



—Cedars photo, Monkmeyer; Gibran photo, Mrs. Alfred Walster Lawson
Gibran and the cedars of Lebanon—"Let there be spaces in your togetherness."

TALES OF A LEVANTINE GURU

by SHEILA TURNER

A lot of romantics are going to hate this, but they might as well know the truth: Kahlil Gibran is buried in a gift shop.

He lies in state, the coffin covered with plastic flowers, counters on either side selling souvenirs, in the old Mar-Sarkees monastery at Bsharri in the highlands of Lebanon. Meanwhile, his 20,000-word essay *The Prophet* has become Alfred A. Knopf's best seller of all time. This year the four millionth copy will pass over the counter.

Fewer than 2,000 copies were sold in 1923, the year Knopf brought out the first edition by the young Lebanese immigrant, whom he had met in a New York coffeehouse. The book began a heavy run after World War II. By the early Sixties it was starting to appear on best-seller lists at campus bookstores across the United States. Now words of *The Prophet* are replacing traditional biblical wisdom at hip public events, especially weddings:

Ay, you shall be together even in the
 silent memory of God.
 But let there be spaces in your
 togetherness,

And let the winds of the heavens dance
 between you.

—"Of Marriage," *The Prophet*.

I discovered Gibran in the Fifties, when *The Prophet* already had become a kind of underground bible. We would read it before taps every night at summer camp in the Michigan woods. To the girls in my cabin, Gibran's views on love, marriage, friendship, and other human conditions "between birth and death" seemed even more profound and relevant than those of Erich Fromm. In recent years, my worn copy of *The Prophet* has rested undisturbed on a high shelf next to Milton's *Paradise Lost*. But I dusted it off and reread it last fall before leaving on a trip for the Middle East. More than ever, I wanted to visit Bsharri, where Gibran was born in 1883 and spent his first eleven years.

On a Saturday afternoon in mid-October, I arranged to drive from Beirut up to Bsharri with a friend and U.N. official who spoke Spanish first and English second. We both had a smattering of French, and he was learning Arabic, so we felt confident of negotiating the journey. A few minutes into the mountains and one is light-

years from the elegant-slovenly Beirut. The mountains are eroded and barren, having been stripped of their cedars to build Solomon's temples, the ancient Egyptian navy, and, more recently, the Turkish empire's railroad cars. The cedar has become Lebanon's national symbol because of its reputed strength and endurance. More than a million acres recently were replanted with help from UNESCO, but the trees grow slowly and aren't big enough to be noticed yet.

We passed a monastery that blended into the gray cliffs as if nature had created it and the cliffs simultaneously. As home territory for the Maronite Christians, these mountains have numerous monasteries and shrines. The Maronites fled here in the fourth century to escape persecution by rival Christian sects, and their community endures to this day. Gibran's maternal grandfather was a Maronite priest.

After a two-hour drive up sharply winding roads, through tiny ivory and red villages, past gorges and waterfalls, my friend pulled over to the side and pointed down at an idyllic little town of red-tiled roofs and graceful church steeples rising from the floor of the narrow valley. "That's Bsharri," he said.

Bsharri has 4,000 residents, mostly farmers. As with most communities in the area, its harsh terrain is terraced for cultivation of vines, apples, and mulberries. Average cash income is about \$200 per year, which may explain why more Lebanese are living outside their own country than within.

Gibran's mother gave up on a drunken husband in 1894, gathering her four children and emigrating to Boston. Little of young Kahlil's life is known, except that he was a moody child, given to fits of rage and religious meditation. He also showed early talent as a painter and poet.

Later, he used visual images of Bsharri in his writing and talked of returning there to live, but he never made it. From New York, he wrote:

Would that I could gather your houses
 into my hand and like a sower scatter
 them in forest and meadow.

Would the valleys were your streets
 and the green paths your alleys, that
 you might seek one another through
 vineyards and come with the fragrance
 of the earth in your garments.

—"Of Houses," *The Prophet*.

Gibran went back to Beirut from Boston to complete high school, then on to Paris where he came under the influence of Nietzsche's ideas. He wrote a long poem, *Spirits Rebellious*, denouncing the Maronite Church's collaboration with Turkish rule of Lebanon. In Beirut, the poem was burned

in the market place, and Gibran was excommunicated and exiled. Five years later, however, he was forgiven.

At twenty-seven, after more years in Boston and Paris, Gibran settled in New York in a Greenwich Village studio at 51 W. 10th Street. He lived and worked there for twenty-two years until 1931, when he died of liver cancer at age forty-eight. During this time he produced *The Prophet*, nine other short books, and countless mystical paintings and drawings. Poetry circles led by Gibran were established in six cities, and countless admirers materialized, especially Syrian immigrants.

In Lebanon, his work went unnoticed until the people of Bsharri learned that Gibran had left them all future royalties from his books to be used for "civic betterment." At first the bequest didn't amount to much. Some was spent to bring his body home and to install it at Mar-Sarkees, the abandoned monastery at the edge of town that Gibran had wanted to buy for his studio. Some funds were used to set up a small museum in the center of town to house his paintings and personal belongings. Later the money grew, and some of it was used to run sporadic Gibran poetry festivals. Some was invested in real estate around Bsharri and Beirut. Some even filtered down to the poor.

Representatives from leading Bsharri families administered the Gibran fund without much conflict until royalties started to swell. With increased money came greater power and people began to push and shove to get on the committee.

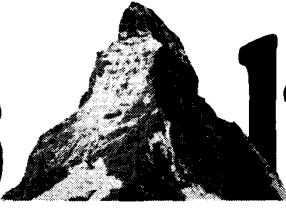
Gibran's only surviving sister, Mariana, still living in Boston, made her own bid when the copyright on *The Prophet* came up for renewal in 1947. She claimed future royalties should belong to her. The courts ruled against her, but the New York lawyer who had saved *The Prophet* for Bsharri felt he deserved 25 per cent of all future royalties as his fee. Some villagers felt the 25 per cent was a bit steep and called for a new committee and a new lawyer. Election results were disputed, and now Bsharri has two committees and two lawyers. Knopf is holding a hefty sum in a New York bank until the smoke clears and they can figure out who gets it. The Lebanese Minister of the Interior has been called in to set up peace talks. And an estimated half-million has been frittered away in fees for lawyers and executors.

Jim Sams of Washington, D.C., the latest lawyer to enter the case, estimates that of the nearly \$1.9-million in royalties since 1947, only \$364,000 has reached the village.

Bsharri looked peaceful enough in
(Continued on page 70)

SR MARCH 13, 1971

The
Swiss Alps
are 68,000,000 years old.
Switzerland is only 680.



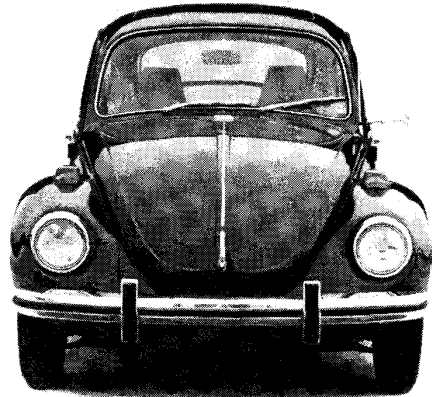
Just one reason
why everybody in our
country feels so young.



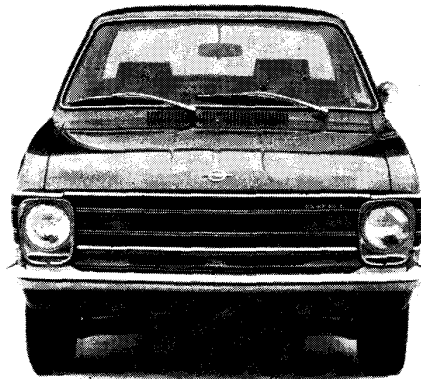
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NOW THAT AMERICA HAS ACCEPTED THE EUROPEAN IDEA OF THE SMALL CAR,



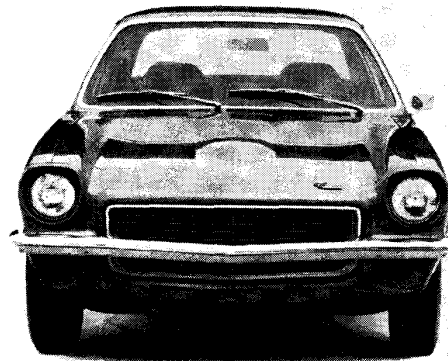
Volkswagen



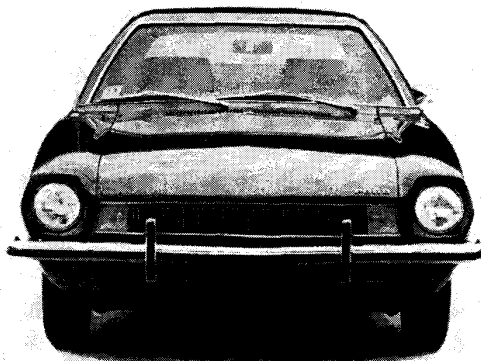
Opel



Toyota



Vega



Pinto



Renault

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO KNOW WHAT THE EUROPEANS' IDEA OF THE BEST SMALL CAR IS?

In America, one gets a somewhat distorted idea of who's who in small cars.

Most Americans assume that Volkswagen invented the small car. And that Volkswagen is the biggest selling small car in Europe, as well as America.

The truth is that both these assumptions are misconceptions.

To start with, Fiat invented the small car, way back in 1936.

(It was called the Topolino, which is Italian for "Little Mouse.")

And secondly, Fiat is the biggest selling car in Europe, where they've been buying small cars for three generations.

For every Volkswagen sold in Italy, eight Fiats are sold in Germany.

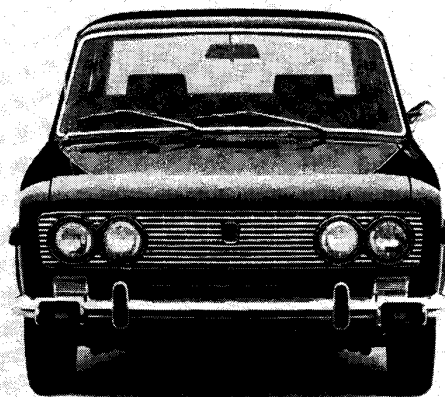
For every Renault sold in Italy, three Fiats are sold in France.

For every Volvo sold in Italy, nine Fiats are sold in Sweden.

You might well consider all this if you're thinking about sinking a couple of thousand dollars or so into a small car.

After all, when it comes to small cars, you can't fool a European.

FIAT



Fiat.
The biggest selling car
in Europe.

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France for Loving Couples: Nests Along the Loire

by CYNTHIA PROULX
and IAN KEOWN

The Val de Loire is the sweetest part of France. Its rivers—the Loire, Cher, Indre, and Vienne—set a meandering pace, and everything else follows suit. Here the kings and courtiers of France came to escape the rat race at Versailles, and here they staked out great hunting estates and erected vast châteaux (Chambord, for example, sits in a park larger than Paris). They thereby initiated a châteaux race, as each aristocrat built a more luxurious castle than his rival.

Now every bend along the Loire Valley brings you face to face with a château—unknown, perhaps, but imposing, aristocratic, and alluring nonetheless. This is the playground of kings, the garden of France. It rubs vines with Burgundy in the east, its principal river flows all the way to the Atlantic in the west, and to the north it touches the very fringes of Paris.

Chateau d'Artigny, Montbazou: A perfumer's nose is a sensitive thing, so when François Coty of the perfume firm built his dream house he commanded his architect to put the kitchens upstairs so that the cooking smells would pass over his head. His dream house is now a luxury hotel, his kitchens some of the most unusual bedrooms in France, his private crypt a discothèque.

The Château d'Artigny rises from a plateau, the Puy d'Artigny, above the River Indre, about seven miles south of Tours. From this perch, the château looks across a sweep of pastures, woods, and a zig and a zag of the Indre. In the distance, the big white building up on the hill between the trees is Tortinière, another château-hotel. Away to the left you can just see the château where the Duke and Duchess of Windsor were married oh those many seasons ago (see page 69).

Puy d'Artigny has been the site of a stronghold since the eleventh century, but the château, for all its

From A Guide to France for Loving Couples, a Vertex Book by Auerbach Publishers, Inc., Princeton, New Jersey.

grace and grandeur, is relatively young; it was built in the 1930s and converted into a hotel only six years ago.

The most romantic rooms are on the third floor. Room 45 is particularly dreamy. You lead your *amoureuse* up a little flight of stairs, down another, then up a private red-carpeted stairway to a room tucked under the eaves; there's a double bed at one end, and a porthole window looking directly down on a weir, an old mill, and a field of grazing cows.

If you can't get a room in the château itself, or in the Pavillon d'Ariane, you have two other choices. On your way up the drive you pass a gatehouse, the Pavillon d'Entrée, which has three guest rooms. Ask for the one on the first floor; it's like having a country cottage all to yourself. You can get room service down there, and it's almost as prompt as it is up at the château. The other possibility is Port Moulin, just down the road. This is a small country house with eight rooms, its own lawns and gardens, right where a stream rushes under a bridge into the Indre.

The dining room at d'Artigny is distinguished not only by its unique floor, but also by one star in the *Guide Michelin*. If you have trouble making up your mind and you want some advice, here's a possible feast: *mousse de homard au corail, coeur de charolais en croûte* or *noisettes d'agneau à la crème d'estragon*, a sampling of the local cheese of the Loire, and *feuilleté des poires au Bourguil* to top it all off. If you think the menu is expansive, wait until you see the wine list. The cellar at d'Artigny contains 40,000 bottles.

When you've settled into d'Artigny and stopped admiring the marble, what else is there to do? You could keep yourself occupied for several days without ever leaving the grounds. There's a heated swimming pool and two tennis courts. The management has marked out three walks through the forest: "Tranquil" (fifteen minutes), "Undulating" (twenty-five minutes), and "Sportive" (forty minutes); our favorite was "Undulating." The paths are lighted at night so you can go for a stroll after your *feuilleté des poires*, or

get a breath of fresh air after a romp in the château's discothèque, the Caveau d'Artigny, in the crypt where the perfumer planned to be buried.

When you do finally drag yourself away from the Puy d'Artigny for a few hours, all the glories of the Loire Valley are on your doorstep. The châteaux of Azay-le-Rideau, Loches, Chinon, Amboise, and Chenonceaux are less than an hour's drive away. If you're in the neighborhood in the middle of June, you're likely to catch Henry Ford II as he lifts off from the lawn at d'Artigny in his helicopter and beats the traffic to the auto races at Le Mans.

La Tortinière, Montbazou: Once upon a time, a young writer was standing on a hilltop drowsily gazing at the river when all of a sudden the plot for *The Sleeping Beauty* popped into his head. After Beauty got her kiss and the writer became famous, nothing much happened here until a rich and dreamy Frenchman took over the hilltop and built himself a *Belle-Epoque* manor house—complete with towers, a fairy-tale stone cottage, and a two-story stable wreathed in wisteria.

Now you can spend the night in any one of these three enchanted hideaways and dream your own dreams.

When you wake up, pad down to the foot of the garden for a swim in the River Indre. Or, if you feel like hooking yourself a fresh pike for lunch, the hotel will give you all the fishing gear you need, and the chef will do your catch proud with a superb sauce. Then maybe you'd like to take a horse for a canter by the riverside.

There's an excellent one-star dinner to be had in La Tortinière's cheerfully trellised restaurant. Salmon escaloped and duck with cherries are the specialties, but we recommend the chateaubriand with pâté and prunes (it sounded strange to us, too—but just try it). Then go and take in the late, late show at Chenonceaux or Chambord or Villandry.

These are among the grandest of France's *grands châteaux* in the Loire Valley. And La Tortinière sits right in the middle of them. Wherever you wander, you catch vast