription on the back of the painting was "Miss E. S. S." The "E" had been added later than the original letters, but was, his son said, unmistakably his father's handwriting.

We were all delighted since this additional "E" confirmed our already certain opinion that Auguste Chabaud had been **le sauvage** of Miss Sergeant's communications with Willa Cather. The portrait was one of his best paintings.

We peered into every part of the old studio, admiring the work of a man whose life spanned the first half of this century, but much of whose work has not always been known to the world of art.

The son and his wife invited us inside their beautiful Provencal farmhouse, where the old fireplace in the kitchen could still be used to cook meals, and where burnished furniture at least three hundred years old gleamed in the sunlight which crept into the dining room, where we, at the invitation of the hospitable Chabauds sipped sparkling wine and talked of art, of farming in Provence, and of our visit in France.

Unfortunately we had to drive back to Aix, and leaving with regret this historic shrine, we thanked our hosts and bid them goodbye. We deeply appreciated their kind invitation to visit them again.

I did not want to leave Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant there in the studio, but perhaps that is where she should be, a marvelous memory of the artist's work.

— Mildred R. Bennett

COTTONWOODS IN AFRICA

Patrice Brown of Fullerton, Nebraska, sends the following information, which, since cottonwoods were Willa Cather's favorite trees, we feel might be of interest to you.

Ms. Brown's cousin, David Parson, visited Sierra Leone, Africa, in 1980. With his photographs he captured a native village in the midst of which stood a dead cottonwood tree. He learned that in slave-trader days cottonwoods stood in each village and commanded a look-out post for slave traders. The lookout could warn the people in time for them to flee to safety.

As Ms. Brown looked at the slide of the dead, sinister, cottonwood, she noticed on a large branch a huge vulture, looking right into the camera. Not even the photographer had seen it before. It looked at them from its dead perch, a symbol of the decay and evil of slavery.

In Freetown, Africa, stands a giant cottonwood which is now an historical landmark where the

slaves were once bought and sold but years later, when some slaves returned, they were set free beneath the tree — hence the name Freetown.

CATHER IN VOGUE

Red Cloud's Mildred Bennett and Vi Borton, chairman of the Board and president, respectively, of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Foundation, were in high glee clutching a copy of Vogue magazine last week at the Governor's Travel Industry Conference at North Platte.

They had scored an international coup in selling Catherland and Nebraska. The magazine was the January issue of the British edition of Vogue, and it featured 13 pages of color photographs of British models and Red Cloud children in Catherland settings in a feature entitled Pioneer Fashions in Nebraska.

Willa Cather quotes are used to describe the old-fashioned settings made famous in her novels.

"The British models and a camera crew spent a week with us in June doing it," said Mrs. Bennett. "Of particular delight was their using so many Red Cloud children with the models in such settings as the old Dane Church and the little red school house."

"Oh, did we make it big," exhalted Mrs. Borton. "We've already had letters from Spain and England wanting to know more about Cather and Nebraska."

— Tom Allan

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- By contributing your Willa Cather artifacts, letters, papers, and publications to the Museum.
- By contributing your ideas and suggestions to the Board of Governors.

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Special group memberships (such as clubs or businesses) are available. Write to the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial for details.

AIMS OF THE WCPM

- To promote and assist in the development and preservation of the art, literary, and historical collection relating to the life, time, and work of Willa Cather, in association with the Nebraska State Historical Society.
- To cooperate with the Nebraska State Historical Society in continuing to identify, restore to their original condition, and preserve places made famous by the writing of Willa Cather.
- To provide for Willa Cather a living memorial, through the Foundation, by encouraging and assisting scholarship in the field of the humanities.
- To perpetuate an interest throughout the world in the work of Willa Cather.

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