

**LIVING AND LOVING ON THE RIVIERA**

The Life of the American Architect Barry Dierks  
and his Riviera – 1920-1960

Working Title

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## PART ONE

### LIGHTS AND MUSIC

The English Visitor calls the entire coast from Marseilles to Genoa the Riviera; but  
the French distinguish their portion as the Cote d'Azur,  
and the Italians distinguish theirs as The Riviera di Ponente. S Baring-Gould 1905

## Chapter 1

The waterfall sings: 'I find my song, when I find my freedom'.

*The Waterfall*. Rabindranath Tagore.

Le Trident, Miramar – 1925

Barry and Eric

'How this coast smells of riches!' So wrote the American Jane de Glehn, wife of the English artist Wilfred de Glehn, when she first set foot on the Riviera after the 1918 Armistice of World War I. A member of the Red Cross Committee who had worked in the devastated areas of the Haute Marne and was now in the south to report on the medical conditions, she felt the train from the north had deposited her in Paradise, 'To eyes fresh from the ruined homes of Eastern France, from the ghastly desolations and sublime endurances of the Front, this previous world of moneyed idleness, these innumerable villas perched on the hills and clouded with flowers, these glowing white walls and basking blue bays ...' filled her with bemused delight.

Europe had been ablaze and the fires had gone out. Now the Riviera slowly began to return to a semblance of its former self. During the war the area had become a vast hospital for the wounded, but gradually the old life of catering to privileged visitors returned, although in an increasingly different form. Suddenly everything seemed possible. Moving pictures, wonderfully designed automobiles, new music, liberating fashions were all exhilarating. By the early twenties the towns along the coast were alive with a fevered post-war excitement. Among the palm trees, oleander and bougainvillea the *belle époque*, characterised by its ornate architecture and amply dressed winter visitors, was over. The owners of the great baroque villas of Victorian times were getting older and entering a new era which would transform their way of life in resorts where they had held sway for so long. As a result of the Bolshevik revolution the Russian nobility had either disappeared from the coast, leaving their beautiful onion-domed churches as proof of passage or, often being poor, become taxi drivers, hotel managers and servants. Their sumptuous villas were converted into hotels or taken over by other, richer expatriates. As the trauma of the war faded, crowds of international socialites, both old and new, came to luxuriate in the beauty of the coast.

To this awakening Riviera full of promise, two young men of very different backgrounds arrived to seek their fortunes and begin a new life. Barry Dierks, an

American from Pennsylvania, was 26 years old. Slim and handsome, with blond wavy hair, he treated life with insouciance and good humour. Eric Sawyer, 10 years older, was an Englishman from Buckinghamshire. Dark-haired and stockier than the elegant Barry, he possessed a gravitas that was in contrast to the latter's puckish sense of fun. The difference between the two was appealing, and as a couple they would become much sought after, being described by the author and composer Beverley Nichols, a close friend, as 'those two charmers'.

Born in Butte, Montana, in 1899, at 12 years old Barry Dierks moved with his family to the suburb of Edgewood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Here, with his sister Elizabeth, they settled at 335 Locust Street to what seems to have been a pleasant suburban life. Barry's father, W C Dierks, was the respected general manager of the firm of C C Mellor, representatives of Steinway pianos. They were a musical family, his mother being an active member of the Edgewood 'Tuesday Music Club', still in existence today. Little is known of Barry's parents. Neither he nor his sister would have children, causing the family trail to go cold. Elizabeth Dierks eventually married a Princeton engineering graduate and became Elizabeth Anderson. And although she and her husband visited Barry occasionally over the years, judging from the omission of Elizabeth's name in Barry's later family letters, the sibling bond does not seem to have been close. This was in contrast to his relationship with his mother to whom, as late as age 44, he would sign his letters 'your own boy'.

A Sub-Lieutenant in the American army during the war but without seeing active service, in 1921 Barry graduated as an architect from the Carnegie Institute of Technology. An entry in the alumnae yearbook of 1921 states that he is deemed 'the Petronius of the school' (Petronius having been a Roman courtier during the time of Nero, a voluptuary; a no-holds-barred satirist and an arbiter of taste). The entry continues: 'He [Barry] is very imaginative' but has 'never made an 8.30 in his life because that time is devoted to matching his necktie with his socks. Women bore him. However Barry is a real "medalist" and we predict a great future'. The writer had foresight.

Like so many cultivated Americans of the time, Barry was drawn to the Old World and the year of his graduation found him enrolling at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. One of the most famous of the Beaux Arts studios was run by the architect Léon Jaussely and Barry was lucky enough to be accepted as his pupil. He found Paris with all its dignified beauty to be extremely agreeable, even more so when he

was awarded one gold and three silver medals for his work at the Beaux Arts. To help fund his studies, he took a cashier's job at a merchant bank, name unknown, where Eric Sawyer happened to be the general manager.

While Barry's background was firmly middle-class provincial American, Eric's was as firmly British. Born in Aldershot, Surrey, in England in 1889, he was the third of five children. His father, William Harcourt Sawyer, was a distinguished career soldier who won the Sword of Honour at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. His mother was born Edith Mary Hanbury, always known as Mary, whose family home was Blythewood House (now Hitcham House) near Burnham in Buckinghamshire. Mary Sawyer was a distant relative of Sir Thomas Hanbury who, in 1867 with his brother Daniel, created the famous Hanbury Gardens at La Mortola near Ventimiglia on the Italian Riviera. The gardens became known for their dramatic planting on a calcareous clay hillside which sweeps steeply down to the Mediterranean. Through the gardens runs the Via Julia Augusta of 241 BC which linked Rome to Gaulle, running through Genoa to Menton, above Monaco and on through Cannes, then over the Esterel mountains to Frejus, Marseille and finally to Arles. A total of around 800 kilometers. At La Mortola this ancient route is now sunk below ground level but still evocatively visible. Thomas Hanbury would later buy land at Wisley in England in order to donate it to the Royal Horticultural Society so the latter could move from Chiswick in London to bigger premises. The Hanbury family connection, remote though it was, would do no harm to Barry and Eric's future social standing.

Educated at Cheltenham College in Gloucestershire, Eric did not follow his father into the military but graduated as an engineer from the Royal School of Mines in London. Military service did not elude him and as an officer during the 19-18 war he acquitted himself well. Serving with the ill-fated British Expeditionary Force in both France and Belgium, followed by a post in the Claims Commission in the Intelligence Corps, he was mentioned in dispatches and awarded the *Légion d'Honneur* and *Croix de Guerre* by the French government. By the time he was demobbed in 1919 he had achieved the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and, although he would wear a soldier's uniform once again, now his way of life changed irrevocably. But he would always refer to himself as Colonel Sawyer. Having served in France he stayed on, perhaps like so many others, appreciating the aura of tolerance and lack of interference. With

an apartment in 15 Boulevard des Italiens in Paris, he was comfortably part of the cosmopolitan set of the city.

Almost every evening after a day at the bank, Barry and Eric would repair to the bars of the Ritz Hotel on the Place Vendôme in the 1st arrondissement. In the frenetic gaiety of post-war Paris of the early 1920s the Ritz bars were the place to see and be seen. They became the melting pot of the *demi-monde* and, as the playwright Noel Coward saw it, the *semi-monde* of the capital. The hotel itself had begun life in the seventeenth century as an aristocratic town house. In 1897 the architect Charles Mewès transformed the building for the hôtelier Cesar Ritz and, among other luxuries, it became the first in the world to have a bathroom for every bedroom. Over the years kings, sultans and aristocrats of society and the arts flocked to its all-embracing luxury.

Now those who jostled into Le Café Parisien through the side entrance on the rue Cambon were joined, and refreshed by, a vibrant new clientele. After the armistice of 1918 Paris was awash with soldier students who had served with the American Expeditionary Force. It was felt by their superior officers that to follow training in the arts in that most artistic of cities was to be encouraged and, after all, they were on the spot. The journalist O O McIntyre wrote in the *Rochester Evening Journal* of the cocktail hour when Americans headed for the Ritz bars where, using a baseball term, 'everything is as American as the seventh inning stretch'. Among the cosmopolitan crowd English was the common language. They came to drink champagne cocktails or dry martinis, some with a touch of absinthe, and socialise with other expatriate Americans and the cosmopolites of the city. Although the hotel housed several bars, accounts of the time seem to mention only the Petit Bar and the small paneled Ladies Bar, the *salon de correspondance* – for women weren't yet allowed in the other bars in spite of the sterling work many had accomplished during the war.

At this point in history it was felt the United States had firm links with France. In 1914, in a programme of aid unprecedented in history, socialites, bankers, merchants and young graduates of American ivy league universities had come together, turned their thoughts towards Europe, formed committees and began to pour money, equipment and themselves into the allied cause. The country felt indebted to France for the support the latter had provided during the American War of Independence to free itself from Britain. However, the American impresario Elisabeth Marbury would later remark dryly, 'The French did not ask for charity. France's friends did the asking while she was

worshipped for her grace in receiving.' But the links were strong, and the social attitudes of the French appealing. As far as the private lives of individuals were concerned, France was basically a nonjudgmental society. Both men and women found a haven in which they could liberate inclinations unacceptable in their homeland, for while homosexuality was simply illegal in Britain, in the United States it was classed as a 'clinical mental disorder'. France did not condemn those who, although they did not usually break the ties with their own countries, found here a refuge for their particular proclivities.

In 1926 Noel Coward wrote a play which he called *Ritz Bar* – the title being later changed to *Semi-Monde*. It is hard to understand now why it was considered so scandalous, for although the sexual preferences of the characters are fairly clear, they are subtly drawn. Only the theme of adultery is obvious, but in England the Lord Chamberlain, Rowland Baring, censored it, declaring the play immoral. 'I cannot agree', remarked Coward 'that it is within the province of the Lord Chamberlain, or of anybody else, to concern himself with what I happen to do with my thighs.' In fact *Semi-Monde* was not produced finally until 1977, which was probably due to the perceived value of the work and its need for a large cast, rather than its immorality.

But Coward knew his Ritz and its habitués well, and those who float through its lobbies and bars in *Semi-Monde* are surely true to life. Here like-minded people came together. 'You haven't', queries Marion to an acquaintance in the play, 'seen a dark little American girl with a sort of wood-violet face loitering, have you?'

Beverley Nichols in his poem 'Ladies of the Ritz' would describe a group of elderly women 'half dead and half alive' sinking into chairs in the grand salon until:

'Now from the shadows creep the stallions  
magnificently muscled and equipped  
dark-suited, double-breasted, heavy-lipped'.

For the clientele of the Ritz provided and received diverse services.

Both Barry and Eric, so different in background and character, felt very much at home among the cocktails, repartee and *flaneurs* of the Ritz Bar. Here they would meet useful acquaintances, make loyal friends and pick up certain information that would change the course of their lives. Already lovers, they would become life-long

partners, their relationship surviving the attention of many admirers and the vagaries of war.

Who did they see, greet and converse with as they relaxed over their cocktails in those early years of the 1920s? They would almost certainly have rubbed shoulders with the musician and song-writer Cole Porter and his wife Linda, arriving from their sumptuous apartment on the rue Monsieur; with Scott Fitzgerald; a still impecunious Ernest Hemingway; perhaps even with Rudolph Valentino and Charlie Chaplin, for the Ritz was their preferred hotel in Paris. Coco Chanel, who made it one of her homes for 30 years, would have walked the corridors as her own – and the voice of the outrageous American actress Tallulah Bankhead may have rung out from the Ladies Bar. Some habitués became life-long friends, as did Nichols and Coward, the latter having in common with Barry that they were both the sons of piano salesmen. It was here they first met another regular visitor, Somerset Maugham, who would soon play an important part in their lives.

In the early part of the 1920s, the couple were undecided what course their future would take, but an event at the Ritz would help to make the decision for them. Much credit must be paid to Georges, the barman, for creating an opportunity which would set the seal on any aspirations Barry and Eric may have had for the future. The short-lived Dawes Plan had recently been launched, proposed by Charles G. Dawes, an irascible vice-president of the United States. The plan was set up in 1924 to manage the reparation payments demanded from Germany after the war. The scheme involved a large loan from the US government to allow for foreign investment in Germany and stayed in effect until replaced by the Young plan in 1929. One evening Georges, seeing Barry alone in the bar, discreetly suggested he sit near two men who were obviously enjoying their cocktails and one of whom was talking loudly to the other. The discourse of the voluble gentleman, who seemed to have inside knowledge, was on the imminent investments which the Dawes Plan anticipated and the companies which were set to profit from these. This was an opportunity not to be missed, and Barry called Eric immediately. On being asked by him, 'How good is your information?' Barry's reply was, 'Straight from the horse's mouth'. They took advantage of this knowledge rapidly, placing their funds in some of those companies whose names had been so generously declaimed. The investments did well, quickly opening up opportunities and allowing them to plan their future together and begin to seek their fortune.

The south of France, the Midi, stretches down to the coast from the Alps in the north, from the Atlantic ocean in the west to the Italian border in the east. Although on the same land mass, in weather, atmosphere and lifestyle it is, in many ways, very different to the rest of France – virtually another country. Barry and Eric went south, to the Riviera. Having now decided they would spend their lives together, they began the search for land on which to build a house which was also to act as a showcase for Barry's architectural practice. There seem to have been three pre-requisites for the plot – the price of land; privacy so they could enjoy a lifestyle which would not, perhaps, be always acceptable to neighbours; and, above all, desire to be on the sea. So it was under the flame-red peaks of the Esterel mountains, above the indigo Mediterranean and eleven kilometres to the west of Cannes, that they built their future home.

They chose a piece of coast at Miramar near the village of Theoule, between La Napoule to the east and St. Raphael to the west. The plot they purchased in 1925 was isolated and no more than a rock face at l'Esquillon, a steep jagged cliff which swept from the hills above to the sea below. The land was situated below the coast road, the Corniche d'Or.

The small towns along this stretch of coast have much history. At St Raphael, with its remains of Roman villas, Napoleon Bonaparte landed in August 1799 after his Egyptian campaign and marched towards Paris and his eventual election as First Consul four months later.. Towards the end of the nineteenth century St Raphael became a popular coastal resort, particularly for artists and writers. It was in 1924 at the Villa Marie at Valescure on the outskirts of the town that Scott Fitzgerald wrote much of *The Great Gatsby*. Nearer Miramar itself is the village of Agay, with its deeply curved sandy bay, beloved of Guy de Maupassant and the author/aviator Antoine de St Exupery.

The Corniche d'Or road begins at the old Roman settlement of Fréjus, east of St Raphael and famous for its Roman arenas. From Fréjus the road continues on to Mandelieu, six kilometers before Cannes. This spectacular road, almost always in sight of the sea, runs parallel to the railway line which goes from Marseille to Italy, sometimes travelling under and sometimes over the road, using two imposing viaducts. The railway reached this stretch of the Riviera in 1863, but the corniche road was not built until forty years later, sponsored by the Touring Club de France and officially opened in 1903. Until that time access along the coast was by narrow, dusty, sometimes tortuous paths. The completion of the Corniche d'Or created a continuous stretch of

road along the Riviera. Those who now speed along this road to the coastal towns, drive between the beauty of the jagged red rocks rising on one side and the steep incline to the sea sparkling far below, while high above the rocks the scrubland maquis rises away into the hills.

At Theoule, the district of the Var is left behind and the Alpes Maritimes begin. The small stretch of coast which is Miramar comes under the auspices of Theoule. The latter has a natural harbour which was, in the fifth century, one of the most important ports on the coast. When trading there ceased, it became a simple fishing village before evolving into yet another coastal resort. La Napoule, further east again and once a small Roman station, as were so many others along the southern coast, had been favoured by rich visitors since the 1880s. Its ancient fortress was almost in ruins when it was bought by the American millionaire Henry Clews and his beloved wife Marie in 1917. Clews was an artist and sculptor and between them the couple recreated the ruin as a medieval chateau and there lived a fantastical life, often attired in the costume of the middle ages, among the gargoyle-like and semi-pornographic sculptures of its owner. In contrast Marie's white peacocks would wander frequently onto the nearby railway track and endanger the Train Bleu racing to its Riviera destination from Paris.

At the Hôtel des Bains at La Napoule in 1898, Oscar Wilde and the journalist and publisher Frank Harris ate a breakfast of little red mullet, beefsteak with apple sauce, cheese and a sweet omelette while discussing the relative merits of the male and female body. Wilde would spend several lethargic months at La Napoule admiring and consorting with the young fishermen on the port rather than applying himself to the writing Harris had hoped he would resume. From here he would continue on his weary, itinerant way until his death in Paris two years later. In 1899 Harris built a luxurious belle époque hotel, Le Cap Estel, on a peninsula below the village of Eze near Monte Carlo, which quickly lost money.

It is at La Napoule that the true romance and glitter of the Riviera begins, spreading east along the curving coastline towards the high altars of Cannes and Nice. In contrast, rising up behind the town are the hills of Tanneron where the mimosa trees grow like weeds and puff their evocative scent from their fluffy yellow flowers into the cool air of late winter.

Barry and Eric had come to a Provence which basked in a beauty 'born of the sun', as the novelist Alphonse Daudet felt, although he himself was rarely there. The massif of the Esterel mountains is of striking beauty from every angle, the volcanic rocks of

porphyry being a deep, rich red as opposed to the schiste and cristalline which make up the wooded Massif des Maures to the west. Dominated by Mont Vinaigre, the Esterels rise to 618 metres, with an overall span of around 19 kilometers before giving way to the grey limestone hills of the Alpes Maritimes which run up to the Italian border to the east. This is a rugged, harsh terrain with deep ravines above which the jagged flame-red peaks rise out of dense green pines and tower above vertiginous rock faces which plunge down into the sea. Vegetation consists of the maritime and parasol pines, eucalyptus, mimosa and cork oaks, these last two important for the local economy. The maquis, the shrubland, is dotted with wild thyme, lavender, broom and myrtle – home to scuttling lizards, small black scorpions and darting adders. In summer the heat which shimmers off the russet-coloured rocks seems to throb in time to the rasping of the cicadas, while the warm scent of the shrubland envelopes the hills. And sometimes, with the heat, come the fires.

A succession of civilisations and conflicts runs through the history of Provence. The region has been inhabited since prehistoric times. First came the Ligurians, followed by Greeks, Phoenicians and Romans. After the fall of Rome, Visigoths, Franks and Moors invaded this land where every Mediterranean race has left its footprint – not forgetting the marauding feet of barbarous pirates. Fear of the Moors and pirates drove the inhabitants of the coast to build the multitude of small towns and villages, bound round with defensive walls, which punctuate the landscape perched on their rocky outcrops above deep ravines. In the 18th and early 19th centuries the Esterel was the haunt of brigands. The dense undergrowth of the *maquis* was perfect cover for these outlaws, who descended on their prey travelling apprehensively on the only passable road through the hills. 'Should a parched traveller venture to pluck a bunch of grapes, it is well for him if this slight indiscretion does not bring on him blows of a cudgel, a stone, or a shot from the gun of the owner' wrote the geologist and botanist Henri de Saussure in 1859. But all that would change by the turn of the century. Far better roads were made through the hills and by 1905 the traveller S. Baring Gould could pronounce that, 'The Esterel may be traversed even more safely than Regent Street'.

It was below this wild region that Barry and Eric, with the help of Eric's mother, bought their 6,000 square metre peninsula, a couple of coves and a small beach of crushed red rocks accessible only by sea or by clambering down the cliff face. The sun-kissed summits of the mountains rose high into the sky above, while down below in the

deep blue of the Mediterranean the rocky inlets pushed their fingers towards the shore. Three rocks, surrounded by water, spread out from the base of the cliff like the prongs of a red, fossilised spearhead. They had found the name of their villa – Le Trident. The plot was as much of a challenge as any enterprising architect could wish for, and the home in which they would live for so many years never ceased to have the illusion of sitting, slightly precariously, on its small plateau preparing to hurl itself into the sea far below.

It is perhaps more on this part of the coast than any other, that the Mediterranean is all-pervading, varying its palette of blues and greens throughout the day to the inky blackness and soft swish of its tiny waves at night. But on occasion its mood can change, its colour become a sullen grey and its tide less waves grow angry and threatening. It is as well not to become too affected by its temperament. Barry and Eric were not. They had come to the Riviera to work, to become successful and sought after, and with great optimism prepared to do just that. But first they had to build a home for themselves.

'The worst has happened. I've BOUGHT THE LAND!!!!!! Only don't say a word to anyone. It's too thrilling.' So wrote Eric from Paris to his mother, Mary, in England. He went on to stress what a fine investment it was 'worth double in a year or two'. The land had cost 300,000 francs. Paying in instalments, he 'would benefit if the franc goes to pieces in the meanwhile'. This included the cost of a narrow approach road along the cliff. He finished by exclaiming: 'You will adore the place – it is a heavenly spot. Do say you approve'.

What is extraordinary about this letter is that Barry isn't mentioned. Perhaps this was from discretion – for Eric's father may have been ignorant of the relationship between the two men. Eric's enthusiasm obviously appealed to his mother, who undertook to contribute one-third of the price of the construction of the future house at Miramar, enabling Barry to leave for the south immediately. Eric would not move there permanently until 1927, two years later.

The great villas of the coast had to be equipped for entertaining in the new style. Salons had to be large and welcoming and, with the vogue for vacations in the heat of summer, dining on large candle-lit terraces became *de rigueur*. Barry, instantly in tune with Riviera life, understood this. He also felt that houses should now be designed to be cool. He and Eric became instrumental in encouraging outdoor living, suggesting that every new client should have a swimming pool, although it would be many years before

one was blasted out of the rocks at their own home. The constant ebb and flow of socialising from house to house was a way of life that only came to an end with World War Two. It was all, once more, as Edward VII had observed, 'like a constant garden party'.

It was imperative Barry's finished house should act as a showcase for his talents, a place so striking it would draw potential clients to first admire and then commission his designs. He needed to demonstrate his talent and in this he was shrewd and far-sighted. The villa would incorporate various architectural details which served as examples of his craft. He had finished his training in the neo-classical style of the Beaux-Arts school, and this influence was not abandoned. Although capable of the purest of designs, Barry would be nothing if not eclectic.

Winston Churchill wrote: 'We shape our dwellings and afterwards our dwellings shape us'. It was in this inter-war paradise that Barry was to establish himself as an architect. When permitted, he leaned towards a mixture of white modernism, simple and angular, flat-roofed but with a Moorish influence in arches and vaulted ceilings. He also admired the classical, in the form of Palladian-style windows, doors and balustrades. But, bowing to the demands of his clients', designs in the Vernacular style, such as round towers often enclosing staircases, were sometimes incorporated into buildings and topped with roman tiled roofs. It is most probable that if he had been allowed *carte blanche* there would have been many more stunningly designed 'white modernist' villas gracing the coast. His designs, on the occasions he was allowed free rein, are thought by many to be some of the jewels in the crown of Riviera architecture. But, for Barry, the client was always right.

Like other progressive architects, Barry had to contend not only with the problem of persuading the powerful mayors of the various communes to grant planning permission for designs with which they had little sympathy, but also the firm ideas and strong characters of his clients. To complicate matters further, an existing law forbade foreign architects to operate except under the auspices of a French practice. He and Eric would work mainly through four cooperative and respected Cannes-based architects, Marc-Pierre Rainault, François Arlac, Pierre Nouveau and Louis Cauvin. This situation continued until 1942 when the law was quashed, establishing a new *Ordre des Architectes* which allowed foreigners to practise, presumably to permit German architects to work in the country they hoped to govern far into the future. Barry's clients were usually American or British who, though delighted to be able to discuss

their aspirations with another English speaker, were extremely rich, much travelled and used to having their own way. The lives of these owners were often as dramatic and fascinating as any young architect from the American provinces could wish to encounter.

The entrance to Le Trident itself was dramatic. One opened a simple gate from a slip road off the Corniche d'Or at Miramar and descended around thirty curving steps to reach the house entrance, with its panelled double front door framed in stone and heavily nailed in the Provençal style. In front of the door was a stone mosaic of a spaniel, Eric's family crest. The door handle was in the shape of a sinuous sea creature in bronze, the keyhole underneath framed by the head of a sea nymph, flanked by two fishes. The door opened onto an upper floor of two double bedrooms (one of them Barry's), one single, a bathroom and a servant's room. Over the narrow bedroom corridor and the top of the stairs were Barry's exquisite arched and grooved ceilings. Starkly white, the contrast with the black tiled floor below was dramatic, while above the stair head a Moorish lamp hung from the centre of a star shaped vaulting.

Living quarters were on the lower floor along with Eric's bedroom and bathroom leading off the panelled dining room. Beside the office the couple would use for so many years, there was a library, a panelled dining room and a large and spacious salon with a fireplace of Arles stone and a white ribbed ceiling. It was all furnished in English style with books, comfortable sofas and armchairs. From here French windows opened onto a Moorish-style loggia fronted by three arches supported by columns. This dining terrace, the *salon d'été*, looked over the wide stretch of the Mediterranean, far below. Windows and French doors were neoclassical and paned, sometimes with arched frames. A small Venetian-style balcony and protective parapets sported spindle-shaped uprights. A little star-shaped pool was inserted into the curve of one of the terraces into which guests, in the spirit of the Trevi fountain in Rome, would fling coins in the hope they would return. In the future this act would gain a more than usual poignancy.

The flat-roofed solarium, mandatory for modernist villas, sported on the sea side a small arch housing a bell in the style of a Spanish mission. A tall, angular chimney stack was pure art deco. The whole house was rendered white, startling against its background of red rocks. In all it was a stylish rather than a grand house. The view was spectacular. To the east lay Cannes where, at night, a necklace of twinkling lights, like miniature diamonds, lit up the long promenade of the Croisette. To the west the vast expanse of sea was interrupted by the headland of Cap Roux. And, very rarely,

immediately ahead and with the right atmospheric conditions, one could just see the island of Corsica 170 kilometers distant.

A very long, rather tortuous, flight of narrow concrete steps was built below the house, winding their way steeply down the hillside before reaching the two secluded coves where the sea foamed around the fingers of rocks and guests could bathe far from prying eyes. Here too lived sea urchins clamped on the surrounding rocks and, in the deep, stinging jelly fish floated. A small price to be paid for the glory of the wide sweep of the Mediterranean which spread to the distant horizon.

When all was completed in 1927, they carved an emblem of a trident into the keystone above the front door. It was all an extraordinary achievement. Not only was it the first house Barry had ever designed, as it was situated precariously on a ledge on its steep and rocky cliff, Eric's engineering skills were vital in ensuring its foundations were sound. And from the following year when he came to the south for good they would always work together, with Barry as architect and Eric as business manager, surveyor and landscape designer.

Now Barry was awarded his first contract on the Riviera. On a peninsula forty-five kilometers to the east, and for an exacting master, he was commissioned to create La Mauresque.

The author Somerset Maugham wanted a new home.