LEANING from our pension window, the evening of our arrival at Montreux, we saw Chillon, nestling into the green fringe of Lake Leman’s edge, and looking a very toy house amid the encompassing Alpine peaks—a castle of dreams, which had existed for us only in the cantos of Byron and in dim records, historic and legendary. As it rose out of the opalescent sheen of the lake, veiled in the warm afterglow, with the gleaming summit of Dents du Midi above it, this illusion was strengthened and Chillon was still a dream castle.

However, when the clearer light of the morning picked out the towers of our fairy tower in realistic shape, we boarded a prosaic trolley at our door and were pleased to find that the conductor had evidently heard of Chillon.

The space between the declivity and the shore grows less on approach to the castle, until the roadway is pushed close to the shore line. At this narrowest point stands Chillon as though opposing its stubborn compactness to the further encroachment of the all-compelling mountains which tower above it, dark with the firs and oaks of centuries. The chronicles declare that it was built at this gateway of the ancient road from Italy over the St. Bernard Pass, to guard and command the way and levy taxes. As they also state that the date of the oldest walls (those surrounding the inner courts), cannot be accurately fixed, the former assertion probably refers to some period in the eleventh or twelfth centuries, when the original structure acquired important additions. The Dictionnaire Universel attributes to Louis the Debonair, son and successor of Charlemagne, the first massive tower, built for a prison in which to confine his uncle, the Abbé of Corbie. The earlier walls must, therefore, antedate this structure of the ninth century. As for the foundation, it is far back in the annals of world-building, a bed of solid rock laid up by the mighty hand which lifted the mountains above it.

The view of the castle with which we are most familiar in illustration, that from the southeast along the road toward Villeneuve, is the most pleasing, showing greater breadth and a more symmetrical arrangement of towers and projecting corners. The machicolations beneath the eaves have the effect of a deep cornice supported by arches, and the walls at the base the outward tendency expressive of strength and resistance.

Chillon, approached by land from Montreux, offers no vista; it is buried in the luxuriant verdure of the shore. From the main
CHILLON, A STUDY FOR ARCHITECTS

This is one of the most picturesque details of the old castle of Chillon, famous in history and poetry: it is the court of honor which communicated with the ducal apartments: the craftsman feels that it is full of suggestion for the country architects of today who are building elaborate structures.

thoroughfare an avenue curves between dense masses of green into a small enclosure, screened on the street side by a wall of foliage. On the other side, across the narrow foss, shallow and gravelly like a mountain stream, rise the rugged walls and towers of the old feudal fortress. Seen from a distance, there is the lure and awesomeness of mystery about it, but at close range, half obscured by the thin leafage, it is less austere. There is an almost human sympathy in its setting amid the wild growths of the woods. In this limited parterre reserved on the mainland for the castle grounds, the wild flowers spring up at will. If the grass is cut and the trees trimmed, it is with a surreptitious touch that leaves no trace of intervention.

The avenue follows the bank of the foss to the timbered bridge, built in the eighteenth century to replace the ancient draw-bridge, a simple, massive construction, its hipped roof approximating the pitch of the nearest tower.

The somewhat uniform character of the exterior gives little idea of the informal variety within the walls, due to the requirements of the varied capacities, public and private, in which the castle has served since the tenth century. Of the buildings surrounding
CHILLON, A STUDY FOR ARCHITECTS

the first court, the towers on each side of the entrance are of thirteenth century origin, the additions to that on the left, of the sixteenth century. The building opposite the entrance, of old Romance construction, earlier than either, was enlarged in the thirteenth century.

The court is irregular in shape, its architecture unpretentious. There are windows with tops square and arched, the arches varying from an inconsiderable segment to a semi-circle. A door at the junction of walls is covered by a lintel roof, and opposite, a balcony nestles under a like protection. Each window has height and width peculiar unto itself. There are low openings under the eaves and windows rising above the eaves, to be hooded with curving dormer roof, and above the whole, a covered patrol gallery and a pointed tower, variety defying accepted rules, yet very winning in its quaint appeal.

The buttressed arch which gives entrance to the inner courts is of comparatively recent date. These courts are scarcely more conventional than the first, but are more ornate as becomes their proximity to the great halls to which they give access. The arched windows have sash of twin panels, also arched, with quarterfoils centered above. The main entrance from the farther court (the Court of Honor), is of cut stone, laid up in a series of three graduated arches with projecting impost, a beautiful doorway, simple and dignified. Beyond this, a double window has columned jambs with ornamented capitals; the circle for the quarterfoil is cut in the solid stone.

From the court near this window a roofed stairway leads to the upper floor, and the tower at the junction of the court walls has a window slightly arched, with mullion-like divisions. On the adjoining wall is a roofed gallery, below which a lintel roof covers a flight of
CHILLON, A STUDY FOR ARCHITECTS

stone steps. The supporting timbers are weather-stained into harmony with the rough stone and the richness of the shadows is unbroken.

The unstudied variety of these courts is so evidently due to the requirements of different periods, that the marvel is, not that a few incongruities have crept in, but that so much of primitive simplicity and consequent charm remains, and that, too, when it is improbable that for any appreciable portion of time, the work has had the intelligent supervision now given to the restoration of ancient structures. While every feature has been the outcome of some simple need, the ensemble is fine in its subtlety of artistic expression. A close adherence to rule gives proportion, adaptation, even elegance, but only when a design rises above the prescribed limit does it attain some measure of the picturesque.

In the eleventh century, Chillon, consisting of a single tower, was given by the King of Bourgogne, Rudolph Third, to the Bishop of Sion, and was by him and his successors in office, considerably enlarged. Surrendered to the House of Savoy in the twelfth century, it remained in possession of the Counts, afterward Dukes, of this line until fifteen thirty-six. It attained the zenith of glory in the thirteenth century, when under Peter of Savoy it grew into a formidable fortress. It is said to have been the favorite residence of this splendor-loving prince, who by force of arms and diplomatic skill, possessed himself of large areas of the surrounding territory. The “Etude Historique” says he “married the heiress of Faucigny and added that province and Chablais to his territories,” and further that, “invited to the Court of England by his niece Eleanor, he spent the greater part of his life abroad, gathering in the service of Henry Second, men and money. These he used to achieve the

THIS IS THE BEAUTIFUL ENTRANCE COURT OF THE CASTLE WITH ITS LOVELY WINDOWS AND ARCHED DOORWAYS.
acquisition of Vaud, to which he every now and then returned to overthrow his enemies. In England he occupied a high position in the council, was knighted and had titles and honors lavished on him. The palace of the Savoy in the Strand bears witness of his magnificence.

From this record and what remains of thirteenth century construction it is not difficult to gather some idea of the princely apartments surrounding the inner court as they were in Peter’s time. The great hall at the right of the main entrance, now known as the Hall of Justice, was the reception and banquet room. Fine windows with columned jambs and mullions, overlook the lake. Black marble columns support the ceiling, and the walls are decorated with tile. Of the furnishings, only a few tables and chairs are scattered about, probably acquisitions of the restoration committee, hence of no interest in relation to the castle.

The representatives of the House of Savoy following Peter seem to have had no love for this stronghold, for they spent little time within its walls. This fact did not, however, prevent their making considerable alterations. To Peter Third is attributed the fine square tower containing the bedroom occupied successively by the Counts and Dukes of the line. In the fourteenth century, however, this was entirely transformed, the vaulted ceiling, window, mural decorations and chimney supports dating from that time. The fireplaces in this room and in that of the Duchess consist merely of chimney hoods in corners. In the latter, the hood is conical and is of thirteenth century construction.

In the Bailiff-Governor’s Hall, entered from the middle court, the quaintly paneled ceiling and huge, paneled capitals of the supporting columns, are the chief attractions. The ceiling and the fireplace as they now appear belong to the fifteenth century, which is true also of the ceiling and fireplace in the banquet hall, alterations probably made necessary by the havoc wrought when the second story was added to this portion. Above the banquet hall, what is now termed the Knight’s Hall is of this period, as is doubtless the staircase leading to it from the inner court.

Under the ducal apartment, and reached by a linteled staircase
are the chambers lying at or slightly below the level of the lake. The floor is rough-hewn, repellent to the step. It is the floor of a prison, but the stress of the captive, the cruelties of the captor have become obscured in the mists of the past, and the present gives a vista of buoyant arches springing from massive columns and merging into the rugged stone of the unfinished inner wall, their groined intersections picked out by the light from the wedge-shaped openings which narrow to mere slits on the lake side.

Of much earlier date as a whole, these chambers were completely altered and vaulted over in the thirteenth century and were utilized at that time as magazines. Hence the vaulting, exquisite in proportion, grew out of the necessity for substantially supporting the floors above, rather than from any desire to elaborate the construction of a military storehouse. Not until the following century did these vaults do service as a prison, where, in after time, Byron gathered the story of the fanciful Bonivard, more real to us than the veritable Prior of St. Victor. The rescue of Bonivard terminated Savoy control, and the castle remained in the possession of the Bernese victors for about two hundred years subsequent to fifteen hundred and thirty six, the arms of the Bernese Bailiffs of Vevay, painted on the walls of the Knight’s Hall, offering tangible proof of their occupancy. Chillon is now the property of the Canton of Vaud and has been since seventeen hundred and ninety eight.

The irregularity of the ground plan suggests that the first walls might have followed the contour of the highest level. Each generation has added its quota, a tower here, a piece of wall there, perhaps only a little height to tower or wall, the later work being readily distinguishable from the older at many points. Through six centuries at least, the main features progressed harmoniously, despite the constant shifting of human purpose, until at last the advent of Gothic architecture gave to its towers their pointed roofs completing the dignified expression of concordant design.

Nor is Chillon the first creation to emerge from the mutations of time, the better for a dearth of unnecessary supervision. Again and again we find the unmistakable charm of consistency in some structure which has simply grown, without conscious plan, as though the sense of eternal fitness guided the unthinking hand that laid the stone. Thrilling with the recognition of its individual appeal, we ignore the possibility that it is the result of fortuitous effort. A conception broader than man-made rules has given to the old pile of gray stone a personality which calls insistently to human, creative instincts, and the something stirred within us is less of passive admiration than of active desire to know, to understand the message of the centuries.