

# **AN EMBASSY TO PROVENCE**

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An Embassy to Provence by Thomas A. Janvier

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**THOMAS A. JANVIER**

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## THE NEW TROUBADOURS

(AVIGNON, 1279)

They said that all the troubadours had flown,—  
No bird to flash a wing or swell a throat!  
But as we journeyed down the rushing Rhône  
To Avignon, what joyful note on note  
Burst forth beneath thy shadow, O Ventour!  
Whose eastward forehead takes the dawn divine:  
Ah, dear Provence! ah, happy troubadour,  
And that sweet, mellow, antique song of thine!  
First Roumanille, the leader of the choir,  
Then graceful Matthieu, tender, sighing, glowing,  
Then Wyse all fancy, Aubanel all fire,  
And Mistral, mighty as the north-wind's blowing;  
And youthful Gras, and lo! among the rest  
A mother-bird who sang above her nest.

RICHARD WATSON GILDER.





## AN EMBASSY TO PROVENCE

### PART FIRST

#### I

**H**AD we not gone roundabout through devious ways in Languedoc—being thereto beguiled by the flesh-pots of Collias, and the charms of the ducal city of Uzès, and a proper desire to look upon the Pont du Gard, and a longing for the shade of an illusive forest—we might have made the journey from Nimes to Avignon not in a week, but in a single day. Had we made the journey by rail, taking the noon express, we could have covered the distance in three minutes less than a single hour.

The railroad, of course, was out of the question. Geoffroi Rudel, even in the fever of his longing to take ship for Tripoli, and there breathe out his life and love together at his

lady's feet, never would have consented to travel from Bordeaux to Cette by the *rapide*. To me, a troubadour's representative, the accredited Ambassador of an American poet to his friends and fellows of Provence, the *rapide* equally was impossible. Strictly, the nice proprieties of the case required that I should go upon my embassy on horseback or on foot. Consideration for the Ambassadors, however, forbade walking; and the only horses for hire in Nimes were round little ponies of the Camargue, not nearly up to my weight—smaller, even, than El Chico Alazan: whose size, in relation to my size, was wont to excite derisive comment among my friends in Mexico. The outcome of it all was that—compromising between the twelfth and the nineteenth centuries—we decided to drive.

By a friend in whom we had every confidence, we were commended to an honest livery-man, one Noé Mourgue. It was ten in the morning when we went to the stables. Outside the door a lithe young fellow—a Catalonian, with crisp black hair, a jaunty black mustache, and daredevil black eyes—was rubbing down a horse. To him we applied ourselves.