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PICTURESQUE BRITTANY

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# PICTURESQUE BRITTANY

BY MRS. ARTHUR G. BELL

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR BY

ARTHUR G. BELL



LONDON: J. M. DENT & CO.

29 & 30 BEDFORD STREET, W.C.

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THE CATHEDRAL, QUIMPER.



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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE present volume is a record of a trip in Brittany, in 1905, of several weeks' duration, supplemented by a general account of the whole of the province, in the preparation of which the chief works consulted have been M. Gustave Geoffroy's recently-published and exhaustive *En Bretagne*; M. Anatole Le Braz's beautiful work, *Au Pays des Pardons*; Pierre Loti's *Pêcheur d'Islande*; Alexandre de Villiers' *Legendes du Pays de Carnac*, and the local literature of the various places visited.

NANCY BELL.

*Richmond, Surrey,  
May 1906.*

# PICTURESQUE BRITTANY

## CHAPTER I

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF BRITTANY AND THE BRETONS

It would be difficult to imagine a more deeply interesting subject from many a different point of view, than the ancient province of Brittany, which, through all the political vicissitudes of the country to which it geographically belongs, has retained its own individuality combined with the unmistakable impress of the remote past. True, there is at first sight something almost repellent in the sombre beauty of certain portions of its scenery, that require to be intimately known to be rightly appreciated, but once known they exert an even greater fascination than the more fertile districts. The physical configuration of Brittany is, indeed, in some respects unique, differing essentially from the rest of France, of which it forms a kind of advance-guard in the west, bidding defiance to the waves of the Atlantic. The storm-worn granitic rocks of the forbidding coast, tortured into a thousand fantastic shapes, the wild, hilly inland districts, with their foaming torrents, streams and rivulets, often broken into

picturesque cascades, the barren, wind-swept moors and heaths, with their ponds and marshes, present, indeed, a striking contrast to the gleaming chalk cliffs, broad rivers and fertile valleys of the more favoured Normandy. For all that, however, those who have the courage to penetrate into the remote and lonely fastnesses of the peninsula, and to put up with the primitive mode of life of its people, will be rewarded by the discovery of many a scene of romantic and haunting beauty, of which grandeur and pathos are the most distinctive characteristics. Moreover, and to the artist this is a very important peculiarity, the atmosphere of Brittany, especially on the seaboard, is exceptionally humid, ever laden with the salt spray of the ocean, that mingles with the fresh emanations of the soil, resulting in the production of constantly varying effects, of which the all-potent element of mystery is a frequent factor.

The peculiarities of the physiognomy and climate of Brittany are vividly reflected in her inhabitants, who have ever been a race apart, intermarrying, as a general rule, amongst themselves only, speaking their own language, now broken up into several dialects, and clinging with almost pathetic devotion to traditions and customs long since abandoned elsewhere. The descendants of the mixed Celtic and Kymric tribes of northern Gaul, collectively known as the Armorici or Dwellers by the Sea, their peculiarities were rather intensified than modified by the influx of settlers from Great Britain, that took place in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and won for their native

land the name of La Bretagne, whilst their subjection to the Franks in the ninth century was merely nominal. It was only after a fierce and bloody struggle that the Bretons acknowledged the suzerainty of the Norman Dukes; they had none of the devotion to their chiefs characteristic of feudal times elsewhere, and even the incorporation of their province with France in the sixteenth century, failed to amalgamate them in the slightest degree with the French.

The Bretons were allowed to keep their own local parliament, and really enjoyed to a certain extent the privileges of home rule, which was perhaps one of the reasons why they remained loyal to the Monarchy all through the Revolution, resisting the authority of the Republic long after opposition to it had been crushed out in the rest of France. Indeed, even at the present day the doctrine of liberty, equality and fraternity cannot be said to have taken root in Brittany; for, in spite of the sturdy independence of the people, they remain too intensely conservative to aspire to freedom of conscience. They consider no aliens equal to themselves, and are willing to fraternize with none but their own relations. They have, moreover, and this is really the keynote of their character, ever cherished an ineradicable belief in a power higher than themselves, whom they instinctively reverence, and to whose direct influence they trace every incident however trivial of their daily lives. The form assumed by that power has often varied, but the sense of

its omnipotence has remained the same, the Bretons having merely transferred to the Holy Family and the saints of Christianity the veneration formerly accorded to the heathen gods. Modern scepticism has, in fact, not yet stormed so much as the outworks of the Breton's child-like faith in the unseen, and nowhere have the innovations inaugurated by M. Combes been more vigorously resisted than in Brittany, where many men and women have quite recently proved themselves ready to die, rather than give up any of their cherished customs and traditions.

One of the most noteworthy results of this continuity of faithfulness to a single dominating idea, under many different forms, is that Brittany is exceptionally rich in relics reflecting the evolution of the religious belief of its people, from pre-historic monuments supposed to be contemporaneous with Stonehenge, to wayside calvaries and shrines, some of the latter being actually built on to the former, popular imagination having welded into one pagan and Christian legend. To the student of folk-lore, therefore, as well as to the archæologist, the historian and the artist, this land of many memories offers an inexhaustible field, and even at this late day startling surprises may still await the student who has the patience to unravel the tangled web of local tradition and to trace to their original source the various strands of which it is composed.

It must be remembered that it was, in the opinion of many scholars, amongst the glades and oak groves of the primæval forests of Brittany that was first evolved the

Arthurian romance that has exercised so great an influence over modern literature and art. King Arthur himself, the greater number of his knights, the mighty enchanter Merlin, and the fair Vivien who wrought his ruin, are all supposed to have been of Breton birth, and it was on an imaginary Breton MS. that Geoffrey of Monmouth founded the famous *Historia Britonum* in which King Arthur made his first appearance. Walter de Map too, the creator of the ideal knight, Sir Galahad—whose strength was as the strength of ten, because his heart was pure—was of Breton origin, and not so very long ago any presumptuous sceptic, who should have dared, in certain districts of Brittany, to scoff at the legend of the Holy Grail, would have been in danger of rough treatment at the hands of the natives. In fact, the Bretons still retain the poetic imagination of childhood, they live in an ideal world of their own, and are proud of the limitations which are counted to them by outsiders as a reproach. The onslaughts of up-to-date civilization make little or no impression upon them; reserved and silent, obstinate and impassive, implacable to their enemies, but unfalteringly loyal to their friends, they cling with unfailing affection to their ancient beliefs, turning a deaf ear to the blandishments of the reformer and innovator. With them it is the old that constantly presses out the new, not the new that obliterates the old, and to Brittany might have been specially addressed the pathetic lament of Victor Hugo over the whole of his native land:

"O débris ruines de France  
 Que notre amour en vain défend  
 Les jours de joies ou de souffrances  
 Vieux monuments d'un peuple enfant."

"The true Brittany, the Bretagne bretonnante," says the eloquent French historian Jules Michelet, "is the element of resistance in France, a country which has become alien to our own, exactly because it has remained too faithful to our original condition, so Gaulish that it can scarcely be called French; a land," he adds, "that would have broken free from us more than once, had we not held it firmly clenched and gripped as in a vice between four French towns, the strong and sturdy Nantes and St. Malo, Rennes and Brest."

It is of course to the rural districts and the peasantry that the foregoing remarks apply in their full force, for although certain of the older towns, notably Dinan, Lannion, Morlaix, Vannes, and Vitre retain in certain quarters much of the aroma of the past, the levelling machinery of modern municipal government is slowly eliminating individual character from the centres of population. Already in the eastern towns the inhabitants are more French than Breton, and it is only now and then that the old costumes are seen, or the rugged Celtic tongue is heard in the streets. The country people, however, shun the towns, and are conspicuous by their absence from the amusements organized by the civic authorities, though they troop in thousands to do honour



PLACE DES CORDELIERS, DINAN.

to the fête days of their many saints in the districts specially devoted to their cult, giving to the celebration of those important occasions, the significant name of pardons; for those who take part in the ceremonies connected with them win forgiveness for the sins of the past and indulgence for those of the future. At these pardons, several of which are described in the text, the true Bretons are seen at their best, and occasionally also, alas, at their worst; at their best when they kneel absorbed in prayer at the shrine of some saint whom they credit with the power of healing their sufferings and those of their dear ones, at their worst when they yield to their besetting sin of drink, and begin to run up a fresh score against the next time for wiping out the errors of the past. These pardons are indeed quite unlike any other fêtes, and are still exactly what they were two centuries ago. They have been well defined as feasts of the soul, for they are penetrated with deep religious feeling, and those who take part in them are in touch for a time at least with the spiritual world, no matter how material may be the object of their veneration, or how trivial the outward expression of their devotion.

To realize fully the significance of a Breton pardon, an intimate acquaintance with the customs of the country is required, and it has even been said that none but the sons and daughters of the soil can hope to understand them. Particulars of the most noteworthy of these singular ceremonies the great Pardons of St. Ives, Notre Dame de tout

Remède, St. Jean du Doigt, St. Anne de la Palude, and St. Anne d'Auray, to all of which the faithful flock from great distances, are given in the text; but in addition to the great centres of devotion, every village church, indeed every site once occupied by a chapel or a shrine, has its own particular pardon, for the Bretons do not estimate the power of a saint by the size or grandeur of his or her sanctuary, but cling with unwavering affection to the traditional scenes of past miracles of healing.

If not so much as a single stone remains to mark the spot sacred to the memory of some beloved saint, the people of the neighbourhood will still repair to worship at it on the appointed day, and all the year round it will be visited by pilgrims, who seek some special benefit for themselves, or are deputed to carry messages for those unable to go to the shrines in person. It is, in fact, impossible to over-estimate the importance in the life of the true Breton of the pardon of his parish, for from his earliest childhood, it is associated with the most solemn moments of his existence. As an infant, he is carried by his mother to the church or shrine, which is the point of departure of the procession; as soon as he can walk, he is allowed to take part in the latter, and he tramps happily along with his playfellows of the village, never owing to weariness, however long the pilgrimage; and when he is old enough, he competes eagerly for the honour of carrying one of the banners. It is often at a pardon that he falls in love with his *douce*, as he poetically calls his sweetheart, and it is generally at the

dance in the open air that follows the completion of the religious duties of the day, that the final words are spoken binding him to her, for weal or woe, for life. It is at the next pardon after their betrothal, that the affianced pair win a blessing on their union, and it is at a pardon that they return thanks for the birth of their first child. The sailor or fisherman who has attended a pardon on the eve of a voyage, feels secure from the perils of the deep; it is at a pardon that the peasant prays for the fertility of his little holding. To the women of Brittany the annual ceremony is the one event of the year, the dress to be worn at it occupies the thoughts of the young for months beforehand, and large sums are often expended on it; whilst to the old it is a time sacred to memories of the past, when the spirits of those that are gone seem to be present once more, and the days of their own girlhood are recalled, when to them, as to their grandchildren of to-day, all things seemed possible.

The division of Brittany into the five departments of the Côtes du Nord, Finistère, Morbihan, Loire Inférieure and Ile et Vilaine is, of course, a purely arbitrary one, but, for all that, each has certain characteristics of its own. The Côtes du Nord, for instance, is the most productive from an agricultural point of view, for the inland valleys are rich in grain, and the seaboard districts in a great variety of fruits, whilst the coast has many sheltered harbours for the fishing fleet. Finistère, whence France still draws her best sailors,—once the head-quarters of the wreckers, who

used to entice vessels on to the rocks and return thanks at pardons for a rich harvest of spoil from the sea,—is the most wildly picturesque and also the richest in mineral wealth, owning large silver and lead mines. Morbihan supports numerous herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, yet shares with the Côtes du Nord the profits of the sardine fisheries, that after a temporary decline are now as great as ever. Loire Inférieure, with the river after which it is named cutting it in two, is the best watered district and grows vines as well as quantities of cereals, and Ile et Vilaine is noted for its fine breed of oxen, its prolific orchards and its extensive manufactures of linen and woollen fabrics.

The entire coast of Brittany is protected by a double circlet of rocks, reefs, islands and islets, about which at high tide the waves wildly toss and moan, in their persistent but fruitless efforts to pass the bounds assigned to them, so that access to the sea is both difficult and dangerous. This is, however, in a great measure atoned for by the romantic beauty of the scenery that meets the eye at every turn: rugged promontories crowned with lighthouses that at night illuminate the darkness with throbbing flashes of many-coloured light, alternating with perpendicular cliffs, riddled with caves running far inland and only accessible at low tide, which have been the scene of many a smuggling adventure, many a wrecker's crime. Here and there, however, are sheltered coves and bays, with beaches of sand and shingle, the playground all the

year round of the children of the fisher-folk and for a few brief weeks in the summer the haunts of fashionable crowds from inland, who have come to enjoy the sea breezes and bathing.

Between the Bay of Mont St. Michel and Cape Fréhel such favoured spots abound, but beyond the latter landmark, the Bay of St. Brieuc bristles with forbidding reefs, though here and there the flat surfaces of huge sentinel-like blocks of granite are clothed with scanty herbage, on which browse flocks of sheep. Near Portrieux, Bréhec, Tréguier and other seaboard towns huge boulders strew the shore and crop up above the surf, but as Roscoff, opposite to the charming Isle de Batz, a veritable enchanted offspring of the sea, is approached, tragic grandeur gives place to homely beauty. The coast line thence to the most westerly point of Northern Brittany, with the island of Ouessant as an outpost, is comparatively tame, and beyond that comes the sheltered roadstead of Brest, with the peninsula of Crozon protecting it on the south, its only entrance being the narrow channel of Le Goulet, where no enemy's craft could escape destruction, so strong are the natural and artificial defences.

The Harbour of Brest is succeeded by the Bay of Douarnenez, with the Cape de la Chevre on the north and the Pointe du Raz on the south, the latter dominating a specially dangerous stretch of coast, protected by two lighthouses, one on the Isle de Sein, the other on a

solitary rock. The rest of the western shores of Brittany are as wild as those of the north ; but after the Pointe de Penmarch, forming the southern boundary of the Bay of Audierne, is rounded, the whole aspect of the scenery changes. Except here and there—notably at the entrance to the Bay of Morbihan, that is almost a lake, so shut in is it by rocky islands—there are but few more natural ramparts ; plantations of pines reaching to the water's edge, break the continuity of the barren cliffs, the climate becomes milder, and the stern characteristics of Brittany are gradually merged in the less aggressive ones of its southerly neighbour La Vendée.

The border districts of Isle et Vilaine share to a great extent the peculiarities of Normandy, but as the traveller advances westward, first one and then another distinctively Breton feature arrests the attention. The open fields and pastures of Normandy, where the cattle graze untended, are replaced by holdings of varying dimensions, enclosed within hedges or round walls, each group of cows or sheep, sometimes each animal, having its own herd, who is never off guard, but with unwearying patience remains in the same spot from sunrise to sunset. Here and there dense woods, the relics of the mighty forests that once covered the whole of Armorica, alternate with cultivated clearings, or with orchards that, in the ethereal beauty of their masses of delicate bloom, contrast in the spring with the blaze of golden glory of the broom and gorse of the neighbouring heaths. In the lonely farms that,

though well built of stone, contrast very unfavourably in comfort with the spacious homesteads of Normandy the most primitive modes of agriculture still prevail—mechanical aids to human toil are looked upon askance, and, though reaping and thrashing machines have recently been introduced in certain parts of Brittany, the hand sickle and flail are still everywhere preferred. Interference with long-established custom is even now fraught with great difficulty in Brittany, and in certain parts any tampering with nature, such as systematic draining, dyke making, or reclaiming land from the sea, is looked upon as little short of a crime, likely to bring down on the offenders the wrath of *Le bon Dieu*, who alone, in the opinion of a Breton peasant, has the right to control the distribution of land and water. It is only of late years that it has been possible to induce the natives to work at the sea-walls, that are so essential a protection to the coast, and some even now seem to fear that they are imperilling their souls by their compliance. No bribes will persuade them to forego attendance at a pardon, however urgent may be the need of their services. The fact that a spring tide is due, that may undo the work of months and cost the Government thousands of francs, is nothing to them in comparison with their religious duties, and when the half-finished wall is washed away they will only shake their heads and remark that they knew *Le bon Dieu* would reclaim His own.

Education, nominally compulsory in Brittany as in the rest of France, is sadly neglected in certain districts, and the

most trivial excuses for non-attendance at school are readily accepted. In the summer the children are wanted to lead the cows to pasture, to help in the harvest field, or in collecting the seaweed left by the tide; in the winter the roads are too bad for walking, or the little ones are ailing. The parents, in fact, are altogether against the education of their children, the boys have no desire to be different from their fathers, and the girls think their mothers' methods quite good enough for them, so that things remain much the same from generation to generation. Not until the education laws are really enforced will this be altered, and in the enforcement of those laws much tact is needed where the love of the past is so strong as it is in Brittany. Only by slow degrees will the Bretons learn to recognize the value of any knowledge but that inherited from their forefathers, and if success in promoting higher education is to attend the efforts of the Government it will be necessary for them to conciliate the feelings of the people in a way that has not recently been their practice. In endeavouring to undermine the religious faith of the Bretons, the authorities have struck a fatal blow at their own influence, by making resistance to them appear a sacred duty. Time, and time alone, can heal the wounds that have been so ruthlessly inflicted, and restore to the sufferers for conscience' sake the confidence in their rulers which is the only true safeguard of a state.



OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF ST. MALO.

## CHAPTER II

### ST. MALO AND ITS DEPENDENCIES

THAT, except in cases of disaster, all sea voyages are very much alike is a generally accepted dictum, but it is certainly not true with regard to the trip between Southampton and St. Malo, in which, in spite of the number of times we have successfully achieved it, we have always found a certain element of variety. On our way to Brittany in July 1905, that element was supplied by the fact, that in spite of the great beauty of the sunset as we steamed out of the harbour of Southampton, a dense fog set in as we left the Needles behind us, so that the sounding every two minutes of our fog-horn, echoed by that of another boat close at hand, formed a weird and melancholy accompaniment to the other sounds of the night. Our progress became ever slower and slower, until at midnight we came to an actual halt, and it was not until three o'clock a.m. that we were able to proceed, with the inevitable result that when we did come in sight of St. Malo the tide was out and we were compelled to anchor in the offing. Presently two tugs appeared to take off the passengers, amongst whom there was no little excite-

ment at the unusual proceedings. Some were eager to be the first to embark, others anxious to wait till some of the crowds had dispersed ; whilst all were much exercised at the inevitable separation from their hand-baggage, for even the hardest travellers shrank from the ordeal of carrying their belongings from the causeway to the Custom House in the great heat. We, however, with somewhat reckless indifference to consequences, allowed all our luggage to start for shore independently of ourselves—glad to be quit of it—and we remained on board till the last, turning the delay to account by having a good look at the cargo of carrier-pigeons we had brought over with us. We had watched the embarkation of the beautiful creatures the evening before, noted the care with which the crates containing them were handled, and their wonderful contentment with their cramped quarters. A sailor, seeing our interest in them, came up and volunteered the information that greater numbers were sent across every year, no less than 80,000 this last season. They are taken to Rennes or some other inland town, he told us, and there let fly. With unerring instinct they make at once for their own homes, nothing daunting or confusing them but a fog, which, he added, "worries even the best of us sailors." Strange to say, however, instead of losing themselves when a fog comes on they simply fly back to St. Malo, and there hundreds of them are captured and kept by the French, though each has its owner's name and address on a label under one of its



OYSTER BEDS, CANCALE.

wings. We asked how the competition was managed, and the man said it was simple enough: "All the birds from one district are let fly together, and the one who gets home first wins the prize. Heaps of good money changes hands each time," he concluded, "for bets for very large sums are laid on the birds."

Our interest in the pigeons nearly led to our missing the last chance of landing, but we just managed to jump into the tug as it was starting on its final trip, and as we approached the shore we noticed a boat full of luggage being rowed in the direction of our steamer. "Is not that the boat that took our things off?" I said, receiving the severe reply that there were more boats than one at St. Malo, a snub I generously refrained from referring to again later in the day when my suggestion was proved to have been right. We landed happily at the seaward end of the long Passerelle des Bés, as the causeway is called, and enjoyed the walk up it to the Porte des Champs-Vauverts, with the beautiful bay stretching away on either side and the grey old ramparts frowning down upon it as of yore. Our light-heartedness was, however, of short duration, for when we reached the Custom House we found that our luggage had not yet arrived, nor could any one tell us what had become of it. I remembered that returning boat, but held my peace! We were, of course, compelled to remain where we were till our property turned up, though we had intended to push on at once for Cancale. It was not until late in the day that

the mystery was solved. It was, it appeared, against the rule to land baggage anywhere but at the Custom House stage, and it had, therefore, all been sent back to the steamer to wait for high tide, a very characteristic instance of the indifference of French officials to delay and inconvenience caused to travellers.

There was nothing for it but resignation, and we spent the day in visiting our old haunts, noting but few alterations, though here and there some novel inscription, such as "High Life Tailor" or "Tea at all times" caught our eyes, significant of the increasing *entente cordiale* between France and England. We passed the Church of St. Sauveur and marvelled afresh at its strange construction, with the steps going down to the nave, which is level with the choir, observed with satisfaction a group of kneeling nuns, for we had feared that element of the picturesque had been finally eliminated, and rejoiced to find that the fine bells—the consecration of which we had witnessed ten years before—had been calling the faithful to worship ever since. From the church we strolled to the gardens under the shadow of the grim bastions, where crowds of children were playing as of old, the girls in the plaid dresses and short socks, the boys in the sailor suits copied from the English some fifty years ago, the nurses in caps with long ribbon streamers, the old women in black sitting in rows knitting and talking, the gardeners hard at work potting out plants in ornate designs that they traced first with their fingers—J. C. for Jacques Cartier, whose fête

day was approaching, occurring at every turn. Then we strolled round the ramparts and on to the beach, where we watched the fashionable bathers whose vagaries were as amusing as ever, winding up our peregrinations by going to the square near the Hôtel Continental to recall an incident over which we have had many a hearty laugh.

The wide space opposite the popular café was deserted now, but not so one beautiful evening many years ago, when, as we were passing by, we were attracted by a large crowd gathered about the bronze statue of a soldier on a pedestal, at which every one was gazing in evident admiration. We elbowed our way close to the figure, and my husband exclaimed, "What a marvellous piece of realistic work! I don't think I ever saw anything quite so good before. Just look at the life and vigour of the pose, at the exact imitation of every detail; why, each hair of the moustache is distinct, and the very textures of the different parts of the costume are accurately rendered. Perhaps impressionists would cavil at it and say it is not art, but the man who could do that could do anything. I wish I knew who the sculptor is, but there's no signature. The only drawback is that it is not life-size, it would have been better a bit bigger." So delighted, indeed, were we that we remained a long time looking at the statue, overhearing many shrewd remarks from the bystanders. An Italian boy with images for sale observed in his own language that he had nothing half so good in his stock, and a conscript said he knew the original: "Pierre Dampier it

is, home on leave; I passed him in the street the other day, it is a capital likeness." To which an officer replied, "Ah oui, but for all that it is not so good as a girl they had here last week, a lovely brunette in the old Breton costume, the cap was a perfect marvel, and she was holding back her skirt just as women do, you know; why, you could almost see the swaying of her body as she settled into the pose!"

We moved away at last, but we had not gone far before we resolved to have just one more look. This time somehow we did not admire the statue quite so much, and my husband said, "After all it is done on the wrong principle altogether; you don't want exact imitation, you know." The words were hardly out of his mouth before their truth was proved, for suddenly the statue gave a great yawn, stamped one foot, threw out his arms with a gesture of immense relief, and jumped down amongst the crowd, who greeted him with roars of laughter. We felt decidedly crestfallen as we realized how completely we had been taken in, and I said, "I suppose the girl they were talking of was real too?" To which an Englishman standing near replied, "Yes, she was a professional model who kept it up much longer than this fellow did, quite a Galatea awaiting her Pygmalion, in fact. The proprietor of the café has a keen eye to the main chance and is always hitting on some clever device for attracting custom."

Although it can scarcely be said that St. Malo lends itself readily to pictorial treatment, there is a sombre



A TRAINING SHIP AT ST MALO.

beauty about the grey old town rising up in lonely grandeur from the little islet on which it is built. It is at high tide, when it is crowded with shipping, that the harbour presents its most picturesque appearance, but the city itself with all its surroundings is seen at its best when, at certain times in the spring and autumn, the long stretches of sand encircling its foundations are laid bare for miles, their surface dashed with gleaming patches of iridescent colour and dotted here and there with low rocks overgrown with golden green seaweed. The ancient stronghold then resembles some magician's castle set down in an enchanted land, whilst the fisher folk in their quaintly picturesque costumes, gathering up the spoil left by the tide, and the children at their play, seem for the nonce the inhabitants of another and a happier world than that of every day. Then, too, the islet of Grand Bé, often completely submerged, stands out distinctly against the sky, crowned by the simple but impressive tomb of one of Brittany's greatest sons, the versatile and eloquent but fickle Chateaubriand, whose writings link French thought of the eighteenth to that of the nineteenth century.

Ambitious for his country rather than for himself, consistent through all his inconsistency, Chateaubriand was a type of the transition time in which he lived, yet he was from first to last a Breton to the backbone. This choice of a resting-place within sight of his native town, with the waves, whose voice had been familiar to him from the first, to sing for him a constant requiem, is significant of

his deep love for his home, and also of the fact that he valued far more the appreciation of his fellow townsfolk than all the fame his writings brought him.

The interior of St. Malo shares the melancholy inseparable from all fortified places, but for all that it is full of picturesque features. The cathedral, with its tapering spire and beautiful early Gothic choir, seems to brood protectingly over the narrow streets, which are packed closely together within the restricted limits of the ramparts, and at every turn some relic of the long ago, or house sacred to the memory of some hero of the past arrests the attention. At No. 15 Rue des Juifs Chateaubriand was born, in the Hôtel de France he spent his boyhood; Jacques Cartier, Duguay-Trouin, Maupertius, Alain Porée, Mahé de la Bourdonnais, Broussais and Surcouf, all first saw the light in St. Malo, and the houses, or the sites of the houses, they occupied can still be identified. The Great Gateway, through which Du Guesclin entered in triumph when he took possession of the town, is still the main entrance; whilst the Porte St. Vincent and the Castle with the Tower bearing the significant inscription,

Qui qu'en grogne  
ainsi sera,  
C'est mon bon plaisir,

remain what they were when the latter was erected in defiance of ecclesiastical authority by the beloved Duchess Anne of Brittany, who is to this day the idol of the people.

Corresponding with the narrow ridge of land connecting St. Malo with the mainland is another strip of territory, at the extremity of which rises the modern town of St. Servan, reached by a cleverly-constructed *pont roulant*, or rolling bridge, on which the authorities greatly pride themselves, though its appearance is rather quaint than beautiful. St. Servan, occupying the sight of the ancient city of Aleth, all trace of which is lost, was at first a mere suburb of St. Malo, but is now a thriving watering-place numbering some 13,000 inhabitants. Its only picturesque features are, however, the so-called Tours du Solidor, commanding the entrance to the Rance, and it is now rivalled as a fashionable watering-place by Paramé, with its large colony of English residents, situated about three-quarters of a mile from St. Malo on the east.

Little is known of the early history of St. Malo, but the first inhabitant of its site is supposed to have been the holy hermit St. Aaron who, in the sixth or seventh century, withdrew to the dense forest with which it was then covered. There he was presently joined by another hermit, some say of Welsh, others of Breton, origin, who was fleeing from the persecutions of the heathen, and whose name is variously given as Maclaw, Maclonius and Malo. Kindly received, the fugitive remained with St. Aaron till the death of the latter, whom he buried with his own hands, making a vow that he would some day raise to him a suitable monument. Left alone Malo soon resolved to return to the world, and after many wonderful

experiences, for his fascinating personality everywhere won converts to the true faith, he found himself in a position to keep his promise. He was made Bishop of Aleth, and one of his first acts after his consecration was to found a monastery on St. Aaron's islet to which Bishop Jean de la Grille gave the name of St. Malo in 1144. The Vieux Rocher, as the Malouians fondly call their sea-girt home, grew in prosperity; as time went on its merchants and sailors became celebrated far beyond the confines of Brittany, arousing the jealousy even of the English who habitually spoke of St. Malo as the Town of the Pirates, a nickname justified, it is to be feared, by the doings of the *troupes légères de la Mer* or privateers fitted out in it. Twice in the seventeenth century the British Fleet bombarded St. Malo without result, the sturdy little city continued to bid defiance to all its enemies, reaching the zenith of its prosperity in the first decades of the eighteenth century, when the East India Company founded in it was able to lend thirty millions of francs to the State. During the Revolution the prosperity of the Vieux Rocher began to decline, but it has since revived, and though the *Cité des Corsaires* has lost much of its prestige, the Government of France still greatly values the fort as commanding the English Channel, and has recently spent a large sum of money in adding yet another basin to the harbour.

Within easy reach of St. Malo on the other side of the Rance, a picturesque river navigable for fifteen miles at high tide, are the fashionable bathing-places of Dinard, St.

Enogat, St. Lunaire, St. Briac, and St. Jacut, that have sprung up round about the fishing hamlets scattered along the coast. They have nothing specially attractive about them, for the numerous villas are alike pretentious and ugly, but the scenes the various beaches present when the pleasure-seeking and fishing seasons are at their height are often full of charm. Then well-dressed crowds gather about the sturdy toilers of the deep as they bring in the gleaming harvest of the sea, or prepare to launch their boats for a new venture, whilst bare-legged children from inland towns, rejoicing in their unwonted freedom from the restrictions of convention, ape the ways of the native shrimpers and shell-fish gatherers. For a time at least class distinctions seem to be forgotten, in the general recognition of the truth that God's fresh air and sunshine are the common heritage of rich and poor.

### CHAPTER III

CANCALE, MONT ST. MICHEL, DOL, AND DINAN

OF the Breton fishing villages on the coast of St. Malo, the most important and picturesque is Cancale, occupying the site of the long submerged town of Porspican, and perched upon the cliffs on the western extremity of the beautiful Bay of Mont St. Michel, within sight of the grand abbey which has been the goal of so many pilgrimages.

Approached from Paramé by a road that winds through fields and gardens, the appearance of Cancale is very impressive, with the long perspective of the Grande Rue leading abruptly down to the Port de la Houle, where congregate the grey houses of the fisher-folk, clustering closely together along the quays and the alleys leading to them.

Ever full of inspiration to the artist, Cancale has already been the subject of many fine paintings, but it cannot yet be said to have become hackneyed, so ever varied are its atmospheric effects, and so full of poetry and pathos the lives of its people, who depend entirely upon the various

fisheries for their daily bread, but accept the hard conditions of their lot with cheerful patience.

The wide bay is specially fascinating at low tide when the sands are laid bare for miles, and groups of oyster cultivators, chiefly old women and girls, are hard at work at the uncovered *parc aux huîtres*, as the sea-gardens are called where the oysters are planted after they are brought in by the dredgers, whilst in the distance the seaweed gatherers and shell-fish gleaners are bending over their toil, or tramping wearily homewards laden with their spoil.

We were fortunate in arriving at Cancale on the eve of the beautiful and touching ceremony of the blessing of the boats, and we were able to watch the preparations for the great event in which the whole population took part with eager zeal. It was very touching to note the simple means by which a really fine result was achieved. The French have, indeed, a perfect genius for decoration, and under the deft fingers of the Cancalese, old packing-cases and barrels, marbled paper and greenery, grew into beautiful *reposoirs* and calvaries, that were connected by long avenues of flags and branches of trees planted in the ground, whilst a final touch of impressiveness was given to the whole scene by the draping of the houses with white sheets.

As the tide came slowly in on the morning of the fête, hundreds of boats dressed with flags, and with all sails set, gathered about the pier from which the benediction was to be given, and we took up a good position in the Grande

Rue from which to watch the passing of the procession to and from the church. It was, indeed, a beautiful sight, the most distinctive feature of which was a large white boat on wheels, full of little sailors in red and white uniforms, and as the long line of priests and acolytes, followed by the bishop bearing the Host, passed between the waiting crowds, women flung rose leaves before them, and nearly all the spectators fell on their knees.

At each *reposoir* a short service was held, heralded by the firing of cannon and ringing of bells, but the culminating moment was, of course, that when the officiating clergy gathered at the end of the pier for the final ceremony. We followed the streams of people, eager to secure a good point of view, and I rushed to what I thought an excellent vantage ground, which I was surprised to find unoccupied: a narrow planking at the very edge of the beach, from which I could see everything perfectly well. I looked round for my husband, who had lingered behind, and as I did so a hand suddenly tapped my shoulder, whilst a stern voice cried, "Make haste to get out of the way, I am going to fire!" I was standing exactly opposite the mouth of a cannon, and when I moved hastily aside there was a roar of laughter from the bystanders. The next moment the roar of the big gun reverberated, and the rubbish from it flew into the sea, a man beside me observing laconically, "There might the head of madame also have been." In my agitation at my escape I almost missed the Benediction after all, but I soon recovered

composure, and shall never forget the exquisite beauty of the scene as the bishop, his tall figure clearly outlined against the sky, as he stood at the top of a long flight of steps with his attendant priests kneeling behind him, and the waiting boats grouped below, pronounced the solemn words that meant so much to his audience, securing, as they believed, protection to the fishermen for the coming year from the perils of the deep.

As the sound of the bell preluding the blessing pealed forth, all but a few groups of the expectant multitudes reverently knelt, their bowed heads looking like a field of wheat over which a strong wind is passing, with a background of sun-lit sky, and for some minutes after the last words were spoken there was a silence that might be felt. Soon, however, the tension was relieved, and the inevitable reaction set in. The bishop had scarcely left the pier, before the procession broke up, those who had taken part in it aiding the spectators in tearing down the decorations, forming, as they did so, many a charming picture, their brightly-coloured costumes contrasting with the sombre garb of the rest of the crowd. The long day ended in happy merry-making on the beach, old and young dancing together round huge bonfires made of the trees that had been used for the avenues of greenery, and early the next morning, the blessed fleet having vanished in the night, the grey village resumed its wonted and somewhat melancholy aspect.

We remained long enough at Cancale to realize how

strenuous is the daily life of its people and how vain the hope of its hotel-keepers that it will ever become a fashionable seaside resort. It was with reluctance that we finally tore ourselves away, to renew acquaintance with Mont St. Michel that we had known in the good old days before the causeway was built, when every one who arrived at the gates in the primitive diligence, felt a sense of relief at having safely performed the perilous journey across the shifting sands. How well we remembered the handsome, dignified, old guard, a retired soldier, who used to take charge of the coach, marching solemnly in front of the horses and making mysterious signs to the driver as to the track he was to follow, occasionally perhaps winking at him as he played successfully upon the credulity of the passengers. The more frightened they were, the bigger the tip they would give to the man who had safely led them over, and no one ever made a good livelihood more easily than that diplomatic guide before engineering enterprise improved him away.

Of course every one now travels to Mont St. Michel by the prosaic tram, that has finally removed the last touch of romance from the approach; but it is still possible for those who would realize to the full the exquisite beauty of the situation of the island to go to it by sailing-boat from Cancale, as my husband and a brother artist once did many years ago. A certain pilot, who by the way, though now very old and infirm, is still living at Cancale, had been ordered to investigate the shifting sands at the

base of the Mount, and offered to take them with him for a consideration. They gladly consented, and though they made a bad start, the pilot having run the boat against the pier and broken the bowsprit, which rather shook their confidence in him, they thoroughly enjoyed the outward trip. Their escort proved a good helmsman after all, and guided his frail bark deftly amongst the quicksands, chatting the while about his previous experiences. A beautiful mirage so deceived the passengers that they could hardly believe they had not really passed palm-clad islets and groups of fairy-like shipping on their way to what looked like an enchanted land. The return voyage, however, was a very different matter, the pilot had lingered so long at his favourite inn, that the sun was setting before they embarked, and though they started with wind and tide in their favour, they were suddenly becalmed when they had done but a third of the distance to Cancale.

There was nothing for it but to row, and as none of the party had brought food, they soon became exhausted. All their efforts seemed of no avail, and the brother artist could think of nothing more cheering to do than to sing a French version of "Little Billee" for the benefit of the skipper. Fortunately, a brisk breeze got up with the dawn, and they did get safely back in the end; but it is not much wonder that having heard this story I declined to trust myself to the tender mercies of a Cancalese boatman. We went to the Mount by the overland route, and once safely through the ancient gateway, we found

it, after all, but little changed. We succeeded in securing rooms high up on the ramparts, from which we had a grand view of the whole of the bay, and were far away from all the noises of the town, so that we might almost have been in a desert island, so complete, and at times even so oppressive, was the utter silence around us.

Crowned in remote times by a temple dedicated to Jupiter, that probably replaced a Druidic monument, Mont St. Michel, which is proudly claimed as their own by Normans and Bretons alike, has ever been a sacred spot, endeared by many memories to the successive inhabitants of the mainland. The group of buildings now occupying the Mount date, of course, from many different periods, yet with the houses of the modern town, that are perched like the nests of sea-birds upon every available ledge or wedged between the old fortifications, they present a most homogeneous appearance, their surroundings varying greatly according to the state of the tide and the time of year, so that they supply endless subjects for the artist. Three picturesque gateways, one within the other, give access to the precincts of the famous stronghold, to which a single narrow and extremely steep street leads up. Roughly speaking the Mount may be divided into three parts, the inhabited portion, the Castle, and the Abbey, which have both been well restored, the Chapel containing the shrine of the archangel, dominating the whole.

Founded early in the eighth century by St. Aubert,



LOGIS DU ROI AND TOURELLE DU GUET, MONT ST. MICHEL.

Bishop of Avranches, who used often to go to the Mount to pray in solitude, the Benedictine Abbey of Mont St. Michel quickly became a harbour of refuge to fugitives from religious persecution, and has ever since been intimately associated with the history of Normandy and Brittany. The rumour of the miracles performed at the tomb of the titular saint attracted pilgrims from far and near—even ruling monarchs, including St. Louis, Louis XI and Francis I of France, going to it occasionally to pray for the success of their arms. Gradually the humble buildings of the original monastery were supplemented by others of a more ornate description, one pilgrim after another bestowing costly gifts upon it, its prosperity culminating in the sixteenth century, when it owned the neighbouring islet of Tombelaine and the Chausey Isles with parts of Jersey and Guernsey.

Mont St. Michel was again and again besieged by the English in vain, and during the Hundred Years' War it was the one bit of Normandy that never fell into their hands. In 1459 Louis XI founded the famous military order of St. Michael, the appropriate motto of which was *Immensi Tremor Oceani*; and for more than half-a-century it seemed probable that the stronghold would for ever defy the decline that inevitably succeeds exceptional prosperity. Presently however the abbots ceased to reside on the Mount, the usual results of absenteeism ensued, and in the religious wars of the sixteenth century the monastery fell into the hands of the Protestants, who with iconoclastic

zeal destroyed many of its most precious heirlooms. In the seventeenth century a brief revival resulted from the installation of the Benedictines of the Congregation of St. Maur on the historic Mount, but the abbey never again played any important part in political or ecclesiastical history. It will ever, however, remain a monument of deep human interest, so vividly do its many vicissitudes reflect the varying fortunes of the Church in northern France, and so beautiful is it still in its restored grandeur, in spite of the inevitable loss of the pathos so long characteristic of its ruins. Nothing can give it back its old supremacy; but now and then, especially on the day of the fête of St. Michael, it seems to become once more an active factor in the life of the people. Then, as the long procession of ecclesiastics in their gorgeous vestments wend their way down the flights of steps leading from the shrine, to make their circuit of the ramparts, and the sweet voices of the choristers echo from the vaulted passages of the cloisters, the present is linked anew to the past, and the rocky isle becomes again a centre of spiritual devotion.

As at Cancale, the resident population of Mont St. Michel consists almost entirely of fisher-folk and inn-keepers, the latter reaping a rich harvest from the many visitors to the famous site; whilst the work of the former is exceptionally arduous. A thorough knowledge of the tides is necessary to avert disaster, so sudden are the changes that take place at certain seasons of the year; but accidents rarely occur and there is little real hardship, the

fishermen finding a ready market for everything they bring to the town, and the women and children also earning a good deal by the sale of the shell-fish that is plentiful along the shore.

Nearly the whole of the coast districts between Cancale and St. Malo have been reclaimed from the sea—fertile fields now replacing salt marshes, from amongst which rises up a solitary granite rock, long sacred to Druidic worship, but now crowned by a fifteenth-century church and the modern village of Mont Dol, not far from which is yet another eloquent witness of the triumph of Christianity over heathenism, in the form of a menhir, thirty feet high, surmounted by a crucifix.

The town of Dol, a few miles from the village of the same name, once a thriving commercial place, the subject of eloquent eulogies by Victor Hugo, Mérimée, and other French authors, has long since been deserted by fashion, and contains little of interest except a few quaint old gabled houses, and the fine Early Gothic cathedral dedicated to St. Samson, who is said to have brought a party of fellow-countrymen from Wales to settle on its site in obedience to instructions from an angel. It is very different with Dinan, in which the past still triumphs over the present, in spite of the growth of a large modern settlement without the walls. The best way to go to it is by the little steamer that plies up and down the Rance in the summer at high tide. The river winds between high banks dotted with bright-looking little châteaux, and the

effect of the ancient city as it gradually comes into sight is very fine. Its massive walls and towers, the tapering spires of its churches, and its grey, red-roofed houses, many of them encroaching on the ramparts, combine to give an impression of massive strength and homely beauty that is full of charm. The one incongruous detail is the huge modern viaduct, spanning the valley, that contrasts anything but favourably with the low stone Norman bridge a little further up-stream, that for centuries met all the requirements of the traffic, and harmonizes well with the creeper-clad houses on the quay, amongst which are a few that were built long before such a thing as a steamer was thought of.

The passengers make their way into the town by the Rue de l'Apport, leading to the ancient Rue de Jersual, the latter entered through a massive archway, from the centre of which hangs a quaint lantern, beneath an image of the Blessed Virgin. Recently greatly improved from a sanitary point of view, the old street is still one of the most picturesque in Dinan, and the inhabitants of the quaint houses, many of which retain traces of more prosperous days gone by, cling to the primitive ways of their predecessors with really touching devotion. From one of the low dark rooms, for instance, on what is literally the ground floor of a many-storeyed tenement, for Mother Earth is the sole material on which the furniture rests, comes the monotonous whirr of a handloom and the whizz of a shuttle; from another the bark of a dog, who is working



RUE DE JERSUAL, DINAN.

the bellows of a forge by running round and round in a big wheel, mingles with the clash of the blacksmith's hammer on the red-hot iron, whilst here and there on the doorsteps outside sit old women plying their spinning wheels and distaffs, pausing often to exchange gossip with the neighbours who have toiled up the hill to fetch water from the pump. In the better houses in this street of many memories live the bedmakers, who separate and beat their materials in the open air; the basketmakers, for whose wares there is always a brisk demand owing to the fact that French housewives do their own marketing; and the washerwomen, who make many a charming picture as they bend over their ironing at the open windows draped with creepers. Steep as the old Rue is, its inhabitants think nothing of going up and down it at full speed, and it is no unusual thing for women past eighty to charge up it with heavy loads on their backs, such as a couple of mattresses or a basket of linen.

In the rest of Dinan, as in the Rue de Jersual, conservatism is the rule, progress the exception. Ten years ago we lived for some months in the Place des Cordeliers, where we had rooms commanding a view of the pump of the quartier, close to the entrance to the college for boys and at the foot of the street leading to the Church of St. Sauveur. We might have left the town but yesterday, so few were the changes we noted as we explored our old haunts, often passing by the way the shop with the name of Lucas Malet still in evidence, that may possibly have suggested the *nom de*

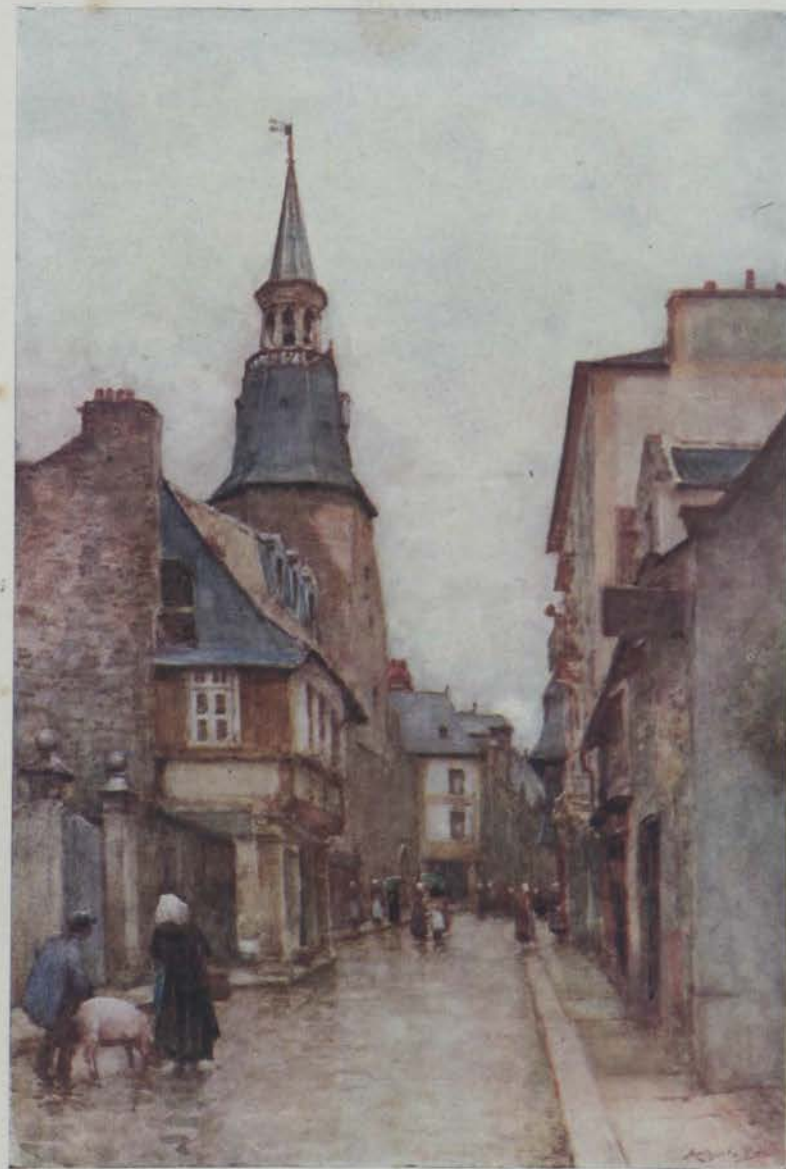
*plume* of Kingsley's famous daughter. The ancient houses, with the projecting first storeys upheld by massive beams, showed no further signs of decay; the women, seated at their fruit-and-vegetable stalls in the arcades beneath, might have been the very same with whom I used to bargain long ago, and the black-robed, rope-girdled nuns who bear their Lord literally upon their hearts, the crucifix being fastened across their breasts, still hurry to and fro on their errands of mercy, in spite of the persecution to which they are subjected. At early morn and dewy eve the country-women still bring in their milk in small hand-carts, not dreaming of time-saving co-operation; the same stringent rules are still in force with regard to the water supply, which must only be taken away in vessels that can be carried in the hand, and must not be used to cleanse the streets. All day long women and children pass to and from the pumps, gathering in charming groups as they wait their turn, or pause, buckets in hand, to watch a troop of soldiers, a funeral, or a procession of school-boys go down the street. Those happy boys! How their presence still brightens up the town as they troop merrily along to the inspiriting strains of their band, gentlemen's and peasants' sons all dressed alike, in smart blue uniforms and gold-laced caps, all evidently full of true *esprit de corps*, and, best of all, all equal in the sight of those who have charge of them.

From what we had heard of the efforts in France of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, we had

hoped to find an improvement in the treatment of the cattle in the Thursday market at Dinan, but, alas, we were doomed to disappointment. The general effect of the animated scene in the wide open space adjoining the picturesque Place du Guesclin, was as striking as ever, and an added touch of dignity was given to the latter by the fine new equestrian statue of the hero after which it is named; but the absolute indifference of buyers and sellers to the sufferings of the living merchandise was not one whit less than of yore. Hundreds of milch cows were tethered to rings in the low wall of the square, their calves lying beside them with their feet all tied tightly together, the poor little creatures keeping up a continuous moaning as they vainly tried to ease their painful positions. We learnt on inquiry that bye-laws had been passed some years before forbidding this and other cruel practices on pain of a fine, but no fine had ever been enforced, so that the law remains a dead letter. It was certainly neither pleasant nor profitable to linger in the market, but we found it difficult to get away from the cowherds, who were as eager to impress on us the superiority of their cattle as if we were likely to buy them. One pretty maiden was very anxious that I should become the owner of a little calf of hers. I could have it for a very few francs, and I chatted with her for a time in the hope of dropping a seed of compassion into her young heart, but it was of no use. "The legs of the calves were always tied," she said: "it was the only way to keep them quiet."

As a matter of course, we often strolled to the ramparts to look down from the English garden on to the valley of the Rance ; or made the circuit of the walls and gazed up at the gloomy donjon, now used as a prison, in one of the rooms of which the Duchess Anne de Bretagne often listened to mass from a stone seat in a niche with a narrow window above the chapel, or climbed the spiral staircase to watch for the home-coming of those she loved. I liked too to linger near the entrance to the hospital on the way to the Porte St. Louis, still so fine a feature of the town, for beautiful and touching scenes were often to be witnessed there at the hours for receiving and dismissing patients. I remember especially, for instance, seeing a peasant father and mother fetch away their son, a handsome lad of about sixteen, whom they were evidently taking home to die. They had but a rough hand-cart which they pushed and dragged between them, but they had filled it with branches of trees and pillows, against which the invalid lay back, his pale face contrasting vividly with the brilliant green of the foliage. He was evidently suffering terribly, but he never failed to respond with a smile to the cheery words of his escort, who were still apparently full of hope.

Although strictly speaking the churches of Dinan cannot be called beautiful, there is something very fine about the restored portal of St. Sauveur, and there are several noteworthy details of decoration in the parish church of St. Malo, including a quaint carving of a devil upholding a



RUE DE L'HORLOGE, DINAN.

bénitier, that is full of grim humour. Moreover, both places of worship are always full, as are all the churches of Brittany, of deep psychological interest, for they are still harbours of refuge to the poor and suffering, and not a day passes without the occurrence in them of some incident significant of the strong hold religion has on the people. I made a point of going to High Mass at St. Sauveur, and was struck by the reverent demeanour of the large congregation, for there was none of the whispering or staring about I had so often noticed with regret in Normandy. It seemed as if persecution had intensified devotion, and I was especially struck with the ready response to the many demands for alms as the service proceeded. Even after it was over many worshippers remained long in prayer as the organ pealed forth, and I noted particularly one truly beautiful old woman, who appeared to be simply wrapt away from earth as she gazed up into the roof, her noble features framed in a lofty snow-white cap, and her wrinkled hands folded across her breast.

I often lingered for hours in St. Malo to watch the worshippers who came in and out, and I was present at many baptisms, marriages, and funerals, the last of which were often full of solemn grandeur, though none made a more lasting impression on me than the humblest of them all, which I shall certainly never forget. It was that of a new-born child whose father carried the tiny coffin under one arm, and with the other supported the poor young mother, who was so overwhelmed with grief that she could

not see her way, but stumbled as she walked; only a single priest and a single acolyte to conduct the service, but the little procession seemed to breathe forth anguish as it moved slowly along, and I wished I had the right to follow it to the grave to whisper hope for the future to the bereaved parents.

There are many charming spots within reach of Dinan, that are hallowed by memories of historical or human interest. Within an easy walk or drive is the ruined château of La Garaye, that was converted into a hospital by the last owners, the hero and heroine of Mrs. Norton's touching poem, and that is now looked after by a young peasant woman who lives in an old farmstead hard-by, and evidently wonders what her visitors find to admire in the tumble-down old house, which is, in her opinion, very inferior to her own. The paths leading to the château are overgrown with weeds, a clumsy cider-press worked by oxen occupies the entrance courtyard, and pigs and poultry grub unhindered amongst the cabbages that replace the beautiful garden in which the countess delighted. In spite of all this desecration, however, there remains a sentiment about the place which sometimes, especially in the autumn gloaming, seems haunted by the spirit of the sufferer who did so much to relieve the pain of others.

Less pathetic are the associations of another ruined château near Dinan, that of Lehon, to which in olden times newly-married couples used to go on Whit-Monday, to break a pole against the coat-of-arms on the wall of the

adjoining monastery, of which part of the church is all that now remains. The quaint ceremony was called *courir la quintaine*, and when it was over the pilgrims were presented to the Superior of the Convent, in whose presence and that of the Seneschal of the castle, the bride had to dance to the accompaniment of bagpipes, singing the refrain—

“Si je suis mariée, vous le savez bien,  
Si je suis mal à l'aise, vous n'en savez rien,  
Ma chanson est dite, je ne vous dois plus rien.”

The proceedings ended by the bride making a deep obeisance to the Prior, or, as some say, kissing him on the brow, in token that in spite of her defiant speech she still recognized the deference due to him.

Admirers of the stern Breton patriot Lamennais, who was born at St. Malo in 1782, and whose chequered career vividly reflected the troubles of his time, should not fail to go to La Chesnaie, about seven miles from Dinan, where he lived for many years, and was often visited by Lacordaire, Montalembert, De Guérin and other kindred spirits. He left his Breton home in 1836 to take his share in the political upheaval in Paris and never returned, for he died in the capital in 1854, leaving instructions that his body should be interred in the common burial-ground, presenting in this strange request a marked contrast to his fellow-townsmen Chateaubriand, whose unique resting-place has already been described, though possibly a similar motive may have inspired them both.

## CHAPTER IV

### SOME INTERESTING VILLAGES AND TOWNS WEST OF ST. MALO

ON leaving Dinan we decided to make Morlaix our next head-quarters, but for all that we did not neglect the intervening country, which is rich in picturesque towns and villages, though none of them are quite as finely situated as the ancient citadel on the Rance. Sixteen miles from St. Malo, for instance, is the little settlement of St. Cast, perched on a height dominating the Baie de la Frénaie, near to which took place in 1758 a battle between the French and English, in which the latter are said to have been defeated, a fact commemorated by a granite column surmounted by a group of sculpture and representing the British lion pulled down by a bloodhound. It was in this fight that the touching incident is supposed to have occurred, commemorated in a quaint old ballad, when some of the Welsh and Breton soldiers suddenly fraternized. Advancing to the attack, a company of the former struck up their national air, that was echoed from the Breton ranks by a refrain exactly the same. Both sides halted, their officers' orders to fire were unheeded, and

when there was no longer any doubt of the strange coincidence the newly-found Celtic brothers flung down their weapons, to renew upon the battlefield the friendship that had bound their ancestors together. Can this have been the victory of the French bloodhound over the English lion?

Upon the beautiful beach of the Anse de St. Cast were flung no less than seventy-five of the bodies of the victims of the disaster to the *Hilda* of December 1905, amongst whom were several English residents from Paramé and Dinard as well as many onion-sellers from Roscoff and St. Pol de Leon, so that the place is full of tragic memories alike to the English and the French. The whole coast between St. Malo and the Bay of St. Brieuc has, in fact, a sinister fame, though it is difficult to realize in the bright summer sunshine how stern and forbidding is its aspect at other times. Its most noteworthy feature is Cape Fréhel, with its fine electric lighthouse, the centre of a galaxy of lesser illuminations, which at night convert the boulder-strewn beach and archipelago of rocky islets into a perfect fairyland of beauty, their scintillating signals being answered by those of the distant Bréhat and Minquier islands, near to which, alas! so many gallant vessels have met their doom. Not far from Cape Fréhel, on the west rises the ruined fort of La Latte, that successfully resisted a siege by the English in 1490, was occupied by the Royalists during the memorable Hundred Days, and, until it fell into decay, was a very typical example of old Breton

fortresses ; whilst some little distance inland are the towns of Broons and Lamballe.

Broons, set down in the midst of the woods that extend north-westwards from Isle et Vilaine, is chiefly celebrated as the birthplace of Bertrand du Guesclin, whose memory is still greatly venerated in northern Brittany, whilst Lamballe owes its enduring fame to its having been the early home of the unfortunate Princesse de Lamballe, who remained faithful to her royal mistress Marie Antoinette to the end, and met a terrible fate at the hands of the Parisian mob in 1793. In spite, however, of its tragic associations, Lamballe is a bright little town with many interesting relics of the past, such as several remarkable old houses, including that in which the executioner lived during the Revolution, and two very fine churches : Notre Dame, with a beautiful Romanesque doorway, and St. Martin, with a triple Gothic, nave and a curious overhanging porch above which is inscribed—

“L'an mil cinq cent dix-neuf  
Jean l'ainé me fit tout neuf.”

On the main road between Lamballe and St. Brieuc is the little hamlet of Yffiniac where the sea penetrates further inland than at any other point of the Côtes du Nord, and from which a view is obtained of surpassing grandeur, of the whole of the far-stretching bay, the coastline of which is broken only by two deep indentations—the estuaries of the Gouesnou and the Urne.

In spite of its favoured position, perched as it is on twin

heights above the Gouet rivulet a mile from the English Channel, St. Brieuc, that was the scene of the fierce final struggle between the Royalist Chouans and the Republican Bleus at the end of the eighteenth century, now retains very little of interest except the restored thirteenth to fifteenth century cathedral, the ruined Tour de Cesson built in 1395, and a few of the ancient houses that originally clustered round a monastery, founded in the fifteenth century by a missionary from Ireland after whom the town is named. St. Brieuc may, however, be made the point of departure of a very fascinating walk along the coast that, if an occasional detour inland be indulged in, will reveal a very striking contrast between the ephemeral population of the mushroom settlements that have sprung up wherever a sheltered beach affords facilities for bathing, and the natives of the country, who live in their secluded hamlets within sound of the sea, but rarely have any intercourse with their fashionable neighbours. The high road may be crowded with hired vehicles taking passengers to and from the hotels, casinos, and villas that have sprung up on every vantage ground, but in the shady *chemins cruex*, as the deep alleys in the woods are called, may be met peasant men and women who speak nothing but Breton, look askance at every stranger, and venerate the dolmens and menhirs near their lonely homes almost as much as the images in their churches.

The first fishing villages passed after leaving St. Brieuc are Pordec and Binic, beyond which come Etables and

Portrieux, the latter quite an important port, where on the Sunday after the first spring-tide, all the boats of the bay meet for a benediction service before starting for the deep-sea fisheries, always a deeply touching sight, when it is borne in mind that every year some at least of the stalwart mariners, who go forth full of life and hope, are doomed never to return.

Between Portrieux and Plouha every variety of picturesque coast scenery is to be enjoyed, and not far from the fashionable settlement of St. Quay, are the quaint little village of Kertugal, the well-preserved château of Pomorio, and the chapel of Kerigal, all still much what they were hundreds of years ago.

Plouha itself, the harbour of refuge of many English nobles after the death of Charles I, has now little to recommend it, except its commanding position, several hundred feet above the sea, but on an open space near by, where fairs are held, is the ancient chapel of Kermaria, with remains of mural paintings, and an outside gallery from which decrees of arrest used to be proclaimed.

It is perhaps at Paimpol, the scene of Pierre Loti's beautiful but tragic romance, *Le Pêcheur d'Islande*, that the human interest of this portion of the coast may be said to culminate, for the hard conditions that saddened the lives of his hero and heroine still prevail in it, and melancholy still seems to brood over the grey stone houses, huddled closely together on the sombre square and in the narrow streets, that though they have for centuries

resisted the fury of the elements, show many traces of the fierceness of the struggle. Here, as when the fair maiden Gaud watched in vain for her dilatory lover, the sinister name of the *Islande* that snatched him from her after but six days of wedded happiness, is met with at every turn; women and girls still frequent the little church, or kneel at the calvary at the cross roads, to pray for the return of the absent, or to mourn for those whom they will see no more; and once a year the dreary place is brightened for a time by the home coming of the fleet, succeeded by the joyful ceremony of the pardon of the fishermen, that does, however, but accentuate the anguish of the bereaved.

An excursion may easily be made from Paimpol to the Island of Bréhat, which has quite a good harbour, where large vessels can take refuge in bad weather. The lonely place, strange to say, presents a very different appearance from its nearest neighbour on the mainland, though its people also depend entirely for their livelihood on the deep-sea fisheries. They are light-hearted and glad to welcome strangers, there is none of the crushing poverty which is so depressing at Paimpol, and the well-cultivated fields and scattered homesteads give a general impression of brightness.

Within a few miles of Paimpol are several interesting seaboard villages and towns, notably Kérité, with the beautiful ruins of a fine Early Gothic abbey church; Pontrieux, built at the foot of a hill, and cut in two by the river Trieux, with an all but land-locked port that is very

picturesque when the tide is in ; Lanvollen, worth seeing on market day when the peasant farmers from far and near bring in their grain for sale, near to which are the much-discussed ruins of the so-called Temple of Lanleff, supposed by some to be of heathen, others of Christian origin, the balance of evidence being in favour of its having been founded by the Templars, locally known as the *moines rouges*. Hard-by the ruins is a little inn, that is a good place for seeing the true Bretons at their ease, for it is much frequented by peasants, who meet there to drink cider and chat together, sometimes winding up the evening with a dance in the open air, in which even old women join, taking off their sabots and footing it merrily as they hold each other's hands.

Lézardrieux—on the estuary of the Trieux, which is here spanned by a fine suspension bridge, though not quite so well situated, or so full of romantic associations as Paimpol—is beautiful when the harbour is full of fishing smacks. It has a quaint old church with a good belfry, and from it a trip of half-an-hour by boat may be made to the Castle of La Roche Gagu, on an islet in mid stream.

On the line between Lamballe and Guingamp is the little village of Chateaulédrun, all that is now left of a large town that was swallowed up by a flood in 1773, but which is worth a passing notice on account of its quaint old church with fifteenth-century mural paintings, and a sixteenth-century reredos, and also because its women still

wear the ornate caps of embroidered net that have been in use for many hundred years.

Guingamp itself, once a strongly fortified city, is now a dull and sleepy place, with little of interest except its thirteenth- to fifteenth-century church, and a fine eighteenth-century fountain. Once a year, however, on the first Sunday in July, it wakes up to fervid religious life, when the pardon of Notre Dame de Bon Secours is held, and pilgrims flock from long distances to worship in the church, do homage to the gorgeously-attired virgin that dominates the fountain, drink the waters which are supposed to have miraculous healing powers, and share in the merry-making which is here, as it were, interspersed with the religious ceremonies, instead of being reserved, as elsewhere, till they are over. The actual procession, which is an integral part of every pardon in Brittany, does not take place until after sunset, and an added touch of poetic mystery is given to it, by the lighting of bonfires in the square and the principal streets. The long day of excitement ends in a grand midnight mass, that is always a most impressive sight, in spite of the fact that many who intended to take part in it, have generally succumbed to the effects of too much cider before it begins.

Near to Guingamp are several interesting memorials of the long ago, such as the remains of the Abbey of Sainte Croix, now used as a farm, the Flamboyant Chapel of Notre Dames des Graces, the Château of Carnalet, with gardens designed by Le Nôtre, and the little village of St.

Nicholas, to which, according to Gustav Geoffroy, sufferers from certain complaints go to eat the slugs they pick out from between the cracks of the stones of its calvary.

Tréguier, the birthplace of Ernest Renan, the well-known author of the *Vie de Jésus*, and the last resting-place of the famous lawyer of the poor, the beloved St. Ives, who is buried in the cathedral, is a far more interesting place than either Guingamp or St. Brieuc. It is picturesquely built in the form of an amphitheatre on a hill above the point where the Jaudy and Guindy meet to form the Tréguier, and commands a grand view of the English Channel, whilst its harbour is full of suggestive subjects when the boats are coming in or going out with the tide. Long the seat of a bishopric, Tréguier, though its early glory has departed, still retains something of an ecclesiastical appearance, its noble Gothic cathedral, founded in 1339, completely dominating the town. It rises up with its three towers and tapering spire, from a magnificent group of cloisters—the most extensive and best preserved in Brittany—that fill the whole space between the transepts and the choir. It was in them, or rather perhaps in those that preceded them, for they are of considerably later date than the Cathedral, that the more important miracles of St. Ives are said to have been performed, and for this reason they are much revered by his many devotees, who, however, really associate his memory far more with the site of a little *minihiy* or oratory, that was dedicated to him, near the Château of Kermartin, where

he is said to have been born, than with the grand building that owns his tomb, or even with the modern church that has risen up in his honour near the former sanctuary. True, in the cemetery of that church is an ancient tomb resembling an altar, locally known as the Table of St. Ives, beneath which the faithful creep on their knees, convinced that the prayers they offer up as they do so will be answered, but the numbers who perform this ceremony are nothing to the continuous stream of pilgrims who go to pray where St. Ives le Veredique, as they call him, for his word was never known to fail, first won the affection of his fellow villagers.

In his deeply interesting book, *Au Pays des Pardons*, a true psychological masterpiece, M. Anatole le Braz gives very special prominence to the cult of St. Ives, the love for whom he says is still an abiding influence throughout the whole of northern Brittany. Whatever foundation of truth there may be in the many legends related of the eloquent lawyer, there is little doubt that he really lived, and by his gratuitous aid saved many a penniless client from injustice. To the Breton peasant he is still the incorruptible advocate, ever ready to plead the cause of the oppressed with the Supreme Judge; his pardon, that takes place on the 19th of May, is essentially the pardon of the poor, and on its eve hundreds of pilgrims are gratuitously entertained by the well-to-do of the neighbourhood of his sanctuary, where the giving of alms and feeding the hungry are still looked upon as sacred duties, in spite of the new

law against mendicity, which is practically a dead letter. During the whole of the week in which the fête occurs, those who take part in it claim the right of making their way across private property, and terrible are the punishments St. Ives is credited with having meted out to farmers who have objected to the treading down of their crops. In a word, the Lawyer of the Poor is a real power in the land; there is scarcely a humble home in Tréguier, or for miles round, that does not own some rough representation of him, and even the most heretical of the local authorities refrain from interfering unnecessarily with his clients during the week specially devoted to him.

The country between Tréguier and Lannion is full of romantic charm, and though the latter town has little to recommend it, except its wide square surrounded with venerable houses, it is situated in the very heart of the district sacred to the memory of King Arthur and his knights, whilst north of it, off the coast, is the rocky islet of Avalon or Agalon, which is one of the seven spots said to have been the ideal knight's last resting-place.

On the left bank of the Guier, on which Lannion is built, is the quaint old church of Kermaria au Draon, with a noteworthy circular-headed portal, and higher up-stream are several interesting historic buildings such as the Châteaux of Coëtfrec and Kergrist and the Castle of Tonquedec, the latter one of the best preserved mediæval strongholds of Brittany. The little village of Brevelenez, perched on a hill near Lannion, is also worth seeing—the calvary

ossuary, church and chapels of St. Pierre and St. Roch forming an imposing architectural group.

Beautiful as is the coast-line between St. Brieuc and Paimpol, it is surpassed in wild grandeur by that further west, more particularly near Perros-Guirec, a picturesque cliff-village north of Lannion, with a good port, often a scene of great activity, and a quaint old church, remarkable for its grotesque decorative sculptures, that occupies the site of a monastery, founded in the sixth century by St. Guirec, an Irish missionary.

Within an easy walk of Perros-Guirec is the hamlet of Notre Dame de la Clarté, clustering about a fine sixteenth-century church and commanding a perfectly magnificent view of the famous Ploumanach rocks, the extraordinary appearance of which, especially at twilight, when they are to a certain extent wrapt in mystery, baffles description. Huge masses of stone grouped together, or piled up on each other, here assume all manner of strange shapes, suggestive of the sudden arrestation of men and animals in the midst of exceptional activity. Here great mammoths are browsing on the shore, there vigilant cave-men are watching them from the low entrances to their dark homes; whilst in the distance the gigantic form of a woman stands out against the sky, and fierce beasts seem to be wrestling for the mastery. The constant surging of the waves is the only sound that breaks the brooding stillness, and the few moving figures on the beach seem unreal in contrast with the quaint semblances of humanity about them. The

one touch that relieves the almost painful weirdness of the scene, is the little oratory of St. Guirec, built, it is said, on the stone on which that holy man made the voyage from Ireland, that rises up from the water and is an ever present witness to the triumph of Christianity in this land of uncanny enchantment. To it girls who wish to get married go to pray, each one making a point of sticking a pin into the wooden statue of the saint to secure his good offices, a primitive proceeding that is supposed rarely to fail in ensuring a good result in the form of a handsome suitor.

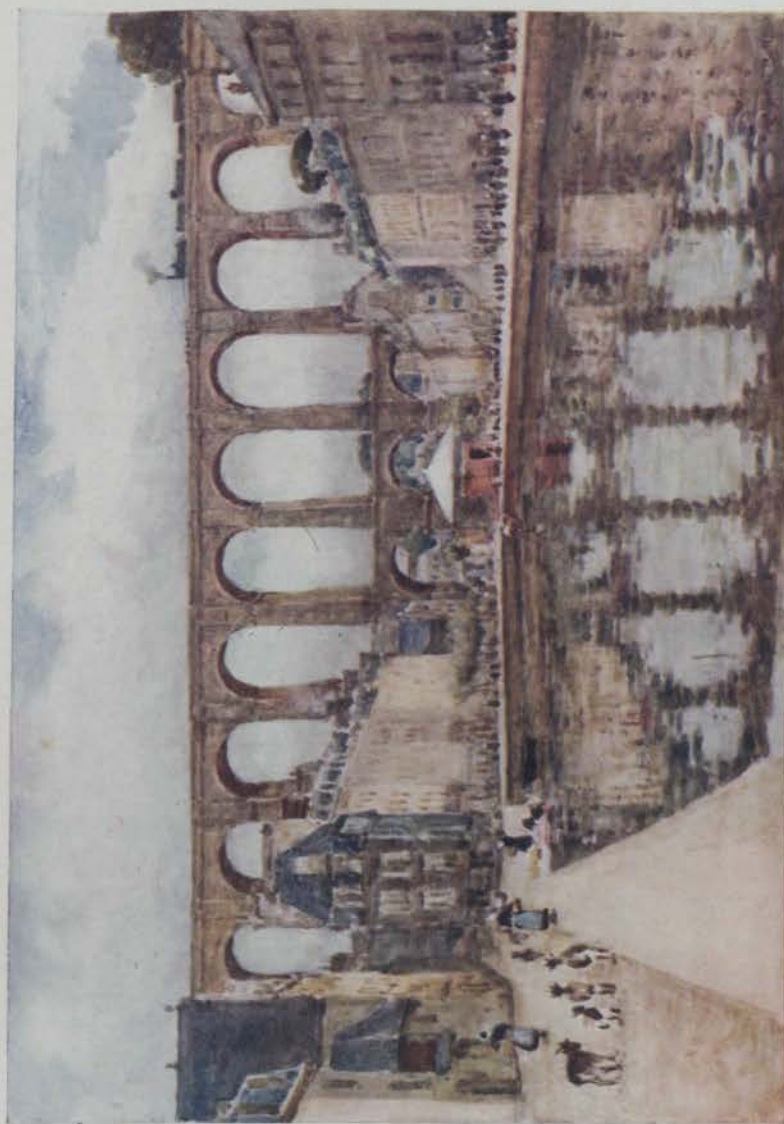
Before leaving the neighbourhood of Ploumanach, a boat should be hired for a visit to the group of seven islands, two of which are fortified, that form a kind of advance-guard to the coast and are the haunts of countless sea-birds whose habits may there be easily watched. Another delightful trip is down the coast to St. Michel-en-Grève, passing a number of picturesque little islands and rounding several promontories. The small settlement of St. Michel is situated at the apex of a wide bay, that presents a very striking contrast to the beach of Ploumanach, for here the sea has won a complete victory over the land, having swallowed up a vast forest as well as a church and numerous houses, that the fishermen declare they sometimes see at the bottom of the water. To this day the tide comes in with such great rapidity that accidents sometimes occur, and many legends are told of the misfortunes that have overtaken the over-venturesome. The sands are, it is said,

haunted at night by the ghosts of those who have fallen victims to their temerity, amongst whom a certain peasant named Perik Scoarn met an especially terrible fate. He had made a bargain with the Evil One, who in exchange for the promise of his soul, revealed to him the secret of the position of the submerged city of Is, once the capital of the mythical king Grallon, who sacrificed his only daughter Ahès to the waves, in the hope of recovering his town. Satan had first appeared to Perik as a beggar, and, when he had won his confidence, he instructed him to go at low tide to a certain spot, where he would see a door, that would open in response to his knock and give access to a treasure chamber. All that was necessary to ensure his safe return was that he should start for home before the stroke of midnight. Perik obeyed all the instructions but the last, for when he entered the magic chamber he found himself amongst a number of beautiful women, in whose society he forgot all about the conditions imposed. As the church clock of St. Michel began to strike twelve, Perik felt his limbs stiffening, whilst the same change came over the denizens of the magic chamber, and, when the last sound rang out, he himself became the central block of a group of upright stones. He, however, retained his consciousness in spite of the terrible transformation, and once a year, on the night of Whit Sunday, his spirit is set free to wander to and fro on the sands, or to float on the crests on the waves.

Near to this haunted beach is a quaint little chapel, dedicated to St. Eflam, who is said to have vanquished a

dragon on a rock hard-by, now surmounted by a calvary, from which a spring gushes forth that is credited with the remarkable faculty of identifying criminals, for if a piece of bread is thrown into the water and the names of those suspected are whispered, the bread will sink at that of the right one. Several interesting villages, full of local character, such as Locquirec and Toul-en-Hevé, both with grand sea views, and the inland Plestin, are within easy reach of St. Michel-en-Grève, but the more important St. Jean du Doigt and Lanmeur are best approached from Morlaix.

Finely situated on the river of the same name, formed by the union of the Jarlot and Quefflent, that meet in an arched channel under the Hôtel de Ville, Morlaix, is a town of many thrilling memories and of great commercial activity. Its citizens have ever obstinately resisted oppression, clinging with desperate courage to the privileges won with their very life blood from their rulers, and the artisans of to-day are no whit behind their ancestors, in their love of liberty and their determination to submit to no tampering with their right to a voice in the management of their own affairs. From the lofty viaduct that spans the beautiful valley, on the slopes of which it is built, Morlaix presents a most picturesque appearance, seen as it is through a haze of blue smoke, from which emerge the spires of its churches, the roofs of its closely-packed houses, and the long walls of its terraced gardens, whilst in the distance glitter the waters of the river, with



THE VIADUCT, MORLAIX.

boats at anchor or coming in and out according to the tide, flanked by the grey lines of the quays, with crowds hurrying to and fro.

Although much of Morlaix has been completely modernized, and, except on market-day, when the appearance of the town is transformed by the influx of peasants from the outlying villages, the clic-clac of the time-honoured sabot is never absent from its streets, and the women still wear a distinctive cap, of which there are several varieties. Moreover, in the older quarters, that cluster about the churches of St. Mélanie and St. Matthieu, especially in the Grande Rue and the Rue des Nobles, are many very fine mediæval houses, with ornate slate façades, projecting storeys, and overhanging roofs, pitched at a great variety of angles, presenting very much the appearance they did when the Duchess Anne de Bretagne was a guest in the one still named after her—recently successfully restored—that has a beautiful spiral staircase, upheld by finely-carved beams of oak.

We explored several of these ancient mansions, and were especially struck with one of them, now used as a shop, entered by a massive oak door adorned with the linen-fold pattern, and giving access to a court with finely-wrought cabinets let into the walls, overlooked by the balconies of the upper storeys, to which a spiral staircase leads up. We peeped into the old scullery, with a sculptured head from which the water used to flow, and crept amongst the bales of goods in the dark recesses behind

the shop, to admire the carved beams and friezes of what must once have been a very fine hall, wondering greatly why the State does not buy for the nation such valuable historic relics as this grand old house, and that sacred to the memory of the beloved Duchess Anne.

Morlaix is one of the very few towns in the true *Bretagne bretonnante* that can be said to be in touch with modern progress, and the general impression left on an outsider is one of contented prosperity. It is kept wonderfully clean, the scavengers—who are preceded by women with brooms who prepare the way before them, dispersing the goats and dogs that browse on the heaps of garbage—leave no alley, however narrow, untended. Even the river is duly cleansed of the rubbish that, in spite of stringent bye-laws, is flung into it, men with nets fishing out the refuse, whilst the washerwomen go on with their work, regardless of their unsavoury surroundings, their white caps and brightly-coloured shawls contrasting with the dark water over which they are bending.

The most noteworthy centre of activity in Morlaix is the huge tobacco factory on the Quai de Leon, in which some 16,000 women are employed, whose presence, when they are going to and from their work, gives to the town a character peculiarly its own. The clatter of their sabots mingling with the murmur of their voices herald their approach afar off, and in their black dresses and high white caps they look more like sisters of mercy than working women, giving a certain

solemnity to the quays and streets as they hasten along them. We often used to watch them from the Place Thiers as they poured past, hurrying to their midday meal, and we were greatly struck with their neatness, cleanliness and general air of well-being, which seemed to us remarkable considering that they work from 6.30 a.m. to 6 p.m., with but one break of an hour and a half, receiving no more than two francs fifty or three francs a day.

It is a little difficult to realize that Morlaix is a port, for it really presents rather the appearance of a mountain town, and it was quite a revelation to us when one evening after a charming walk along the river-side, a turn in the road suddenly brought us face to face with the Channel, the massive Château du Taureau, built at their own expense by the patriotic burghers in 1542, rising up against the sky and guarding the entrance to the harbour, whilst on either side stretched the long undulating coastline, fringed with islets, amongst which and the offing beyond, fishing smacks and pleasure yachts were skimming to and fro, their many-coloured sails contrasting with the blue distance. The whole neighbourhood of Morlaix, indeed, abounds with surprises, for many are the secluded seaboard villages, farmsteads, manor houses and châteaux, hidden away amongst the beautiful woods, which are here unspoiled by the merciless trimming of the trees that is so characteristic a peculiarity of certain districts of rural Brittany. The village of Ploujean, where, by the way,

a mystery play, "The Life of Saint Triphynus," is sometimes acted in the open air, has an interesting old church with a Moorish-looking belfry, a semi-circular tower, and a quaint sacristy resembling an anchorite's cell blocking up the east window. The hamlet of Taulé-Penzé, the châteaux of Kerozar, Kervezec and Coatserho, the farm of Langolvaz and the manor house of Kermerhon, all built of the grey stone that is so plentiful in northern Brittany, are well worth a visit, as is also the more distant borough of Plougouven on the south-east of Morlaix, which owns a remarkably fine sixteenth-century calvary, on which the whole story of the Cross is told in a series of crude but wonderfully effective sculptures. Moreover, a diligent search in outlying districts will result in the discovery of many time-honoured shrines, significant of the simple faith of the peasantry in the power of those to whom they are dedicated. We ourselves were fortunate in happening quite by accident on one, that touched us deeply, in spite of the smile it was impossible to suppress. Deep in a wood that was dark even at mid-day, we came upon a little clearing, the grass worn by the knees of many worshippers, where on a moss-covered rock, from which issued a sparkling spring, stood a weather-worn statue of the Virgin, wearing on her head a pyramid of babies' caps—the offerings probably of grateful mothers whose little ones had been healed by the water, sanctified by the presence of Notre Dame de la Miséricorde. The lower caps, some of them originally of dainty work-

manship, were worn and stained, but those at the top had evidently been only recently added—a proof that the spring has not yet lost its power and that the Divine Mother is still credited with taking individual interest in her votaries.

## CHAPTER V

LANMEUR, ST. JEAN DU DOIGT, ROSCOFF, AND THE  
ISLE DE BATZ

ON the high road between Morlaix and Lannion is the now deserted, but once important, town of Lanmeur, that is associated with many tragic memories of the long ago, for it occupies the site of the Celtic Kerfeunteun, that was destroyed by the Normans after being the scene of a fierce struggle between the natives and the invaders from the east. Here the saintly prince Méloir was mutilated by his cruel uncle Rivod, to prevent him from bearing sword; and in the beautiful Romanesque crypt beneath the comparatively modern church, is a magic spring, that in popular belief will one day be the instrument of a terrible punishment for the crime. Some Trinity Sunday, it is prophesied, the water of this spring will pour forth in a mighty flood that will carry away church, officiating priests and congregation, for which reason mass is always celebrated in the neighbouring chapel of Kernitron on that day.

Some five miles by road from Lanmeur is the more

famous St. Jean du Doigt—so called because it is supposed to own a finger of St. John the Baptist—a picturesque little mediæval village with a beautiful fifteenth-century church, situated in a charming valley within sight and hearing of the sea. St. Jean owes its celebrity entirely to its possession of the treasured relic that gives to it its name, in honour of which one of the most interesting and also one of the most pathetic of the pardons of Brittany, known as the *Pardon du Feu*, is held at the summer solstice, the ceremonies connected with it lasting from the evening of the 23rd to the night of the 24th of June.

The story of the acquisition of the priceless relic is very variously told, but the generally accepted version, is that it was brought home from the Holy Land by a native of Tréguier, whose name has not been preserved, on his return from the Crusades, in which he had greatly distinguished himself by his piety and courage. Whilst his comrades were eagerly collecting booty, says the legend, he used to spend all his spare time at prayer in a church, in which was a reliquary containing a finger of St. John, for which he had conceived a deep and abiding love. If only, he thought, he could be the means of taking such a treasure to his native land, how intense would be his joy, and as the time drew near when he must start for home, his regret at leaving the object of his devotion amounted to anguish. Strange to say, however, as he was kneeling before the reliquary for the last

time, a sense of ineffable content suffused his soul, and when he left the church, he felt as if some great benefit had been conferred upon him. From that moment the most remarkable occurrences took place wherever he went—the bells of the churches of the towns through which he passed began to ring of their own accord, flowers sprang up in his path, and those who were suffering from any disease were healed if they did but accidentally touch one of his garments. Needless to add, he became a marked personage; revered by the greater number of his associates, looked upon as a sorcerer by others. That he should have arrived in Brittany without any great delay is one of the most remarkable of his many remarkable experiences, but the story goes that, though he was shut up for a few days in prison, accused of being in league with the Evil One, angels intervened for his release; and when he came to a river unseen hands carried him across.

At last the traveller found himself, he knew not how, close to his native village, Traoun-Mériadek, and before he went to see his people, he hurried to the church to return thanks for his safe return. Mass was going on when he entered the sacred building, and as he knelt with the other worshippers he felt a sudden pain in his right hand. He looked at it, and lo! in the palm was an open wound from which a strange object fell that rolled away till it came to the steps of the choir, from which it bounded on to the

High Altar, alighting on the side from which the epistle is read. At the same moment the candles lit themselves, the organ burst forth with a hymn of triumph, and a joyful peal sounded from the church bells. As by a flash of lightning, it was revealed to the Crusader that the desire of his heart had been granted; he had been the unworthy instrument of bringing home the finger of the great forerunner, and by so doing conferring an inestimable boon upon his beloved birthplace. No one seems to have for a moment doubted the truth of his account of the miracle, and people at once accepted the brown and shrivelled object, that had so suddenly presented itself, as the very finger which had pointed to the Lamb of God, and the enthusiasm that spread throughout the length and breadth of the land was absolutely unbounded.

The little church of Traoun-Mériadek was, of course, far too small to hold the crowds who now flocked to worship in it, and in course of time it was replaced by the present stately Gothic edifice, that was begun in 1440 and completed in 1513, close to which was built, at the expense of Anne de Bretagne, a hospice for pilgrims. The finely-proportioned octagonal spire rises up in lonely dignity from the little hamlet clustering in the valley beneath; and, in addition to the beautiful reliquary containing its greatest treasure, the church owns a valuable chalice and patina, the gifts of the Duchess Anne; whilst in the

picturesque cemetery is a fine Renaissance fountain adorned with sculptures representing the Baptism of Christ, the water of which is supposed to have miraculous power.

The *Pardon du Feu* is, as its name implies, intimately bound up with the old heathen worship of the sun, with which that of the finger of St. John has been, as it were, incorporated; and there is something especially pathetic in the fact that, at this fête, essentially one of light, the blind are always present in great numbers, for they believe that, if they can but feel upon their eyes the fire of the bonfire that is lit up at sunset, they will receive their sight. Year after year the same poor creatures drag themselves up the steep hill known as the Tantad, on which the sacred pyre is built, fighting their way to the front, often at the risk of being seriously burnt, only to return disappointed, but with faith unshaken, convinced that the fault is entirely their own, for having neglected some of the prescribed prayers or ceremonies necessary for success. For a whole week before the actual pardon begins, the neighbourhood of St. Jean du Doigt is crowded with pilgrims, amongst whom, in addition to the blind, are hundreds of the crippled and diseased, for as St. Ives is supposed to be the special patron of the poor, so is St. John the Baptist of those who have been pronounced incurable by human doctors. Some have tramped for many miles by land, others have come by sea in boats decked out with greenery, the patron saint always in full evidence, for it is customary for the local wonder-workers to attend each

other's fêtes, and when they are accidentally left behind they are credited with the power of appearing in the right place at the right time unaided.

On the afternoon of the 24th of June, every point of vantage is occupied by those who wish to watch the meeting on the hill of the various processions from the outlying towns and villages, all of which send forth their relics, their crosses, images, and banners, under an imposing escort of priests and acolytes, to take part in the solemn festival. It is etiquette for the main procession to go forth to meet that of the neighbouring hamlet of Plougasnou on a bridge spanning the stream dividing the two parishes, and for the standard-bearer of the former to make his banner salute that of the latter, a feat requiring no little strength and skill, for the banner of St. Jean du Doigt is celebrated throughout Brittany not only for its beauty but for its weight. The honour of carrying it is eagerly competed for by the young men of the village, in spite of the fact that more than once the fortunate one chosen has been injured for life. The meeting of the two processions safely over, they form into one, and in their turn welcome with ceremony the later arrivals, the banner of St. John in every case, however, taking the lead. A complete tour of the valley is made, after which the sacred fountain in the cemetery is visited, the blind bathing their eyes, the cripples their limbs, and the diseased their sores, in the water; whilst amongst the crowds mingle the so-called *miraculous*, or those who have been

healed on previous occasions, who walk bare-headed and bare-footed in token of their gratitude. Service after service is held in the church, which is packed with worshippers all day long, the religious fervour and excitement becoming ever greater as the supreme moment approaches for the culminating ceremony of the lighting of the fire.

As the long trains of gorgeously-attired priests and their attendants, preceded by a troop of maidens dressed in white, in the midst of whom walks a child dressed as St. John the Baptist leading a tame lamb, begin the ascent of the mount, the eager crowds of spectators closing in upon them, and those who hope to be healed pressing on with cries of eagerness, the scene becomes one of surpassing grandeur and interest, especially if the spectator has secured a post from which the grand panorama of the coast and sea form a background to the surging masses converging upon the Tantad. Thousands and thousands gaze with eager, longing eyes, now at the sombre pyre awaiting the touch which shall seal its doom, now at the church tower from which that touch is to come; and when at last the so-called dragon—a box full of living embers—starts on its rush through the air on an invisible line, to give that touch, shouts of "*La Fusée! La Fusée!*" mingle with the pealing bells of all the surrounding churches, whilst the choristers of the various processions begin a chant of triumph. In another moment the fire bursts out upon the mount, and frenzied cries of "*Au Tân! Au Tân!*" drown the voices of the singers as the

flames rise ever higher and higher, the heat soon driving every one back, except some few of the blind, who, hoping against hope, are finally dragged out of danger by force. Slowly the fire dies out, and when its last smouldering embers are quenched the inevitable reaction sets in. All is over, and the weary multitudes gradually disperse, but it is not until long after nightfall that the secluded valley resumes its wonted calm.

Until quite recently the festival of St. Jean du Doigt was held after sunset, instead of in broad daylight, and the pyre was supposed to be lit up by an archangel from heaven, as the priests chanted the *Veni Creator*, when the scene must have been even more impressive than it is now. By an ingenious mechanical contrivance the messenger of light was made to poise for a moment upon the spire of the church, his figure lit up by a blaze of fireworks, that left a track of glory behind him, as he swept down to perform his task, disappearing mysteriously immediately afterwards. On these occasions the excitement of the people often amounted to frenzy, and what had begun as a solemn religious function too often ended in a midnight orgy, for which reason the authorities wisely decided that the fête should take place in daylight, and that the archangel should be replaced by a less supernatural agency, a necessary reform, as he would, of course, have entirely lost his effect, if the ropes manipulating him were in evidence. There was at first a good deal of murmuring at the change, but the numbers attending the ceremonies have for all that

shown no decrease, for the belief in the efficiency of the fire on the Tantad remains as firmly rooted as ever.

Though it was certainly not quite so exciting as a trip to St. Jean du Doigt at the summer solstice, we very greatly enjoyed an excursion we took from Morlaix to Roscoff and the Isle de Batz, passing on our way the so-called Holy City of St. Pol de Leon, the spires of its many churches standing out against a fine background of sea and sky, opposite to which is the comparatively modern settlement of Trégastel, commanding a fine view of the Channel, where a comfortable house may be rented for a very few pounds a year.

Roscoff—the head-quarters of the sturdy onion cultivators, many of whom bring their produce over to England at harvest-time, and by their house-to-house visitations on the south coast aid in their humble way in promoting the *entente cordiale*—is a charming little town with one long street leading down to the sea. Many weather-beaten grey houses overlook the islet-studded bay, that in the summer is crowded with boats bringing in fish or taking out vegetables, and the entrance to which is defended by a huge rock known as the Blascon, whilst in the offing on the right is the beautiful Isle de Batz, the home of a self-contained community, that under favourable conditions may be reached in ten minutes' sail, but in bad weather is often quite cut off from the mainland. Associated with the memory of Mary, Queen of Scots, who landed here in 1548 as a child of five on her way to

become the bride of the Dauphin of France, as well as with that of the equally unfortunate Prince Charles Stuart, who was brought here by a French privateer after his defeat at Culloden, Roscoff was once an important port, and still owns the remains of the Chapel of St. Ninian, said to have been founded by Queen Mary, and an interesting sixteenth-century domed church, in which is a series of quaint alabaster reliefs in good preservation, that graphically tell the gospel story from the Annunciation to the coming of the Holy Ghost. The figure of the angel in the former and that of the Blessed Virgin in the latter are especially fine.

After paying a tribute to the charms of Roscoff we hired a boat and were skilfully piloted to the Isle de Batz by two handsome young fishermen, one of whom quite took our hearts by storm, so eagerly did he respond to our questions about the island. He was a native of it, he told us, had lived there all his life, and, in his opinion, there was not in all the wide world a place to be compared with it. "But isn't it rather dull in the winter when the weather is too bad for you to get over to Roscoff?" we inquired. "Dull!" was the eager reply. "Oh, no, there is always plenty to do—nets to make or mend, boats to paint, cattle to tend, etc. Then there are the fêtes, every Sunday is one in a way, and the curé is so good to me: he lends me books; and besides," he added, a tender look coming into his face, "we are all friends in our island, and every *gars* has his *douce*." I guessed at once without any further

telling that he too had his sweetheart, who made even the darkest days bright, and but for the presence of the man at the helm, who was as taciturn as his companion was talkative, I should have found out all about her.

Arrived at the island, after threading our way through a perfect labyrinth of rocks and islets, a fresh scene of beauty revealed at every turn, we lost no time in scrambling up to its highest point by way of an almost perpendicular path, with heather, thrift, sheep's-bit, scabious, and many other wild flowers scenting the air with their familiar fragrance; whilst here and there on the ledges of the rocks were brown patches of cow-dung drying in the sun, to be used as fuel in the winter, for the island yields neither coal nor wood. When, somewhat out of breath, we reached the top of the cliff, we both exclaimed "How perfectly lovely," for on every side was spread out a very fairyland of beauty. On the island itself picturesque cottages nestled in the hollows, clumps of tamarisk making vivid patches of green. Men and women were bending over their work in the fields, groups of cattle tethered here and there; whilst all around stretched the deep blue sea, with hundreds of dainty-looking vessels skimming to and fro. In the distance, on the north, could be seen the long line of the mainland, on the right the spires of St. Pol de Leon, and on the left those of St. Brieuc, rising up into the cloudless sky. The trip back to Roscoff was even more charming than that to the island, for the sun was now beginning to set, and to all the other

elements of beauty was added that of mystery. We were quite sorry to part with our handsome boatmen, and doubled the modest fee of one franc, which was all he asked for the three hours he had given to our service, an unlooked-for generosity which delighted him extremely. He gave us a most courtly bow of farewell, sweeping his broad-brimmed hat down to his knees, and watched us till we were out of sight, wishing us *bon voyage* again and again.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE COAST DISTRICTS OF FINISTÈRE, WITH THE TOWNS OF Ouessant and Brest

AN interesting town within easy reach of Morlaix is St. Thégonnec in the Penzé valley, once of considerable importance, that still retains an interesting Renaissance church, with a very ornate pulpit, a seventeenth-century calvary with one hundred figures, a quaint old ossuary and a richly-decorated triumphal arch forming the entrance to the cemetery. Even more noteworthy, however, is the little village of Gimiliau near by, with its remarkable sixteenth-century calvary, one of the finest in Brittany, many of the numerous figures being full of action and expression. The cemetery containing this wonderful reflection of the religious faith of its creators, is entered by an archway surmounted by a statue of the Blessed Virgin, with a mounted knight on either side, and the calvary itself is two storeys high, each enriched with numerous groups of actors in the drama of the Cross, all wearing sixteenth-century costumes, from amidst which rises up a massive and lofty column surmounted by a crucifix—that is, by the way, the least satisfactory part of

the monument, being too small for its elevated position—on either side of the base of which stand the mourning Mother and St. John.

The church of Gimiliau, of somewhat later date than that of St. Thégonnec, though not so unique as the calvary, has many fine characteristic details, notably the sculptures of the western doorway and the Flamboyant tower and spire, whilst hard by is a Renaissance chapel with an outside pulpit and some fairly good coloured wooden statues adorning the High Altar. On Sundays and fête days, when the people from the neighbouring villages flock to the churches and calvaries in their native costumes, forming charmingly picturesque groups as they pause to gossip together, both St. Thégonnec and Gimiliau resume for all too brief a time, very much the appearance they must have presented before the levelling influences of so-called progress began to eliminate character from the rural districts of Brittany. They are, however, both surpassed in this respect by the little sea-side village of Plougastel, which also owns a remarkable calvary, and to which we made a detour *via* Landerneau on our way to Quimper from Morlaix.

Our last day at Morlaix was rather an exciting one, as it was that of the fête of the Republic, when there was much marching to and fro of troops, some of the companies of soldiers carrying bouquets at the points of their bayonets, on their way to the various functions in honour of the occasion. Our hotel was draped with flags, and the tables

were most tastily decked with flowers. In the evening there was a torchlight procession through the town which was very effective, but it was impossible to help seeing that there was very little real enthusiasm amongst the people, who are just now very discontented with the Government on account of their bitter disappointment with regard to the religious amnesty.

We were not particularly struck with Landerneau, though we could see that it must originally have been very picturesque, built as it is on either side of a river that winds between wooded hills. A fine sixteenth-century church, dedicated to St. Thomas à Becket, an ossuary dating from the same period, and a few old houses overlooking the port, are all that remain to bear witness to the former importance of the town, and we decided not to linger long in it. We hired a carriage to take us to Plougastel, and we were rather disappointed in the drive, as it was an extremely hot day, and the lofty hedges on either side of the road quite shut out the view. My husband, who always left the choosing of our route to me, kept asking me what in the world I had brought him to this outlandish place for, where there was nothing to see and nothing to do, and though I myself was assailed with doubts as to my wisdom in having done so, I replied that it was to see the costumes at Plougastel, that were the most remarkable in Brittany. "I don't believe a word of it," was the reply, "there will be no more costume here than there was at Morlaix."

As we neared Plougastel and the country became more open we got a very good view of the Rade de Brest, with the English fleet lying at anchor, and I remarked that that at least was worth coming to see, but I received no reply, and was just about to suggest that we might as well turn back and catch an earlier train to Quimper, when a group of peasants in an old country cart came suddenly into view. "Oh, look, look at those lovely costumes!" I cried, and my words were echoed by my companion, who wanted to stop carriage and cart to have a good look at the people in the latter. I, however, suggested that there were probably plenty more where they came from, and we drove on, passing several delightful groups, for after all the guide books are right, the men, women, and children of Plougastel do still wear costumes such as were in vogue in the sixteenth century. The men were in blue or plum-coloured jackets with two rows of large silver or gold buttons, vests of the same or a contrasting colour richly embroidered with gold, blue linen trousers and broad-brimmed black felt hats, with long streamers behind of black ribbon velvet, whilst here and there we noted a veteran in the still more charming bragoubras costume with the very wide knickerbockers, and thick-ribbed stockings, such as were worn by his remote ancestors. The women wore black or coloured petticoats, aprons of many varieties of beautiful shades of colour, coloured kerchiefs folded across their breasts, supplemented by deep white collars or by embroidered net vests just show-

ing for a few inches at the throat, and head-dresses resembling the hoods of nuns, with wide white lappels, or close-fitting caps of embroidered net tied under the chin.

We were so excited over the remarkable toilettes of Plougastel that we were scarcely able to give any attention to the grand calvary that dominates the village, set up in 1602 in memory of the terrible epidemic which devastated the whole neighbourhood in 1598. True we could not but admire the simple yet massive structure, the solemnly impressive central granite crucifix, the wonderfully realistic sculptures, including no less than one hundred figures, that unfold the whole tragic drama of the Passion, but it was with the living groups, who were gathered at the base gossiping together, that we chiefly concerned ourselves, and it was all we could do to tear ourselves away from them to walk through the village before returning to Landerneau. We were, however, more than rewarded for doing so, for as we went down the main street the children were pouring out of school, and we found ourselves taken back several hundred years, for we were amongst just such a crowd of little ones as might have watched the building of the calvary.

Beautiful and effective as are the costumes of their parents, those worn by the boys and girls of Plougastel are even more picturesque and ornate, bearing witness to the loving pride taken in them by those whose skilled fingers produced them. The little maidens, varying in age from two years old to ten, were all dressed alike in long

black or coloured skirts, beneath which peeped out red or blue slippers, closely-fitting long-sleeved bodices of some bright material, snow-white chemisettes, aprons of delicate tints, pale blue and pink predominating, and dainty little caps of velvet, silk, or cotton, some of them richly embroidered with beads, tied beneath the ear with narrow ribbons. The boys were simple copies of their fathers, and presented an even quainter appearance than the girls, their long trousers dwarfing their statures. Our sudden apparition amongst them startled them all a little, and they stood at gaze, giving us a good opportunity of noting every detail. We spoke to some of them in French, but they did not seem to understand us, though we were told that it is taught in all the schools now, and that the use of Breton is forbidden. Suddenly the spell we exercised was broken, and with many a backward glance the children dispersed to their homes, leaving on us an unforgettable impression. We were eager to buy some specimens of their costumes, but we had now only a few minutes to spare, and all we could do was to secure one cap. Even this we did with great difficulty, for the old woman who served us in the village emporium did not understand French, and could only tell us the price by counting out the money we were to give her.

Plougastel is so hidden away in a kind of niche in the coast, protected by a forbidding frieze of rocks, and is so out of the beaten track, that it is often overlooked by travellers, which is perhaps as well, for too many visitors

might spoil the unsophisticated people. When we got back to Landerneau we had rather an amusing proof of the difficulty of finding the charming little spot, for we met two young officers from the English fleet, who told us they had been hunting for it all day in vain, and that whenever they asked the way, they were simply told the time. True they did not speak either French or Breton, but they said they did keep repeating Plough Castle, so there was really no excuse for the stupidity of the people.

The right day, we heard, to see the people of Plougastel at and in their best is June 24, when the so-called Pardon des Oiseaux takes place, and the children sell the birds they have managed to catch in reed cages, to the people who come to take part in the religious ceremonies of the fête of St. John, but we ourselves greatly preferred seeing them as we caught them on this occasion living their simple every-day life in their far from simple every-day clothes.

Landerneau is also a good starting-point for an excursion to the humble little hamlet of Le Folgoet, which owns one of the finest Gothic churches of Brittany, that with its lofty spire, 160 feet high, is the most noteworthy feature of the whole district. Enriched with good sculptures within and without, including a very remarkable stone rood-screen of three arches, this beautiful church has long been the goal of pilgrimages; but the village to which it belongs is almost deserted, except on fête days and at the annual pardon. A very romantic legend, first put in circu-

lation in the seventeenth century, is told as to the origin of this grand edifice, the erection and decoration of which was evidently a labour of love to designers and craftsmen. Some time in the fourteenth century there lived in a little village near its site, an idiot boy, named Salaün, who could say nothing but the first words of the Angelus and "*Salaün a debrez bara*," the Breton for Salaün wants some bread. The afflicted lad was early left an orphan, and resisted all the efforts of his neighbours to care for him. He loved solitude, and took up his abode in a wood near a spring, where day and night he repeated constantly, "*Ave Maria, Ave Maria*."

Every day Salaün went to the village to ask for bread, which was readily given to him, for the mentally-afflicted are in Brittany supposed to be under the special protection of Heaven, and on this bread, soaked in the water of his spring, he lived for many years. At last, however, there came a day when he did not appear to ask for food, and the villagers went forth to see what had become of him. He was found lying dead beneath a tree, his thin hands folded across his breast, and a smile of wonderful sweetness and intelligence on his lips, as if reason had come to him before the end. He was reverently buried where he lay, and a cross was erected to mark the spot. "The little favourite of the Mother of God has gone to her keeping," said the simple folk, and it seemed as if that would be the end of the matter, but one day some children playing in the wood noticed a beautiful lily—the scent of which

filled the air, and on the petals of which was inscribed the words, "Ave Maria"—growing from the heart of the fool. Astonished and delighted they ran home to tell the wonderful news, and the whole population, led by the curé, hastened to the spot. The grave was opened, and it was discovered that the stem of the supernatural flower came out of the mouth of Salaün, whilst its root was embedded in his heart. The rumour of the miracle, of course, spread rapidly far and near, and the ecclesiastics of the neighbourhood decided that a church should be erected above the lonely resting-place of the man they now recognized as a saint, to which should be given the name of Notre Dame-du-Folgoet, or Our Lady of the Fool of the Wood. The first stone is said to have been laid by Jean de Montfort, after his victory over Charles de Blois at Auray, and the main building was completed by his son Jean V in 1423, whilst the beautiful southern portal is supposed to have been added by Anne de Bretagne.

The coast between Roscoff and Brest is as grand and even more melancholy in bad weather than that of the Côtes du Nord, and bears the terribly significant local name of "*le pays des naufrageurs*," for in olden times the native wreckers used to tie lanterns on to the tails of their cattle to entice vessels on to the rocks—presenting, indeed, a marked contrast in that respect to the peasants and fishermen of to-day, who are ever ready to save life at the peril of their own, and to do reverent service to the victims of the waves who are washed up on their shores. Those

who have the courage to explore the wild coast on foot, or, better still, in a sailing boat under the care of an experienced pilot, will be rewarded by making acquaintance with many a scene of weird and terrible grandeur. Between Goulven and Pontusval, for instance, the rocks are piled up much as they are at Plonmanach; the estuary of the Averbrach, or the Fairy Harbour, with a picturesquely-situated hotel, once a convent, at the water's edge, is full of romantic beauty, and the little ports of Lannilis and Porsal, with the more important Porsporder, that rises up from amongst groups of bristling rocks, opposite to which the waters of the Atlantic and Channel meet, command magnificent sea-views. Further inland, between Lesneven and the shore, are several important prehistoric relics, such as the dolmen of the Enchanter, and the menhirs of Plouneour-Trez and Kerlouan, whilst between Porsporder and Brest is the busy little town of St. Renan, or Ronan—named after the saint who is specially honoured at Loeronan, and whose legend is related below—near to which, on the Kerlons farm, is one of the loftiest still erect menhirs of Brittany, known as Le Bossu, to which newly-married couples make a pilgrimage: the wives in the hope of getting the upper hand in their home life, the husbands with a view to securing sons.

Brest, a first-class fortress and the most important naval port of France, has little that is attractive about it from the æsthetic point of view, in spite of its fine position on

a hill commanding a grand prospect. The actual harbour, however, when it is crowded with men-of-war, and the offing is full of vessels of a great variety of rig, presents a most impressive appearance. The revolving bridge, connecting the port with the suburb of Recouvrance is one of the largest and best built structures of the kind in Europe, and from it an excellent view is obtained of the whole complicated system of basins, the dockyard, the fortifications, and the roadstead. On a week day, when work is in full swing and crowds are hurrying to and fro in every direction, the sight is very inspiring; and on Sundays and fête days, when the people, dressed in their best, are enjoying themselves in the open air, the scene is thoroughly French in its light-hearted gaiety. The thirteenth-century castle, with its massive donjon and seven supplementary towers, and the nineteenth-century church of St. Louis, are the only buildings of historic interest in Brest; but the church of St. Martin, in the Late Gothic, style, is a good example of modern work.

On the coast a few miles from Brest are the little fishing settlements of Le Conquet and St. Matthieu, the latter dominated by the ruins of an abbey, and close to the promontory of the same name commanding the mouth of the Goulet de Brest, as the narrow entrance to the harbour is called. Both hamlets are most romantically situated at the very edge of the sea, their weather-beaten old houses looking scarcely less ancient than the fantastic rocks around which they are built; whilst their inhabitants, who cling

with faithful affection to the costumes and customs of their ancestors, present a remarkable contrast to their near neighbours of Brest who are in the very van of modern progress. From Le Conquet and St. Matthieu a view can be obtained on clear days of the islets of Beniguet and Molène, and occasionally of the more distant Ouessant, that forms an advanced outpost of Brittany and is her furthest westerly possession.

A small steamer plies in good weather between Le Conquet and Ouessant, touching at Beniguet and Molène, and those who wish to become acquainted with the true Breton, quite unmodified by outside influences, should not fail to make the trip. Even under the most favourable conditions, however, there is always a certain element of risk in the crossing, so terribly forbidding are the natural *chevaux de frise* that ward off the intruder, whose courage must be high indeed to brave the passage that is already so full of sinister memories. There rises a group of rocks resembling a fortified city, with its approaches strewn with the remains of shipwrecked vessels; not far away appear the masts of another victim of the waves, that as they wash over it are churned into perpetual foam by the reefs below the surface. Yet these significant relics do not appear to affect at all the spirits of the islanders, who go backwards and forwards between their island home and the mainland to sell their vegetables and buy supplies of other kinds. They gather together in groups on the deck of the steamer, singing their national songs, and many of

them attend all the pardons that are held within reach of Brest, making the transit in their frail fishing-boats that are decked with flowers and greenery for the occasion, those who are prevented by illness or other causes from performing what they consider sacred duties, sending messages and offerings to the various saints by the more fortunate, who are often quite overburdened with their vicarious responsibilities.

After touching at Molène the steamer enters the so-called Fromveur, the mighty current in which the waters of the Channel and Atlantic are merged, and where, except in the calmest weather, the turmoil of the meeting waves is enough to overawe the most experienced sailor. The promontory of La Jument once rounded, however, the quiet Bay of Lampaul is entered. The whole population of Ouessant gathers at the landing-stage to welcome the passengers, and the perils of the voyage are forgotten in the enjoyment of the solemn beauty of this true *ultima thule*, whose people remained heathen long after the conversion of their fellow-countrymen of the mainland, and are still a race apart. From the lighthouses of Creac'h and of Stiff at either extremity of the island, which is but seven miles long and three-and-a-half wide, a sea-view of unrivalled grandeur is obtained; whilst the scenery between those two points is very picturesque, in spite of the total absence of trees, for Ouessant has a double row of hills, many miles of cultivated districts watered by two streams, and numerous scattered home-

steads, their grey stone buildings contrasting with the stacks of golden-brown seaweed, that are to serve alike for manure and fuel. On the wild cliffs, with their scanty herbage, browse stunted black and white sheep, each one tended by its herd; whilst in the fields toil the sturdy, handsome women, their black costumes relieved by their ornate, helmet-shaped caps and wide white collars. The men are absent fishing for the greater part of the year, so that, until the arrival of the recently-established military garrison, the need of which is open to question, Ouessant may be said to have realized, during the summer months at least, the ideal of Tennyson's *Princess*, so entirely wanting is the disturbing male element.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE INLAND DISTRICTS OF FINISTÈRE AND THE CÔTES DU NORD

ALTHOUGH the inland districts of Finistère are neither so grandly beautiful nor so full of romantic associations as are those of the coast, the scenery of the so-called Montagnes d'Arrée is full of character and sombre charm. No single height can be said to attain the dignity of a mountain, for the culminating point of St. Michel is scarcely 1,200 feet high, but the general impression is not unlike that of parts of the Highlands of Scotland, so constantly are the summits of the hills shrouded in mist, and so full of mystery are the lonely valleys. There are but few villages, and of these La Feuillée and Botmaur, the latter called the oasis of Finistère, so protected is it on every side from wind and storm, are the chief, whilst of the more important settlements the town of Huelgoat, built on the shores of a small lake, is the most interesting, for it owns a fine sixteenth-century church, with a good campanile and a number of quaint old brasses. The chapel of Notre Dame des Cieux is also worth seeing, on account of the curious carvings of the interior, and just outside the town

is a cave known as *le ménage de la Vierge*, in which the waters of the lake form a very picturesque cascade. In a lovely valley a few minutes' walk from Huelgoat is a huge trembling stone, one of the largest in Brittany, and about six miles away is a very typical Breton sanctuary, the chapel of St. Herbot, a favourite saint of the peasants, for he is credited with the power of healing the diseases of cattle, and the walls of his shrine are hung with bunches of the long hairs of cows and oxen, the offerings of his grateful votaries. At the fête of St. Herbot, held early in June, the peasants of the whole neighbourhood used to bring their animals to do homage to him, the beasts as well as the pilgrims making the tour of his chapel. On these occasions such a quantity of hair was presented that its sale produced several thousand francs, but it is now considered enough to put one long hair in the trough provided for the purpose, though in times of epidemic amongst the cattle the old ceremony is resorted to in the hope of obtaining aid from the saint. Not far from the famous chapel is a waterfall some two hundred feet high, also named after St. Herbot, and below it are the remains of the Château of Rusquec, now used as a farm, with an old mill of the same name, approached by a grand avenue of beech trees.

From Huelgoat good roads lead through beautiful country to Carhaix on the south-east, and Belle Isle en Terre on the north-east, both of which are well worth seeing, on account of their interesting historic associations

and the relics they still retain of the stirring times in which they played an important part. The original name of Carhaix was Ker-Ahès, or the town of Ahès, the fair daughter of King Grallon, who was, according to the touching old legend already referred to, sacrificed by her father, in the hope of rescuing his beloved town Is from the waves. Here, in 1197, Richard Cœur de Leon was defeated by his Breton vassals, and for six long years, between 1341 and 1347, Jean de Montfort and Charles de Blois struggled in it for the mastery.

Just before his appointment as governor of Pontorson in 1363, the famous Constable of France, Du Guesclin, made a triumphant entry into Carhaix. In the last decade of the sixteenth century many a fierce struggle took place in its narrow streets between the leaguers and the royal partisans; here, two centuries later, the insurgent Chouans made a last stand against the troops of the newly-founded Republic; and here, in a house still standing, was born in 1743 the brave Theophile de la Tour d'Auvergne—commemorated by a statue by Marochetti in the market-place—whom Napoleon I. dubbed the first grenadier of France, and held in high esteem in spite of his stern Republican principles. Carhaix is the head-quarters of a large trade in horses and cattle, and several important fairs are held in the Grande Place, overshadowed by the fine Gothic cathedral, when the secluded little town is transformed into a scene of great activity, and it resumes for a time something of its mediæval appearance, the old

inns being crowded with buyers and sellers in the distinctive costumes of their various communes. It is worth while to make a pilgrimage to Carhaix on one of these occasions, and from the vantage ground of the so-called Champs de Bataille just outside the town, that commands a grand view of the Montagnes Noires and the intervening country, to watch the troops of peasants bringing in their animals, the scene recalling the preparations for a siege, which must often have taken place in the old strenuous days of civil war.

Those who are not pressed for time would do well before going north to Belle Isle en Terre, to make a tour by road through the westerly inland districts of the Côtes du Nord, in which are many interesting though little-known villages, such as Rostreten with a sixteenth-century church and several sixteenth- and seventeenth-century houses; Glomel, on an important link of the canal connecting Nantes and Brest, in the church of which is a quaintly-carved lectern representing an eagle strangling a serpent; the hamlet of Menhir on a height above Glomel, named after a pyramidal block of stone about which the cottages cluster, where a few of the men still wear the picturesque bragou-bras costume; St. Nicholas du Pelem, with a fine fifteenth-century church retaining some beautiful stained glass, that is, however, rivalled in popular esteem by the chapel of St. Eloy, with some realistic sculptures of the goldsmith bishop's chief miracle, to which on the 24th of June the peasants bring their horses to be guaranteed against disease,

and Goarec, beautifully situated on the junction of the canal and the river Blavet. From Goarec a very beautiful road leads to the so-called Mur de Bretagne, a charming little village perched on a height in one of the loveliest parts of inland Brittany surrounded on every side by exquisite scenery, not far from which is Uzet, deserted except at the fête of the Holy Trinity, when horse-races take place, succeeded by dances to the music of the bagpipes, at which old-world costumes are worn that have been handed down from generation to generation.

Other noteworthy villages are : Quintin, once an important fortified town, still retaining a fine old castle and a thirteenth-century church, that was greatly injured by fire in 1600, and Corlay, picturesquely situated on the Salon, with a ruined château, a sixteenth-century church and many other relics of the long ago, that is still one of the most important inland places of the Côtes du Nord, for in it a monthly horse-fair is held, the animals sold, locally known as the *doubles bidets de la montagne*, being of a very valuable breed, the direct descendants it is claimed of Arab steeds brought home by the Crusaders from the Holy Land. Callac is another old-world hamlet, near to which is the famous chapel of St. Servais, where, until quite recently, when the authorities interfered, sanguinary combats used to take place between the young men of the neighbouring parishes for the honour of carrying the banner of the saint at his pardon, on May 13th. One of these unholy struggles is very graphically described in Anatole

Le Braz's *Au Pays des Pardons*, in which he quotes the account of an old peasant-woman who had seven times made the pilgrimage bare-footed from Quimper to St. Servais, and relates how the fierce struggle, in which many were seriously hurt, took place within the sacred building itself. The rector and his choristers took refuge in the sacristy, the sacred banner was torn to shreds, the image of the saint smashed to pieces, a fresh fight beginning to secure the fragments, and when at last the combat was over, the defeated party carried away their wounded in carts, whilst those of the victors who were not put *hors de combat*, settled quietly down to their religious duties as if nothing out of the way had happened.

Less exciting, but very interesting, is the Pardon des Fontaines, held on September 8th, at the little village of Bulat, which owns nine springs credited with miraculous powers, into one of which newly-married women throw the pins that fastened their wedding finery, in the hope of securing children ; and not far from Bulat is the hamlet of Bourbriac, with a sixteenth-century church containing the tomb of the revered St. Briac, near to which many touching scenes are often witnessed, for the saint is supposed to be able to restore reason to the mad and health to the epileptic, who are brought to his shrine year after year by their relations in the hope of securing his help.

The country between Bourbriac and Belle Isle en Terre is very wild and romantic, dense forests, the remains of those that once completely covered the ancient

Armorica alternating with charming valleys and richly-cultivated districts. Belle Isle en Terre richly deserves its name, for it is set down in a fertile, well-watered landscape on one of the northern spurs of the Montagnes d'Arrée, and, except on market day, when it is crowded with peasants in picturesque costumes, it resembles a desert island in its absolute peace and seclusion.

The scenery of the Montagnes Noires is far less pleasing than that of the Montagnes d'Arrée, or of the intervening districts, but this is atoned for by the great interest of the towns, villages and hamlets dotted here and there, for they retain far more than do those further north their mediæval appearance. The inhabitants are true *Bretons bretonnantes*, many of them speaking no French, who wear unchanged the costumes in fashion centuries ago, and rely for their knowledge of what is going on in the outside world upon the so-called *chansons* or *feuilletons*, sold at markets and fairs for a couple of sous, printed in Breton and French and adorned with old woodcuts that have seen long service.

Gourin is a very typical *ville noire*, with a quaint old church, calvary and ossuary, and between it and the little village of Spezet a glorious view is obtained from the lofty road connecting them, of the valleys of the Aven and the Aulne, the canal from Brest to Nantes, and the dense forest of Couveau. Spezet itself contains little of interest, but near to it is the celebrated Chapelle du Cran with six remarkably fine sixteenth-century stained-glass windows,

that are among the best preserved in France. Chateauneuf du Faou, very finely situated on a hill above the Aulne, is, however, perhaps the most important town of the Montagnes Noires and should be visited on market-day, when the square, dominated by the quaint sixteenth-century church, and all the streets converging on it are crowded with animals and their owners, the whole place being full of eager animation, picturesque groups collecting at every corner to exchange the news of their different parishes. Pleyben, with a grand church partly in the Gothic and partly in the Renaissance style, a very characteristic calvary, that has been the text of many learned discussions, a quaint old ossuary, and one of the largest market-places in Brittany, should also be seen on a fête- or market-day, for at other times its appearance is somewhat melancholy; but Chateaulin, with the picturesque village of Port Launay forming its port, is always charming, built as it is along two quays by the side of the Aulne, at the base of the mountains that protect it from the north and east winds. A viaduct, very characteristic of French enterprise, spans the valley above the town, which was one of the first in France to use the electric light, and is quite in touch with modern progress, but at the same time Port Launay retains many interesting relics of days gone by, including a well-restored fourteenth-century church with a fine spire, the chapel of the now destroyed castle, and an ossuary with a domed campanile.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PENINSULA OF CROZON, QUIMPER AND THE GREAT PARDON OF ST. RONAN

It is always something of a relief, especially in the heat of summer, to return to the coast from the inland districts of Brittany, and no greater contrast could be imagined than that between the sombre region of the Montagnes Noires and the wind-swept peninsula of Crozon, with its far-reaching views of the open sea, the roadstead of Brest and the beautiful Bay of Douarnenez. From the summit of the loftiest of the three pinnacles of the so-called Menè-Hom, at the foot of which is the little village of Sainte-Marie, the scene spread out on every side is of surpassing grandeur, especially after a storm, when the waves are filling the air with foam and the harbours are crowded with the boats that have taken refuge in them.

Crozon itself, that gives its name to the peninsula, is finely situated on rising ground, and has of late years become a favourite summer resort of Parisians. As a result it has lost much of the primitive simplicity that was its chief charm; though the farmers of the neighbourhood still cling to old-fashioned methods of husbandry, reaping

and thrashing their grain by hand, whilst the women wear the lofty pyramidal caps that were in vogue more than a hundred years ago. The one valuable art relic of Crozon is the fine sculptured reredos of the church, giving scenes from the life of St. Maurice and his fellow martyrs of the Theban Legion, but the village is associated with many memories of the feudal days, when the will of the seigneur was law, and also of the time when the hostile English were constantly expected to appear off the coast. Indeed, not so long ago English visitors were still looked upon with suspicion, and artists were not allowed to make sketches of the forts along the coast.

The chief claim to distinction of Crozon at the present day is that it is connected by a good road with the little harbour of Le Fret, from which excursions may be made to the outlying islands, and also with the wildly beautiful beach of Morgat, famed for the numerous caves in the weirdly fantastic rocks shutting it in, of which the most remarkable is that known as La Grotte de l'Autel or de la Fée, accessible by boat at high tide, by way of a narrow passage leading into a vast and lofty hall, in the centre of which is a mass of granite resembling an altar. Supposed to have been used in prehistoric times in Druidical worship, this strange natural retreat was later turned to evil account by the smugglers and wreckers, about whose wicked deeds many legends are current in the neighbourhood.

Other villages of the Crozon peninsula in touch with

grand coast scenery are Roscanvel, Quelern, Camaret, Landevennec, and a few miles inland, Chateauneuf du Faou. The first two have little distinction, except the pathetic one of their dangerous situation on a promontory that is being gradually but surely eaten away by the waves, but Camaret is a bright little port, with cheerful white houses clustering about a sixteenth-century church, and a chapel flanking the fort on the pier. From it may be easily reached on one side the so-called Château de Dinant—a group of magnificent rocks riddled with caves, of which the finest are those known as Les Grottes des Korrigans—and on the other the nearly equally grand Pointe de Toulinguet, also undermined with galleries and cells, and from the summit of which can be seen the celebrated Tas de Pois, a group of isolated rocks, forming a natural defence of the coast, amongst which even on a calm day the noise of the waves is deafening.

On the cliffs and seaboard of this wild and romantic district, are many prehistoric remains, including alignments and menhirs, proving how strong a hold the Druidical religion once had over the people, but as Landevennec, on the southern shore of the roadstead of Brest is approached, these tokens of an outworn creed become fewer and at the same time the scenery is less rugged. Woods and cultivated fields replace the barren cliffs and lonely stretches of heath and woodland, whilst the ruins of the abbey, founded in the fifth century, that are still to many the chief attraction of Landevennec, bear witness to the

early triumph of the Cross over heathenism. Here the founders of the Abbey, St. Guenolé and his broken-hearted convert King Grallon, who never smiled again after the terrible fate of his beloved daughter Ahès, are both buried, and something of the melancholy that overshadowed the whole district during their lifetime, still broods over their last resting-place.

Landevennec owns a fine old calvary, with several interesting mediæval houses, and on fête days the inhabitants appear in really beautiful costumes, greatly resembling those already described as seen at Plougastel; but the distinctive characteristics of the people of Finistère may be even better studied at the little town of Chateauneuf du Faou, at the mouth of the river of the same name, with its sixteenth-century church and many houses built on the beach. From it the fruit and vegetables of the neighbouring districts are embarked for Brest, and it is here that the pilgrims from Ouessant and other islands land on their way to the pardons held at Rumengol, that is about a mile and a half inland, at the base of the Montagnes d'Arrée. The port is, therefore, a scene of great activity for many months of the year, and the old market, with the gabled houses overlooking it, is one of the most picturesque in Brittany.

The little village of Rumengol is associated with some of the most romantic legends of the seaboard. Its church, known as that of Notre Dame de tout Remède, built in the sixteenth century, replaces a much earlier chapel,

that was, according to a beautiful tradition, built on the site of a wide-spreading oak, near to which King Grallon, maddened by remorse for the murder of his daughter, expired, watched over by St. Guenolé and the last of the Druids who in obedience to his dying request clasped hands across his dead body, thus as it were linking heathenism with Christianity. In the hollow trunk of the same oak, was found later a primitive but wonder-working image of the Blessed Virgin, now replaced by a massive silver one, kept in the church, which is surrounded with venerable yews overshadowing a miraculous well, the water of which is said to have effected many wonderful cures. To it the afflicted flock all the year round, whilst at the great fêtes held on the 25th of March, Trinity Sunday, the 15th of August, and the 8th of September, the whole neighbourhood is crowded with worshippers, and the present seems to be absolutely merged in the past, so truly mediæval are the costumes, so full of the savour of the long ago the customs observed.

It is on Trinity Sunday, when what is known as the Pardons des Chanteurs takes place, that the religious fervour of the people reaches its height at Rumengol, and those who have once witnessed the scenes that occur on that great day, are never likely to forget them. The name of the Pardon des Chanteurs is given to the festival, on account of the prominent part that used to be taken in it by the bards, who occupied much the same position in Brittany as did the minstrels of Scotland, but whose race is now, alas,

extinct. It is claimed in the neighbourhood of Rumengol that the gift of a beautiful voice and the power of improvisation were given to the first Breton bard, in response to an agonized appeal from King Grallon, ever haunted by the moans of his murdered daughter, who often appeared in the form of a mermaid on the crests of the waves. He entreated the Holy Mother that other sounds might drown them, and she replied by promising that the songs of bards should ever resound in the coast districts of Brittany. It was customary for each singer when he felt his end approaching to name and bless his successor, but the last of the minstrels Yann ar Minouz, who was duly appointed by his predecessor, died not long ago, as related by Anatole Le Braz in his *Au Pays des Pardons*, without being able to choose his heir. Other bards will probably arise and the old refrains, which were never printed but handed down in writing from one generation to another, will still be sung, but no one will ever again exercise the authority or inspire the reverence of the *pères des chansons*, who, even if they were in positive rags, were everywhere welcomed as honoured guests and were never allowed to want.

We decided wisely, as it turned out, to make Quimper our head-quarters for the exploration of the south-western districts of Brittany, for though it no longer enjoys its old dignity of the capital of the kingdom of Cornouailles, it is thoroughly in touch with the villages and hamlets for many miles round. The journey by rail from the north was full of interest and charm, for late crops of hay were

being carried, fields of snow-white buckwheat in full flower—despised in England, but everywhere cultivated in Brittany—alternated with golden wheat and silver barley; the hedge-rows were full of familiar wild flowers; in the gardens of the cottages and at the wayside stations oleanders and aloes were in full flower, and the distant uplands were bright with gorse and broom.

We passed Daoulas, the name of which means the monastery of the two murders, and caught a glimpse of the ruins of the abbey, said to have been built in the sixth century by a knight who treacherously slew two monks; noted the quaint and lofty village of Quimerch, the bright little town of Chateaulin on the Aulne, here spanned by a lofty viaduct, and the larger Quemeneven in the picturesque Steir valley, and arrived at Quimper late in the evening. We found the whole town *en fête*; the hotels and principal houses illuminated, torch-light processions followed by crowds marching along the quays on either side of the Odet, and on the banks of its tributary the Steir, the long-drawn-out and melancholy call of the French horn pealing forth every now and then above the ceaseless clatter of sabots and the murmur of many voices.

After seeing Quimper for the first time in so bewildering a light, we expected to be disillusioned in the morning; but it was not so, for the every-day aspect of the venerable city is full of interest and charm. Our rooms overlooked the Odet, with groups of women bending over their washing, and beyond the bridge we

could see, at the end of a narrow street, the chief entrance and the lofty spires of the beautiful Gothic cathedral. Already, for it was market-day, stalls were being erected in the Grande Place, and we were presently to witness a thoroughly representative gathering of true *Bretons bretonnantes*, for soon the steps of the church and the whole square were crowded with men and women in the distinctive costumes of their various communes, whilst in the actual market-hall the scene almost defied description. We were ourselves apparently the only foreigners present, and our appearance created quite a sensation, but nothing to what we ourselves experienced, as we elbowed our way along the narrow lanes left between the stalls of the fruit-sellers and the sacks of corn in the flour-market.

Never before, not even at Plougastel, had we seen such an infinite variety of ornate caps and collars, such a gorgeous diversity of embroidered vests and jackets, such a choice of daintily-worked bodices and delicately-hued aprons, or such marvellously voluminous petticoats, that were kept out at the waist by rounded pads. Even the smallest boys and girls were dressed as if for some grand function—the boys in complete replicas on a small scale of their fathers, in blue, green, or mauve cloth jackets and waistcoats embroidered with gold, black felt hats with long velvet streamers, and blue linen trousers; the girls in costumes peculiar to themselves, consisting of three or four striped petticoats

of different lengths, the longest coming down to the heels, and very long-waisted bodices of the same materials, with tight-fitting sleeves, giving them the appearance of the Spanish Infanta in Velasquez's famous portraits, whilst on their heads were close-fitting velvet, silk or cotton caps, tied under the chin with different coloured ribbons, and ornamented with embroidery of beautiful design in silver beads. A few venerable peasants appeared in honeycombed and embroidered blouses, that looked as if they had been handed down for many generations, and one group especially attracted us who spent all day long at a corner of the market-place, their flails over their shoulders, evidently waiting for hire as thrashers. On the steps of the cathedral and of the market-hall, girls were seated embroidering caps and waistcoats, with a good supply of finished goods spread out beside them, for which they found a ready sale, so that there seems to be some hope that beautiful needlework may long be made in Brittany. We could do nothing the whole of our first day at Quimper but watch the buyers and sellers, and we established quite friendly relations with some of them, though we had to communicate by signs, as it is quite the exception for the countrywomen to understand anything but Breton.

We were specially struck by the total absence of collaboration amongst the peasants, each working on his or her own account, with no suspicion of the value of the division of labour, and we were pained by the

weather-worn appearance of the women, whose skins were parched and cracked by constant exposure to the sun, their beauty destroyed even in early girlhood. True, each one of them was provided with an umbrella as part of the gala get-up; but we seldom saw one in use, and were told that the owners would rather risk sunstroke or getting wet through, than injury to what is looked upon as a valuable ornament, not a thing of use.

Now and then we left the noisy crowds in the central hall to watch the scene in the market-place from the vantage ground of the steps of the cathedral, taking up a position amongst the privileged beggars in the porch, who, by the way, when we had once paid our footing with a sou or two to each, never begged from us again, but merely saluted us respectfully whenever we passed. Or we went to rest awhile within the church itself, amongst the many worshippers, who, their market-baskets on their arms, had left their business for a brief space to pray. The men were few, but the vast nave was often nearly full of women, and many a beautiful group they formed, as they knelt absorbed in devotion, some of them with their little ones around them, who told their beads with the fervour of full-grown saints, though, as they painfully balanced themselves on the high *prie-dieux*, they could not resist peeping through their fingers at new-comers. It was but rarely that the utter peace of the dimly-lighted place

was marred by the intrusion of mere sightseers, and it is significant of the veneration in which the building is held, as well as of the conservatism of the ecclesiastical authorities, that there should be a permanent notice on the chief entrance, that women in cyclist costumes are forbidden to cross the threshold.

Before we left Quimper we had become very much attached to the cathedral, not only on account of its intrinsic beauty and sacred associations, but also because of the many typical episodes we witnessed in it, proving it to be a perennial source of fresh strength and inspiration to the young and happy, as well as an unfailing refuge to the weary, the worn, and the sad. Early in the morning the factory hands would come in to ask a blessing on their day's work, and later in the day the side chapels would be full of penitents waiting their turn to confess. Sometimes we noticed numbers of boys of six or seven years old under the care of their master, some of them so small they could scarcely reach the orifice, and we wondered what sins they could possibly have on their infant consciences.

It would be difficult to over-estimate the importance of religion to the people of Quimper, for it is the very foundation of their daily life, and they are ever ready practically to prove that it is with them a vital principle. They are proud of their parish church, and when, half-a-century ago, it needed restoring, much of the necessary money was contributed in sous by the very poor. More-

over, of late years the citizens have been amongst the staunchest defenders of the old faith in Brittany, and the most persevering opponents of the anti-Catholic policy of the Government. The local papers breathe defiance, and it will probably be many years before the bitter feeling that has been aroused subsides.

The cathedral of Quimper, founded early in the thirteenth century, and completed in 1515, with the exception of the spires that were added in 1854, is dedicated to St. Corentin, who was one of the earliest bishops of western Brittany. The quaint old sculptures of the west front are well preserved, and above the portal is a modern equestrian statue of King Grallon, whose tragic life-story was intimately associated with Quimper, that, according to popular belief, may yet have to suffer vicariously for his crimes, it having been prophesied that when his submerged town of Is reappears above the waves, Quimper will take its place beneath them.

The interior of the cathedral, with its polygonal apse, its many side chapels, its fine decorative sculptures and frescoes and old stained-glass windows, is considered one of the best examples of early Gothic work in France, but its general effect is somewhat marred by the declination of the chancel to the left, a peculiarity of constant occurrence in Brittany, where it is supposed to have reference to the drooping of the head of the Redeemer on the cross. In addition to its fine structural details, the cathedral also owns several very interesting tombs, ranging

in date from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, and a number of relics, said to be unique, are enshrined in it, including three drops of blood, of which the singular legend is told that they fell from the pierced feet of an image of the Lord on the cross, in silent protest against a false oath sworn on the crucifix.

Of much earlier date than the cathedral, the tenth-century church of Locmaria, a suburb of Quimper, and the later St. Matthieu, founded in the thirteenth century, are also of great interest to the antiquarian. Almost lost amongst the modern buildings of the greatly altered streets, are also a few really fine survivals of mediæval times, including some remains of the ancient fortifications, and several houses with carved side-posts and lintels, the façades adorned with quaint wooden figures on projecting rests. In the Hôtel de Ville, a fine old building, is a good library, that includes many very valuable MSS. and first editions, and in the adjoining building, once the bishop's palace, is a good collection of mediæval ecclesiastical sculpture, old faïence, etc., and an interesting group of life-sized terra-cotta figures, wearing the costumes in vogue in the neighbourhood two centuries ago. A few good pictures by old masters are hung in well-lighted rooms, and here, too, may be seen many of the modern paintings that have been bought by the French Government, including early works by Corot, landscapes by Pélouse, Bernier, and the American Harrison, with several very fine subject compositions, including Rénouf's pathetic

*Veuve de l'Isle de Sein*, that created a great sensation when exhibited at the Salon, and Terree's realistic *Marché aux Chiffons*.

We were very fortunate in being at Quimper in time to witness the final ceremonies of one of the most impressive and significant of the religious functions of Brittany, the *Pardon de la Grande Troménie*, that is held once in seven years at the outlying village of Lo-cronan or St. Ronan. The pardon begins on the second and ends on the third Sunday in July, and is held in honour of the saint after whom the village is named, whose legend is certainly one of the wildest ever evolved, even by the vivid imagination of the wonder-loving Celts.

The friend and companion of St. Patrick, the young Ronan was sent by him to evangelize the people of Brittany, and is said to have made the voyage across the Channel alone, upon a floating rock that needed no guidance, and was seen one very dark night approaching the Breton coast, near where the town of Douarnenez now stands, a brilliant light from the halo round the head of the passenger illuminating the sea for a considerable distance. None dared approach to ascertain the meaning of the phenomenon, and Ronan landed in safety; but he had not long been on shore before he found that, so far as the conversion of the natives was concerned, he might as well have remained in Ireland. At first he was merely avoided, but when the people became familiar with his appearance they began to be

actively hostile, for he was credited with stopping what they looked upon as their legitimate gains from the sea. Since he had taken up his residence amongst them there had been no shipwrecks, and a plot was laid to get rid of the intruder. The missionary, however, who could read the very thoughts of men, decided not to wait for the *dénouement*, and started on an inland journey upon his rock, which he called his *jument de pierre*, or stone mare. On this he sped easily over hill and dale, across rivers and through forests, till he came to a spot that seemed suitable for a habitation. There he built himself a hut, and, apparently forgetting all about his mission to convert the heathen, settled down to a life of lonely meditation and prayer. Needless to add that his retreat was soon discovered, or that he is supposed to have performed many miracles of healing for those who sought his aid.

Without any means of support of his own, the hermit had always plenty of food brought to him by his votaries, whom he summoned when he needed them by ringing a bell, which was his only earthly possession, the very one, according to tradition, that is carried in the processions of *la Grande Troménie*. For many years Ronan led a blameless and useful life, changing his retreat from time to time with the aid of his stone mare, when the numbers of his admirers became irksome. At last he settled near the site of the village now held specially sacred to his memory, and from his new hermitage he is said to have

daily made a pilgrimage of some ten miles, walking bare-foot along the track followed at his pardon, and resting only on his beloved *jument de pierre*, which he now allowed to remain stationary where it still remains, on a spot commanding a grand view of the coast and the Bay of Douarnenez.

Amongst those in the new district who were most devoted to the service of Ronan, was a certain land-owner whose name has not been preserved, but whose wife Keban plays an important part in the closing scenes of the legend, and is looked upon as the very type of an ill-tempered woman. Rightly attributing her husband's constant absences from home to the influence of St. Ronan, Keban hated him with a bitter hatred, and laid many plots to compass his ruin, which were all frustrated by his supernatural prescience. On one occasion she shut her little daughter up in a chest and accused St. Ronan of having spirited her away. The poor child died of suffocation, and the holy man restored her to life with a word, but this did not mollify the mother, who managed to persuade King Grallon that Ronan was a sorcerer. Blood-hounds were set on the track of the saint, but when they reached him they fawned upon him and grovelled at his feet instead of tearing him to pieces, so that the attempt to destroy him only added to his prestige. Henceforth the veneration in which he was held was ever on the increase, although to the last he retained his love of solitude and refused to accept any earthly honour.

Keban was so bitterly disappointed at her failure to injure him, that she went out of her mind, neglected all her duties, and became a terror to the whole countryside.

At last the time came when St. Ronan felt his end approaching, and his followers entreated him to say where he would like to be buried, but he refused to express any wish on that point, only begging to be left to meet his fate alone. He was humoured, but as soon as it became known that he had passed away, an eager consultation was held as to where he should be laid to rest. It was finally decided to place the body in a cart, to which two oxen were harnessed, who were left to go whither they would. The bell St. Ronan had used for so many years was fastened to their yoke, and its sound was heard throughout the length and breadth of the land, summoning all to do honour to the holy dead. Without the slightest hesitation the animals made for the uncleared forest, the trees withdrawing to make a path for them, and great crowds following them, Keban being the only person in the whole countryside who kept away. Alone amongst the women of the neighbourhood, she determined to take no notice of the funeral procession, and set about her washing as usual, thereby committing a double crime, for it was Easter Day. When the familiar and hated sound of St. Ronan's bell reached her, however, her feelings became too much for her, and she rushed up the path from the river, forced her way to the head of the *cortège* and began

to belabour the oxen so vigorously with her washing beetle, that she knocked off one of their horns, that was flung to the top of the mountain of St. Ronan, making a dent in the ground that in popular belief can still be seen. The infuriated madwoman then actually dared to spit in the face of the dead, but this was her last act, for immediately after the outrage, the earth opened beneath her and swallowed her up. Never again, it is said, did grass grow upon the accursed spot, but some years later a cross was set up to commemorate the tragedy. At this cross, however, none but a few who believe that even Keban may be saved from eternal wrath by the prayers of the living, are ever seen to kneel, though at the Pardon of St. Ronan a short service is held near it.

After the interruption caused by the terrible death of Keban, the oxen resumed their journey, to halt finally on the site of the present church of Locronan, where a grave was dug. A fresh difficulty now arose, for all the efforts of the mourners to take the body from the cart were unavailing, so that it was at last decided to leave it where it was for the night, under the care of a few trustworthy watchers. During the hours of darkness, however, a deep sleep that they could not resist, overcame the guardians, and when morning broke the cart was found to be transformed into a tomb, on which lay a beautiful effigy of St. Ronan, whilst the surrounding trees had grown up into a stately Gothic chapel, forming a fitting shrine for the mortal

remains of the saint, who was evidently more powerful in death than he had been in life.

Whatever grains of truth there may be in this wonderful story, acquaintance with which is necessary for the full understanding of the proceedings at the great pardon, there is no doubt that the present church, founded in the fifteenth century, occupies the site of a much earlier building, and that the so-called *Chapelle du Peniti*, or Chapel of Penitence, containing the tomb of the saint, bearing his effigy in bishop's robes, is a century later in date than the main structure. The town of Locronan, once the head-quarters of a thriving weaving industry, originally grew up round a Benedictine abbey, which, though all trace of it is now lost, was probably really the first centre of the *Troménie de St. Ronan*. *Troménie* is, in fact, a corruption of the Breton *Tro-Minihy*—*minihy* signifying a refuge or shelter—so that the word really means the tour of the refuge, not, as is generally taken for granted, of the mountain. *Minihy* at first signified the actual abbey, monastery, or church with the right of sanctuary, but gradually became applied to all the land owned by it, which enjoyed certain privileges and immunities. Once a year processions made the circuit of these ecclesiastical estates, and it is evident that the course followed by the pilgrims of *la Grande Troménie*, under the belief that they are walking in the very footsteps of their beloved St. Ronan, also marks the boundaries of the possessions of the old

abbey of Locronan, which were more than ten miles in circumference, and took in portions of four parishes.

During *la Grande Troménie* all the approaches to Locronan, as well as the actual route of the procession, are lined with quaint temporary shrines of interlaced branches, draped with white cloths, in which, on tables dressed as altars, are the images of saints, that have been brought from far and near to share in the benefits of the great occasion. Large sums are collected in sous for the benefit of the poor of the various parishes, by the guardians of the shrines, who ply the passing pilgrims with appeals for an *obole* for St. Herbot, "who is so good to the cows," or for St. Ives, "the lover of the oppressed," etc. Strange to say, however, there are no actual beggars seen at the fête of St. Ronan, for the holy man was bitterly hostile to mendicancy during his life, and is certainly, it is supposed, not likely to tolerate it now he is dead. As a result, the *Pardon de la Grande Troménie* has a subdued joyousness peculiarly its own, unmarred by any of the gruesome and painful sights generally seen at such times in Brittany.

The best place to obtain a general idea of the people who come to take their part in the great procession, is from the steps of the church, which dominates the market-place on one side, whilst on the other are two or three fine old Renaissance houses, that even in their present neglected state, preserve to the little town something of the dignified impressiveness of times

gone by, especially when, as at the great fête, the open space below is crowded with pilgrims wearing the ornate, many-coloured costumes such as used to be the every-day wear of the country folk, but are now many of them only brought out on great occasions. All day long services are being held in the church, and those who are unable to obtain admittance are waiting their turn outside, some kneeling on the steps, others gossiping together in picturesque groups, or congregated about the stalls where rosaries, crosses, cakes, etc., are being sold. Inside the church itself the scene is such as to defy description.

Even when empty the great nave with the lofty roof, upheld by massive time-worn, moss-grown pillars, the distant perspective of the brightly-illuminated choir contrasting with its semi-obscurity, is grand and imposing, but when, as on this last Sunday of July, it is closely packed with kneeling worshippers, the men on the one side, the women on the other, the very air seems to palpitate with solemnity and mystery. At this time, in the belief of the pilgrims, the dear ones they have lost are allowed to be present with them, and every now and then one or another will start up and turn round, as if to listen to a voice from the other world, whilst those near the favoured one, raise their clasped hands above their heads in a mute appeal for a similar privilege. Meanwhile, in the adjoining *Chapelle du Peniti*, continuous streams of pilgrims are passing to and fro, making their way with difficulty

amongst the kneeling crowds, to kiss the relics held out to them by a priest from the altar rail, and to press their lips upon the forehead of the effigy of the revered saint. Mothers lift their children, and make them lay their soft faces against the cold stone cheek, and some even place their little ones for a moment upon the folded arms of the wonder-worker, convinced that by so doing they have obtained a special blessing for them.

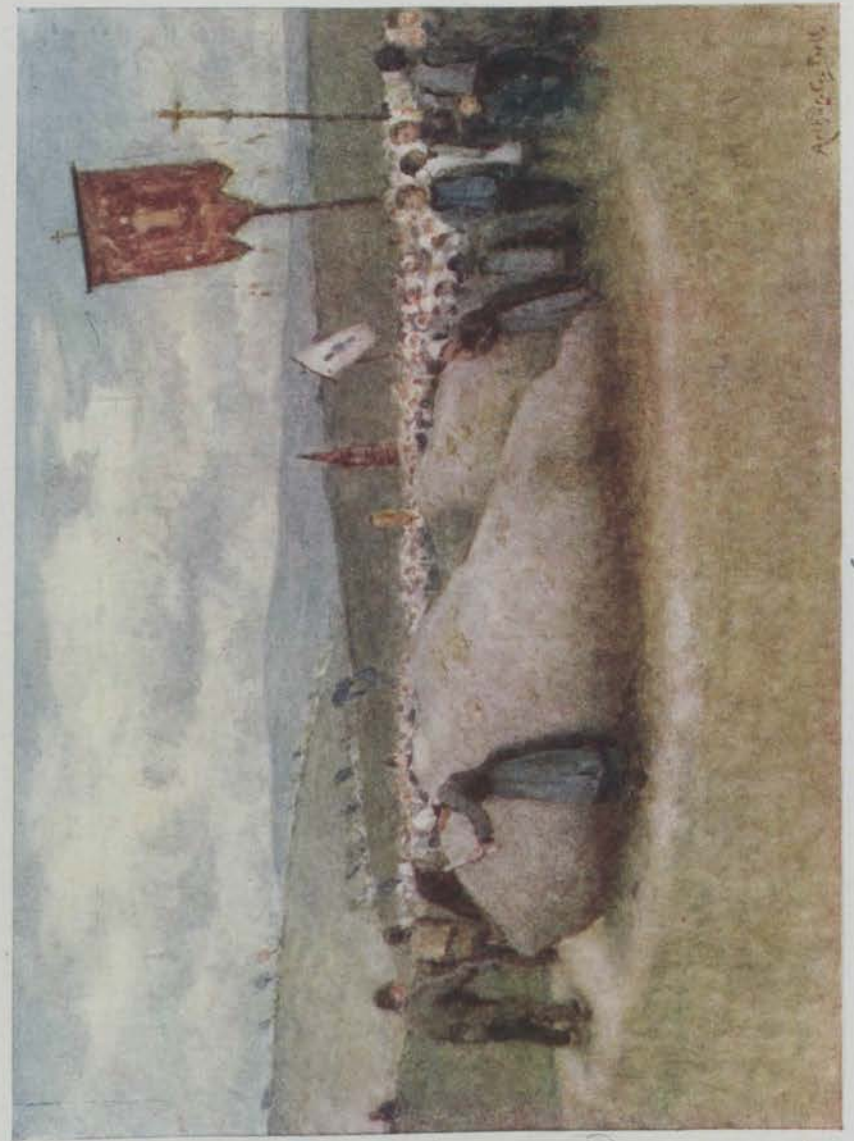
When the church services are over, and the pealing of bells announces that the great moment has arrived, a sudden hush falls upon the waiting pilgrims in the market-place, for the Pardon of St. Ronan is a silent one, and those who can refrain from using their voices except in prayer, from the beginning to the end, will win special indulgences.

Slowly and painfully, for their burdens are heavy, the bearers of the banners and the relics—amongst which the bell of St. Ronan is conspicuous—make their way out of the door of the church, and as the long file of priests, acolytes and choristers pass down the steps into the space cleared for them, followed by a dense mass of pilgrims, many of them carrying lighted candles, the scene is alike beautiful and impressive. Gradually the crowds break up into little groups, to start on their long tramp of more than ten miles across country, and up the long steep slopes of the sacred mountain, all fences and obstructions in their path having been already removed, for terrible indeed would be the vengeance of St. Ronan on any landowner

who should dare to interfere with the privileges of his votaries.

The first halt is made at the cross of Keban, a short rest is allowed at the base of the mountain, and a sermon is preached from a stone pulpit half-way up the slope, but the most characteristic scenes take place at the *jument de pierre*, which is reached quite late in the day, so that to all the other attractions of the unique occasion, is added the glamour of the gloaming.

From one of the rocks near by, commanding a view of the distant country and the sea, as well as of the immediate environment of the sacred stone, we watched the returning pilgrims arriving, some in single file, others in family groups, whilst far away amongst the fields, we could see the waving of the banners and catch glimpses of the bright robes of the priests and of their attendants. In a continuous stream the weary pilgrims came, all telling their beads with unabated fervour, looking neither to the right hand nor the left, till they reached the great white mass of stone associated with so many legends, when there was a kind of trembling and hesitation amongst the women, and looks of significance were exchanged by them, though not a word was spoken. With a sort of shamefaced defiance, first one and then another sat down on a natural niche in the stone, whilst others contented themselves with pressing their faces against it, for amongst the wonderful powers with which the *jument de pierre* is credited, is that of being



PILGRIMS GOING ROUND THE JUMENT DE PIERRE AT LOCRONAN.

able to secure the joys of motherhood to those who have the courage thus to notify their longing. Three times the circuit of the stone was made by all except the leading priest and his acolytes, who walked severely by, taking no notice of it, whilst the later comers were swept along with the crowds whether they would or no, the Church being thus compelled to sanction a custom that strongly resembles idolatry, and is probably really of far earlier origin than the evolution of the story of St. Ronan.

The long ceremonies of the long summer's day terminated at last with a beautiful service of benediction in the church, after which the people dispersed quietly to their homes, the Pardon of St. Ronan being marked from first to last by an absence of the revelry generally associated with religious fêtes of Brittany. As we drove back to Quimper beneath the sunset sky, feeling how great a privilege it had been to witness *la Grande Troménie*, and that the memory of it would abide with us for the rest of our lives, we passed group after group of pilgrims, some of the old women and the little children so tired they could hardly drag themselves along, but all seemed perfectly content and were chatting happily together, doubtless relieved that the long tension of the vow of silence was at last relaxed.

On the last Sunday in August another very distinctive pardon takes place on the coast a little distance from Locronan, known as *Le Pardon de la Mer* or *Le Pardon de Sainte Anne la Palude* that differs very greatly

from the one we had just witnessed, for at it hundreds of cripples and other sufferers are present, the mother of the Virgin being considered the most potent healer of all the saints in the calendar. "*Il n'y a que St. Anne,*" say her votaries, and any one who questions her having been of Breton origin is considered quite outside the pale of Christianity, for it is firmly believed that she was the wife of the seigneur of Moellien, an ill-tempered man who hated children, and when he found that he was about to become a father, drove St. Anne out of her home. She knew not where to go, but as she was wandering sadly about on the cliffs she noticed a luminous bark, with an angel at the helm, floating in the creek of Trefentec below.

The angel made signs to her to come down to the beach; she obeyed and was transported to Jerusalem, where a few days later the Blessed Virgin was born. St. Anne lived with her daughter until she too became a mother; but when the Holy Child was a year old the grandmother became home-sick, and prayed to be allowed to see her native land once more. Again the luminous bark appeared, for in the quaint story Jerusalem becomes a port, and St. Anne was taken back to her own parish, where she learnt that her husband was dead. She lived to a great age and spent the rest of her life in doing good, and before the end received a visit from her divine Grandson who came to receive her benediction on the eve of His death on the Cross, accompanied by St. Peter and St. John. He told St. Anne that He would grant

anything she asked, and she pleaded that a church should be erected in her honour: that all who could see its spire and hear its bells should be healed of any suffering, and win relief for those they loved, living or dead, by calling on her name. "All shall be as you desire," was the reply, and to enforce His words the Lord planted His staff in the ground, from which issued a spring of living water, the very one in which the pilgrims now bathe their wounds.

Soon after this remarkable interview St. Anne was translated to heaven; her body was never found, but a few days after she disappeared a stone image of her was washed ashore, and those who found it decided to take it to the parish church. This, however, they were unable to do, for when they reached a certain spot on the cliff the image became so heavy it could not be moved, and it was evident that St. Anne intended it to remain there. The present chapel, known as that of St. Anne la Palude, was built to enshrine it, and many are the touching stories told of the mercies vouchsafed to those who have come to do homage to it.

Strange to say the cult of St. Anne is inextricably interwoven with that of the sea, which was worshipped long before the mother of the Blessed Virgin was born, in the form of a beautiful maiden, who is said still to appear at the time of the pardon, or when a storm is imminent, floating on the crests of the waves, and calling in a seductive voice to the fishermen to come and

live with her in her submarine palace. This siren of the deep is also identified with the murdered daughter of King Grallon—at first called Dahut, but later Ahès—so that the ceremonies of the Pardon of St. Anne de la Palude, in which a kind of Trinity in Unity is honoured, would really appear to be a modification, to meet the requirements of Christians, of the heathen rites practised to propitiate the all-devouring element that has claimed so many noble lives, and never fails to exact its yearly toll of victims.

In the August procession, much of the course of which is along the shore, a prominent feature is the number of widows, some of them mere girls, who take part in it, walking together two and two, and carrying extinguished candles to mark the fact that the light of their lives has gone out. The so-called *sauvés*, or the men who have escaped shipwreck, and who wear the very clothes in which they landed after their peril, are almost as numerous as the widows, and the sombre garb of both contrasts very forcibly with the rich costumes of the more fortunate pilgrims, who are not yet saddened by bereavement, for those costumes are considered the most ornate that are still worn in Brittany.

## CHAPTER IX

PENMARCH, THE POINTE DU RAZ, QUIMPERLÉ, PONT AVEN,  
AND CONCARNEAU

OUR next excursion from Quimper was to Pont l'Abbé and Penmarch, both full of interesting memories of the past, though their glory has now departed. Pont l'Abbé, once the centre of one of the most powerful baronies of Brittany, is now merely a picturesque but unimportant fishing port, chiefly celebrated for the fact that it is the head-quarters for making the embroidery for the so-called Bigouden costumes, the oldest, though by no means the most beautiful, of those still worn in Brittany, the masses of gold braiding on heavy black cloth, and the close-fitting velvet skull-caps with white net fronts and strings, delighted in by the women, being anything but becoming and peculiarly unsuitable for summer wear.

We did not linger long at Pont l'Abbé, but secured box seats on a primitive diligence bound for Penmarch, and were rewarded for the terrible jolting we endured, and the frequent stoppages, by getting a good view of a district quite unlike any we had seen before, one of the minor peculiarities of which was the number of larks; the

first we had heard in Brittany, for, alas ! there, as elsewhere in France, singing birds are, as a rule, ruthlessly shot. At first the road wound between vast unenclosed fields of wheat, barley, and buckwheat, but as we neared Plonmeur we entered a barren, sterile tract of heath and moor, dotted with grey stone houses, a menhir or a dolmen occasionally doing duty as part of the wall of the enclosure, whilst here and there by the wayside rose up a simple stone calvary or a roughly-hewn cross, looking no less venerable than the more antiquated survivals of heathenism.

Here were groups of men toiling with primitive pickaxes in stone quarries ; there cottages were being built with the materials ready to hand. Truly a stony land where little water is, and that little only to be obtained at the cost of much labour, for women were painfully winding up buckets from deep stone-enclosed wells, or bending over low stone troughs with a little muddy liquid at the bottom. Yet in spite of all the signs of hardship, the general impression was one of brightness. Stacks of golden seaweed near the humble homesteads, relieved the general grey monotony, and in the distance the spires of churches and the towers of lighthouses stood out against the deep blue background of the sea and sky. Plonmeur itself, where we alighted for horses to rest, is a charming little hamlet, and near to it is a noble old church dedicated to St. Nonna, which owns some really good stained glass, and a unique stone



THE COAST AT PENMARCH.

font, with a supplementary basin just big enough to baptize an infant in. On the doors I noticed an appeal from the curé to his people not to fish on Sundays except when a great shoal should happen to be sighted, or when it had been bad weather for three days before, proving that here ecclesiastical rigour is tempered with mercy.

When, after another short drive, we reached the coast at Penmarch, we realized how fitting was this hint of clemency, for not even at Ploumanach, at Morgat, or at the Pointe du Raz, are the awful perils of the sea brought more forcibly home to the imagination, than in this wild and forbidding district, where once, according to tradition, rose the fair city of Is, the beloved capital of King Grallon, which was swallowed up by the waves in a few brief hours. We did but glance at the scattered houses of the village, with the square tower of the church of St. Guénolé dominating them, that are, if this legend be true, now the sole representatives of a fine city, for the grandeur of the scene spread out before us drew us with irresistible fascination, to the very edge of the masses of tortured-looking rocks, where the incoming tide was rushing towards groups of women laden with baskets of sea-weed and shell-fish, who were literally fleeing before it, making warning gestures to us as they approached.

We had noted a long white wall running straight out to sea, flanked on either side by bristling natural defences, and we had meant to walk along it, so as to look back on the village ; but long before we could reach it, it was

completely submerged, the white foam from the surging breakers blowing in our faces. We had to beat a hasty retreat, and we took up our position on the top of a great rock standing well back, which seemed to us an excellent point of view from which to make a sketch. We had, however, hardly settled down before we were surrounded by boys, who eagerly drew our attention to an iron cross embedded in the stone, which they told us commemorated the tragedy of October 1870, when a family party of five had been swept away at this very spot, by a large wave that had risen up without a moment's notice, though the sea was perfectly calm at the time. This made me a little uneasy, but my husband declared he should make his sketch for all that, and began to draw in the groups of rocks he had chosen, whilst I kept a watchful eye on the treacherous sea, hoping that he would not be long at his work. Presently I heard a cry of dismay from him, and for a moment I thought we too were in peril of our lives, but the trouble was only that he had left his brushes behind. I was really relieved, and said, "Then it's no use waiting here any longer." But not so easily is a true artist daunted; that sketch was made with fingers and thumb, and was by no means the least satisfactory of those done on our trip.

Our excursion to Penmarch gave us a kind of nostalgia for the sea, and we resolved to stay no longer at Quimper but to go on to Douarnenez at once. We had heard much of its picturesqueness, and it was associated in our

minds with the closing scenes of Wagner's wonderful interpretation of the romance of Tristan and Isolde, for it was to the Isle de Tristan in the Bay of Douarnenez that the faithful Kunwenal took his wounded master to die. There was accomplished the final act of the long tragedy of the soul, and there we expected to find still brooding, the magic glamour of the day when the suffering hero was at last released from his pain, and to hear, perhaps, the echo of Isolde's exquisite lament. That we were quickly disillusioned will surprise no one who knows Douarnenez, for although we recognized the exceptional beauty of its site, it could not make up to us for the squalor of its streets and quays, or the poverty-stricken appearance of its people. There for the first time in this trip we saw, at anchor in the wide bay, the sardine fleet, with the pale blue nets hanging from the masts, lending to them an ethereal beauty peculiarly their own, and we would gladly have lingered to make sketches of them, but it was impossible long to endure the scents of the ill-savoury harbour, or the persecution of the teeming juvenile population.

At the time of our arrival at Douarnenez there was a strike amongst the *sardinières*, as the women who work in the factories are called, and in consequence, a general depression reigned everywhere, but a touch of picturesqueness was given to the commonplace-looking building, where the fish are dealt with, by the long rows of women, seated outside them, knitting and chatting together, look-

ing very neat and business-like in their black dresses, coloured shawls and dainty close-fitting net caps. On the evil-smelling beach, amidst decaying fish and other abominations, for sanitary science is altogether ignored in Douarnenez, hundreds of bare-legged children were playing happily, though the holidays had not yet begun; but it was impossible to enjoy watching them, for directly we appeared we were simply mobbed by them.

Needless to add that our stay in this neglected town was short, and it was with a feeling of great relief that we left it for Audierne, a fishing-village that contrasts very favourably with its larger rival, for it is bright and clean, and when its harbour is full of boats there are many excellent subjects for an artist. It is, however, chiefly known as the starting place for the Pointe du Raz, the most westerly and, perhaps, the most rugged promontory of Brittany, that is in touch on either side with coast scenery of surpassing grandeur. We secured places in an open brake, and in the long drive of fifteen kilometres through a well-cultivated country, divided up into good-sized holdings by hedges and stone walls, and dotted with hamlets and villages we noted many characteristic incidents. To begin with we were pursued for miles by ragged, bare-footed boys and girls clamouring for sous, who, if the education laws were enforced, should have been at school; and by the wayside we saw many little herds who were certainly of the right age for instruction. Prehistoric monuments were rarer than near Penmarch, but here and there a fine



THE BAY OF DOUARNENEZ.

stone calvary marked the entrance to the villages, each of which had its own little church or chapel. As we neared the sea the land became even more and more barren, stacks of furze and cow-dung spread out to dry on the walls, marking the scarcity of fuel, whilst the houses got smaller and smaller, so that when we at last alighted at the top of a narrow lane to make the tour of the wonders of the rocks on foot, it was with a shock of surprise that we saw on the cliffs fronting the Atlantic, two huge hotels with every appearance of prosperity about them.

Eluding the guides, who attached themselves to the rest of the party to introduce them to the terrible *Enfer de Plogoff* and the *Baie des Trepassés*, etc., we slipped away alone to explore the less sinister but equally beautiful coast scenery, enjoying for more than an hour absolute solitude, in a scene of enthralling charm, seeing no fellow-creatures except an old man leading a lamb from one scanty patch of herbage to another, and an ancient crone presiding over the slumbers of a little pig in a ditch, tightly clutching the rope binding him to her, as if there could have been any fear of his escape.

As grand as the rocks of Penmarch, but for some subtle reason less forbidding, the approaches to the *Pointe du Raz* did not impress us with anything like the awe we had felt as we watched the tide coming in from the scene of the catastrophe of 1870, but when, after a long stiff climb we reached the top of the rugged cliff and took up

a position exactly opposite to the famous Raz, we realized that we had, indeed, reached one of the most important points of the western coast, the true *finis terre* of Brittany, of which the beautiful Isle de Sein, looking in the brilliant July sunshine like a swan resting on the waves, and the Rock of Ar-Men, with its lofty lighthouse, are the outposts. We remained for a long time looking down on the dreaded Raz with its seven conflicting currents, in which it seemed impossible for any vessel to live, but, even as we watched, a torpedo-boat suddenly came into view and swiftly made the transit, threading its way unhesitatingly through the foam-flecked maze.

It was with great reluctance that we at last turned away to join our fellow-travellers at one of the hotels, where we were all quickly served with an excellent meal at as reasonable a price as at any of the many inns we had tried in Brittany, a striking proof of the enterprise of the proprietor, for everything must have been brought at a great cost from a long distance. After *déjeuner* we sat outside the hotel, enjoying the grand prospect, and watching the arrival of fresh tourists with their guides, who, by the way, were treated as equals by their employers, who always drank with them before starting on their explorations. Now and then a motor-car would dash past in the direction of the Raz, as if bent on self-destruction, and we heard later, that a day or two after we left, one had actually sprung from the cliffs on to the rocks below, the driver having lost control when endeavouring to turn his

machine. Strange to say no one was hurt, though the car was smashed to pieces.

We made great friends with the housekeeper of the hotel, who told us she was the wife of a fisherman of the Isle de Sein, and gave us a very pathetic account of the poverty there. "So many widows and fatherless children," she said, "I am lucky to have my man still, for the sea takes all our breadwinners sooner or later." We asked if it were possible for us to go to the island, and she told us the proprietor of the hotel was taking the letters in a fishing-boat from Audierne the next day. "He will let you go too if you like, for a few francs, most people have to pay twenty-five or more." We had almost decided to take this chance, when it fortunately occurred to us, to ask when we could return. "Oh, that depends on the weather," was the reply, "in a week or perhaps a fortnight, God only knows;" and as our time was not unlimited, we were obliged to forego the project. As we talked, groups of very hungry-looking children gathered about us, not begging, but gazing wistfully at the scraps of food left on the tables by the guests, so we gave them some sous, and they at once dashed into the hotel, coming back eagerly devouring great slices of bread. "Are they very poor here too?" we inquired. "Oh yes, indeed, potatoes are often all they get, and in bad seasons sometimes not even that, but they are poorer still on my island."

Gladly would we have remained for weeks at this unique retreat, so truly, but for the brief mid-day hours,

far from the madding crowd, for when the last brake had driven away, utter silence settled down once more upon the scene. The gamins followed the carriages, in the hopes of more sous, the weary guides withdrew, and we were again left absolutely alone. Lovely by day, cliff and sea, and distant islands became even more entrancingly beautiful as the sun set and the moon rose, its silvery beams rivalled by the scintillating rays from the lighthouses. What a place for quiet work! what a glorious point of view for studying the moods of the fickle sea! But stern necessity compelled us to resist all the enticements around us, and we too were soon on our way back to Audierne, whence we started for hot, dusty, shut-in Quimperlé, that did, indeed, contrast painfully with the breezy outworks of Finistère that we were leaving behind us.

As far as Quimper we were traversing familiar ground, but between it and Quimperlé all was new to us, and we were struck with the great increase of fertility as we went further and further inland. We passed many large farms, and, rare sight in Brittany, we noticed large herds of cattle grazing untended in great meadows. Moreover, here and there reaping machines were in use, or rather in partial use, for the horses were led by one man whilst another sat idle on the box, and often in a single field we saw women with hand-sickles, toiling away in the old style close to the innovation, at which they looked askance.

Quimperlé did not greatly delight us on first acquaintance, though we gradually discovered that it is really rich in

typical subjects for brush and pen. Built on the slopes of a picturesque valley, where the Ellé and Isole unite to form the Laita, its steep and narrow streets, dominated by the belfry of the ancient church of St. Michel, from which the same voice, now somewhat cracked by age, has called its citizens to prayer for many generations, its wide squares shaded by venerable trees, its beautiful gardens and orchards, its quaint bridges and narrow quays by the boulder-strewn rivers, overlooked by creeper-draped houses, combine to give it an old world character, that gradually wins the affection and respect of the stranger.

Quimperlé is divided into an upper and a lower town, and the latter is again subdivided into two parts, the so-called Ville Close and the Terre de Vannes, the river Ellé having formerly been the boundary between the dioceses of Vannes and Quimper. The original nucleus of the city was the monastery of La Sainte Croix, founded in 1029, the remaining buildings of which are now converted into public offices, whilst the recently well-restored basilica of the same name, built on the plan of the church of the Holy Sepulchre, still preserves to La Ville Close its ecclesiastical appearance.

The men and women of Quimperlé are very frugal and hard-working, and the latter are especially celebrated for their taste in aprons, which are here more delicate and varied in colour than in any other town in Brittany. It is, however, alas, necessary to add, that another peculiarity of the place is the irrepressibility and aggressiveness of the

gamins, who are only excelled in this respect by those of Douarnenez. The holidays had just begun when we arrived, and the ranks of the unemployed children were swelled to such an extent that the whole place simply teemed with them, and wherever we sat down we at once became the centre of an eager, pushing crowd who made it almost impossible to work. For all that I owe these very gamins a debt of gratitude, for through them I made a very important discovery, namely, that though the rising generation in France are no respecters of persons, they have a real reverence for the property of others.

One very hot day I was sitting on the quay by the Laita, near the washerwomen my husband was putting in his sketch, and was feeling that I could not bear the discomfort much longer, for I had again and again removed grimy hands from my shoulder in vain, when I suddenly and unwittingly intercepted some soapsuds flung by one boy at another. I laid my umbrella down beside me to wipe my smarting eyes, and to my surprise my persecutors drew back beyond it. A hint is enough to the desperate, and I at once removed the barrier further off, and supplemented it with a camp stool. The result was truly remarkable; not again did a child come near enough to touch me, and later I found it sufficient to place a stick on the ground a few yards behind my seat. No one touched it, no one stepped across it, and it became possible to read in peace. Moreover, we found it quite safe to leave an unfinished sketch unprotected on an easel in the open air, the boldest



BRIDGE OVER THE ELLÉ, QUIMPERLÉ.

boy would respect it, and if we happened to leave any of our belongings behind us, they were sure to be restored to us, perhaps by the very ringleader of the worst of the gamins.

I went several times to the services at St. Michel, which was always full of reverent worshippers, and where the charming old custom of handing round the Blessed Bread was observed. One Sunday afternoon, too, I attended vespers in the basilica of Sainte Croix in the lower town, and was very greatly impressed by the scene I witnessed there. The raised choir and the steps leading up to it were crowded, and beneath the arches supporting the main body of the church, as well as in the wide ambulatory encircling them, many women were kneeling on the stones in rapt devotion. One group especially beneath the west window, the many-coloured light from which threw upon them a transient glory, attracted my attention, for there was about it a nameless charm, a sculpturesque fitness, that still haunts my memory. No fashionably-dressed beauties, however devout or however forgetful of self, could so impress the imagination as do the sombrely-dressed Breton women when at prayer, and it is difficult to define in what consists this unique distinction, a heritage of dignity shared by the poorest and most careworn of the daughters of the soil.

Strange to say, at the most solemn moment of the touching service, when all heads were bowed and the whole vast building seemed charged with devotion, two French

gentlemen—Catholics, for they crossed themselves with holy water as they came in—made the tour of the church, whispering together, unproved by the attendants, and taking no notice of the annoyance they were causing. Such a thing would be impossible in Protestant England, but France is full of anomalies, and this fact was very forcibly brought home to me every time I looked out of my window at Quimperlé, for on the wall opposite was the legend in huge letters, "Véritable liqueur fabriquée à Tarra-gone par les pères Chartreux," proving that, however unrelenting the rigour with which the authorities pursue the religious orders, there is no ban against their liqueurs. From that same window I watched the building of a house, twelve men leaning against a long ladder, handing up a single stone at a time, a remarkable instance of the Breton conception of economy of time and labour. Yet an American gentleman whom we met in our hotel, told us that in the last year he had sold over 15,000 reaping machines in France, and was now hoping to get them introduced in the extreme west of Brittany, though he added, "It is the most difficult thing I have tried to do yet, and I shall certainly never get the peasants to use them properly, but that is *tout à fait une autre chose*."

Many were the weddings and many the funerals that took place whilst we were at Quimperlé, and at each there was something typical to notice. At the former the bride and bridegroom, followed by a long procession of friends, used to march round and round the town all day long,

halting at pretty well every inn for refreshments, after which they would dance in the street outside to the music of the bagpipes or an ancient concertina, the poor bride becoming quite exhausted before the end of the festivities, and the bridegroom too unsteady on his legs through his many potations, to be of much support to her. At the funerals, too, there was often a kind of sombre enjoyment, for they were made the occasion of the gathering together of friends and acquaintances. One, a child's, struck us especially, for the mourners were all women, and the father was represented by his hat only, carried solemnly behind the small coffin by the mother.

Quimperlé is in touch with much fine forest scenery, the extensive woods of Clohars-Carnavêt, in which every Whit Monday a bird-fair is held, beginning just outside the lower town; and twelve kilometres away is the charming little hamlet of Le Pouldou, built partly on the river and partly on the sea, which, except for a very short time in the height of the summer, is one of the most peaceful retreats in Brittany. Its loneliness and seclusion contrast very greatly with the life and animation of Pont Aven, to which we went after quite a long stay at Quimperlé, whence, by the way, our departure was as significant of the disregard of the value of time as any of our experiences in our wanderings. We had been so hampered in finishing our work that we had some difficulty in getting to the station at the time our train was advertised to start, but we waited in it nearly two hours before it left. We felt sure

we must have lost the one we meant to catch, but on inquiry found we were mistaken, for we were told we were in the 12.50, but just to-day it might be an hour or two late in going!

We had of course heard a great deal of Pont Aven, of the beauty of its situation, its cosmopolitan colony of artists, and the comforts of the famous hotel under the motherly care of Mademoiselle Julia; so that when at last, quite late in the day, we alighted from our tardy train, we were full of happy anticipation. It must be owned, however, we were at first just a little disappointed; for though the village is certainly pretty, built as it is on either side of a picturesque stream, there is nothing exceptional about it, and the scenery in which it is set is excelled in romantic beauty by many districts in Devon and Cornwall. Nevertheless we had not been at Pont Aven long, before we ourselves fell under its subtle spell, and, although we had intended to stop but a day or two, we found it difficult to leave it at the end of a week. We made friends later with some artists who told us they had come for a summer's work and remained for years. "We feel at home here, you see," they said, "and live our own lives independently of the people, who, though of course they profit by the influx of foreigners from over seas, are not otherwise in the least affected by it; so that the local colouring is retained as it would scarcely be elsewhere under similar conditions."

It was market day when we arrived at Pont Aven, and the scene presented was, of course, full of animation and

primitive charm, but there was nothing at all distinctive about the wares spread out for sale in the booths, though in the crowds gathered about them American ladies in dainty dresses and hats fresh from Paris and artists of both sexes in more or less æsthetic and eccentric array, rubbed shoulders with peasants in ancient blouses and women in the traditional Breton costumes. Here a motley group had gathered to listen to a blind old man singing a quaint local *chanson*, there a purely native throng was clustered about an enterprising dealer in prayer-books, who was doing a very brisk trade as he chanted the praises of his wares, to the music of a barrel-organ played by a small boy.

No, it is not in the market place, not on the riverside road leading to the sea, where the spray from the far-famed water-mills cools the air, not even in the great Hôtel Julia, where delightful society may be enjoyed in surroundings of true refinement, but in the narrow water-washed alleys where the women, with their children beside them, ply their washing beetles close to their own doorsteps; in the shady lanes leading to the Bois d'Amour, where ancient crones sit spinning or knitting outside their low dark cottages, and in the Bois itself, with its tender grey-green colouring, its moss-grown boulders by the waterside, its picturesque weir, where at eventide the village boys bathe, looking like young Apollos as they disport themselves in the sun-flecked foam, that the secret of the fascination of Pont Aven is revealed. Those who once enter that magic wood,

will find themselves involuntarily wending their way thither day after day, their enjoyment of it ever increasing, an enjoyment unspoiled by the presence of the many artists and their models, who, absorbed in their work, take no notice of the passers-by and seem part and parcel of the peaceful scene, where even the French gamins cease from troubling and the way-worn pilgrims are at rest.

We had been at the Hôtel Julia for two days, reveling in the comfort of our big studio bedroom, the cool saloon and the beautiful garden, and already, thanks to the cordial welcome given to us by our fellow-guests, feeling like *habitués* of the place, before we made acquaintance with its presiding genius. I amused myself with trying to identify her without help, and after making several wrong guesses, I had decided that she was a certain noble-looking old lady with snow-white hair, who always had a little court about her, and when this, too, was found to be a mistake, I resolved to get some one to point her out to me. That same evening, however, the mystery was solved, for when *table d'hôte* was going on, and the great *salle-à-manger* was so full that the powers of the girls in attendance were taxed to the uttermost, a very tall broad-shouldered peasant woman in a shabby black dress, holding a great knife in her hand, suddenly appeared, made her way to the lift—which, by the way, is fitted up in a beautiful old Breton *lit clos*—and at once took the command. Several of the gentlemen near the door rose and bowed as she came in, and I felt sure this must really be the far-famed

Mlle. Julia. I was right, and the next morning I was fortunate enough to get a little chat with her, as she sat beneath the trees outside the hotel, stringing beans and acknowledging with a friendly nod the respectful salutations of the guests as they passed to and fro. She was ready enough to confide in me, told me how she had begun life as a waitress in the very hotel she now owns, but had left on account of a difficulty with a fellow-servant.

Soon after the departure of Mlle. Julia the owner of the hotel suddenly died, some say committed suicide, and the artists who had been boarding with him sent to beg her to come to their aid, for they did not wish to leave, and there was no other hotel to go to. After some demur, for she had no capital, she consented and she got on so well, that in the end she was able not only to build on to the original hotel, but to supplement it with no less than three annexes—the one we were in, the one upon the hill, and the one at Port Manech, at the mouth of the river, which madame, she said, certainly ought to see. It was the old hotel she loved best still, “had I noticed the paintings on the panels in the coffee-room? they were all done for her by students who had since become famous. Ah, how poor and hopeless some of them were when they were here! Had I seen the lovely old *faïence*? Much of that had been given to her by a guest still with her, who came twenty years ago and seemed likely to stop the rest of his life. Ah, they do not make such things any more now,”

she added with a sigh, "but when I was young everything for daily use was beautiful."

Mlle. Julia dwelt much on the kindness she had received, but it was from others that I heard of her own many generous deeds, of her charity to the poor, who come in crowds on Monday mornings to receive each a buckwheat pancake and a sou, of the veneration in which she is held by many a now successful artist, whom she had nursed in sickness and cheered in depression. The proudest moment of her life, she will tell you, was when, on the invitation of some of her old students, she went to Paris to see the Salon. She wore her peasant's costume, cap and collar and all, and was escorted round the galleries on varnishing day by her friends, as if she had been a queen at least—little dreaming that her simple dignity and total absence of self-consciousness, really made her one of the most appreciated of the many notable personages at that most characteristic gathering.

Within easy reach of Pont Aven is the picturesque chapel of Tremalo, with a long sloping roof and a quaint little belfry which, with the fine stone cross near by, form a charming picture, especially when some religious ceremony is going on, and pilgrims are kneeling on the grass and the steps of the cross, whilst groups of peasants are drinking cider together in the adjoining orchard. Within the church is some beautiful old carving and very good mediæval stained glass, which, by the way, an American lady stopping at the Hôtel Julia told us she had tried in



THE CROSS AND CHURCH OF TREMALO.

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vain to buy to take home with her. "The curé, tiresome man," she said, "would not let me have it!" A decision that, when we had seen the glass, did not surprise us.

It was at Tremalo, after assisting at the pardon, that we saw the most characteristic figure we had come across in all our wanderings. We were examining the coveted stained glass, as we thought, in the empty church, when a rustling sound attracted our attention, and we noticed in a dark corner, what looked like a bundle of rags and straw till it began to move, and resolved itself into an old crone, with a wizened face, framed in the very full, dirty borders of a dirty cap, and wearing a collection of many coloured ragged shawls, with a series of ample but ragged petticoats, one above the other, kept out from the hips by a huge crinoline from below which protruded two sturdy legs, clothed in thick knitted stockings, a pair of sabots, stuffed with straw, completing the extraordinary costume.

To add to the grotesqueness of this female Rip van Winkle, she carried, hung round her shoulders like a necklace, bundles of supplementary rags, which she wore with the dignity of a queen in her coronation robes, adjusting them with care before she left the church and stepped out amongst the crowds without, saluting them solemnly as they drew back in astonishment at her sudden apparition, and holding out for alms a skinny hand like a bird's claw. Slowly she threaded her way amongst the pilgrims, exacting toll as she went. When she came to the long beech avenue leading to the church, she fell on

her knees to pray again and again, reaping each time a rich harvest of sous, and before resuming her course rearranging her awful draperies to the accompaniment of a ripple of laughter from the bystanders and exclamations in many different languages. Evidently the old lady is a privileged person in these parts, where it is no disgrace to be a beggar, for amongst the other pilgrims we noted many who were apparently quite well-to-do, turning the occasion to account. One very picturesque-looking old man, for instance, in a beautiful blue vest and jacket, with much gold braid, who had knelt all through the service near the church door, apparently absorbed in devotion, and had been sketched or photographed by several artists, never failed to hold out one hand for his guerdon, whilst he told his beads with the other, keeping his eyes shut the while as if quite unconscious of what he was doing.

From Tremalo we went to the equally interesting chapel of St. Maude, now disused and full of pathetic beauty in its forsaken loneliness, and retaining the characteristic feature of a wooden gallery, with some quaintly realistic carving on the massive but decaying beams.

Yet another relic of the long ago near Pont Aven, is the ruined château of Rustephan, once a favourite hunting lodge of the Dukes of Brittany, to which a very romantic interest is attached, for it is said to be haunted by a whole party of ghosts, who appear at midnight and perform the mass for the dead, in memory of the tragic fate of a certain

Geneviève de Rustephan, who died of grief because her lover deserted her to become a priest.

It is well worth while to go down to Port Manech from Pont Aven, for it is a very charming and typical little place, in one of the many secluded bays, that are such a noteworthy feature of the Breton coast. We made the trip with some delightful American friends, in what one of them aptly called "a mean little motor-boat," that reeked of paraffin, but we were fully rewarded for the discomfort by the beauty of the scenery we passed and by the delights of Port Manech itself. To avoid the long, hot walk from the landing-stage to the beach, we hired a fishing-boat to take us to the bathing-place, which we had entirely to ourselves. There, after a refreshing dip in the sea, which was icy cold in spite of the great heat of the day, we spent an ideal two hours sitting beneath the shady trees, which grew nearly to the water's edge, and, when we were tired of inaction, exploring the ancient church and a yet more ancient farm that both seemed to be in the very last stage of their long-protracted existence. All too soon our fishermen hailed us from afar, warning us that it was time to return, and we hurried back to the beach, to find that the tide was running out fast and that we must wade to the boat if we wished to return in her. At the last minute we were saved from this somewhat risky proceeding, for our escort managed to make a bridge of oars, and we all achieved the perilous transit dry shod. The bay and river were more lovely than ever in the evening light, for the gleaming mud on

either side of our course glowed like fire, and we met the boats from Pont Aven going out with the tide, some of them full of most picturesque groups of fishermen.

It would be impossible to imagine a greater change than that from the Vale of Rest, in which Pont Aven is situated, to the head-quarters of the sardine fisheries, densely populated Concarneau, where life at the best is strenuous and full of anxiety, and at its worst darkened by bravely-endured suffering and privation. We were fortunate in seeing it under both conditions, for we arrived when the effects of the strike were still very evident, and the boats had been out again and again without result, whilst before we left we witnessed the arrival of the very largest catch that had been known for several years. We made the journey from Pont Aven in a springless wagonette, with one fellow-passenger only, an Irishman, whose enthusiasm for everything Breton knew no bounds, for in Bretons, he declared, he recognized the best qualities of his own fellow-countrymen, the one difference between them in his opinion, he shrewdly added, was that the former were without the sense of humour, which is the saving quality of the Irish. We stopped very often, now to look at some prehistoric monument, now to examine an ancient church, and whenever we halted we were at once surrounded by beggars. Amongst them was a blind old man, who continued to beg of the empty carriage when we had all left it, a fact that brought his helplessness so forcibly before us that we



VILLE CLOSE AND HARBOUR, CONCARNEAU.

tipped him liberally. The Irishman, however, who had been very lavish of his sous to the children, would give him nothing, for he remarked "that blind man knows his business well."

Modern Concarneau did not please us very much, for it is squalid and dirty, but we were charmed with the quaint old *ville close*, that is connected by a single narrow bridge with the new town, for though it is not remarkable for cleanliness, it is a true bit of mediæval Brittany, with its three picturesque gateways, its massive fortifications, its closely-packed houses, and its ugly church dominating the whole and commanding a grand view of the land-locked harbour, the crowded piers, and the distant Baie de la Forêt.

The scenes that met our eyes as we waited amongst fishermen and peasant-women for the clumsy ferry boat, that is the one link between the *ville closé* and the opposite Côte de Lannec, and watched the children, true water-babies, pottering skilfully about in rafts or playing in the fishing-smacks at anchor, must have been much the same as those that were familiar to the doomed Huguenots in the time of the wars of the League. Some of the cottages near which we landed, built of quarried stones, fitted in between prehistoric menhirs, must have been standing when Du Guesclin came to the relief of the besieged town, and his troops must often have looked across at Concarneau from the grass-clad heights, where now men and women were peacefully engaged in mending the beautiful pale blue sardine nets stretched out upon the sward, that

looked at a little distance like reflections of the sky above. We paused to examine some of these nets, and chatted with their owners, who told us that each one was worth at least ninety-five francs, for it takes a very long time to make them, and, unfortunately, they are very easily spoiled, especially when there is a great shoal of fish, for they tear the meshes in their frantic struggles to get free.

We were so utterly charmed with the Côte de Lannec, with its breezy cliffs, its primitive people, its beautiful views, and its quiet as compared with Concarneau, that, could we have found rooms, we would gladly have taken up our quarters there, but as it was we elected for the Hôtel Atlantique—a decision we had every reason to congratulate ourselves upon, for in it we spent the most exciting, though not perhaps, our sympathies being keen, quite the happiest week of our long stay in Brittany. The hotel, a new one, is built opposite the sea, only a few yards from the edge of the rocks, far from the evil odours of the harbour, yet in thorough touch with the life of the people, for the two balconies of our room commanded, one, the principal pier and its glorious environment, the very focus of interest in good times and bad, the other the rugged coast, the islet-strewn offing, and the open ocean.

On the day of our arrival a settled gloom reigned in the town, and on our way from the *ville close* to the hotel we noted many groups of women talking

eagerly together at the corners of the streets, or sitting in attitudes of weary listlessness on the quays, whilst on the rocks near the pier were crowds all looking seawards as if in strained expectancy. On inquiry we learnt that the sardine fleet was expected back, but that there was little hope of a good catch, for since the strike the stupid little fish seemed to have turned sulky. Early in the morning of the next day many boats came in, but it had been signalled before they arrived that the presentment was well founded, for the men had toiled all night and taken nothing.

It was truly depressing to wander about on the pier and quays that day; and seeing many hungry-looking men leaning against the railings of the inner harbour, where there were numbers of small rowing boats moored, we tried to persuade several of them to take us out for an hour or two. After a good deal of hesitation, which we found it rather difficult to understand, one of them said we could have his boat for an hour, his boy would go with us, the charge would be five francs and a *pourboire* for the boy. Vainly we protested against the exorbitant charge, and in the end we gave up the idea of a row, the incident having somewhat changed our view of the situation, for though the general impression was that there would be little more fish taken that season, the poverty could not be so extreme as it had appeared, when such a chance of making a little money was deliberately thrown away.

Very early the next morning we were woke by a great commotion going on outside our hotel, to the accompaniment of what we thought was an alarm bell, but which turned out to be merely a summons to the Hôtel de la Criée or Auction Hall. We hurried to the windows and there spread out before us was a scene of surpassing beauty and interest. On the right, crowds of men and women were pouring into the hall; on the left, the approaches to the pier were thronged with carts and barrows, the little sentry-like offices for the counting and selling of the sardines all open, their owners waiting outside, whilst the pier itself was black with people, the cliffs and rocks dotted with groups of women and children, all pointing seawards and gesticulating eagerly, some of the little ones, infected with the general sense of relief, dancing together in light-hearted glee. Beyond, against a background of gold and crimson sky—for the sun was only just rising—could be seen the gleaming waters of the beautiful bay now almost full of incoming boats, their tawny sails glowing like fire as they slowly made their way amongst the islands, jostling each other in their haste to be the first to get into port. Hundreds must have passed our windows as we made our hasty toilette; yet still they came, the distant sea soon completely blotted out by them, and the horizon line darkened as by an invading host, whilst the excitement on land became ever greater and greater.

On the steps of our hotel we found our host, who

told us that the biggest catch of sardines had been taken that had been known for many years, and that, in addition to the Concarneau fleet, which numbers over a thousand boats, a number of vessels from Quiberon, Belle Isle and elsewhere were bringing in their spoil. We hastened down to the pier, making our way with difficulty through the throngs, and all day long, with a few brief intervals of rest, we watched the coming in and unloading of the boats—the interest becoming ever greater as the whole drama of the life of the people was, as it were, unfolded before us. Now we stood enthralled at the end of the pier to gaze at the graceful crafts rounding the corner, and to look down upon the weary but exultant fishermen, their weather-stained overalls contrasting with the gleaming silver of the fish amongst which they stood; now we squeezed our way to the railing above the inner harbour and looked down upon the unloading, which was proceeded with very rapidly, but in a most primitive fashion, boys and men carrying away the fish in hand-baskets, pausing to dip each in the sea before they left the boats, an endless procession passing to and fro for some sixteen hours without a single break.

Many of the fishermen after emptying their boats prepared their simple meal on board, so as to be able to go out again with the tide, and beautiful as was the sight during the unloading, it was excelled in pathos and human interest by many a scene in the brief interval of comparative repose, when the toilers of the deep, having discarded

their sea raiment, sat round a fire of sticks in their faded blue jackets and trousers to enjoy their frugal meal of *potage au pain*, the blue smoke from the damp wood and the shimmer of the wet sardine-nets, hanging out to dry above their heads, giving to the homely group a touch of mystery.

Scarcely less interesting, though not quite so picturesque, were the incidents to be noted round the sardine offices, where women deftly counted and sorted the fish, giving to each man a tally for his load; in the auction hall, where the sorting and packing of that portion of the spoil set aside for immediate consumption was going on; and in the sardine factories, where hundreds of women were hard at work all day, and much of the night, struggling to cope with the extraordinary demand on their skill and despatch. We obtained permission to go over the Amieux Frères dépôt, and saw the whole process—the washing of the sardines in tanks, the cutting off of the heads, the dipping in boiling oil, the preparing for the so-called *bain de soleil*, which gives them their fine flavour; with the packing and the final soldering of the tins—and we were touched by the friendly greetings given to us by the weary toilers, who were all, in spite of their haste, eager to explain everything to us. One woman at a vat of boiling oil, who looked terribly exhausted, offered me an empty box to sit on, and when after thanking her I said, “It is hard work this hot weather, is it not?” she replied with a touching smile, “*Bien dur, madame.*”

Long after sunset on that eventful day, boats were still coming in, whilst others were going out, and lovely as the scene had been in the morning it was surpassed in poetic beauty as the moon rose and the stars came out, all the stress and strain of the day apparently forgotten, though as a matter of fact many remained at work all night, and we were again roused betimes the next morning by the shrill voice of the auction bell. Not, indeed, for three days did the excitement subside, but later we contented ourselves, at our landlord's suggestion, with making the roof of the hotel our point of view, climbing up there again and again, to revel in the magnificent prospect it commanded of the whole of the town, with the crowded harbours, the shores of the mainland, and the vast Baie de la Forêt, in which we were now able to watch the manœuvres of the fleet to the greatest advantage.

At Concarneau, as at nearly every place in which we stopped in Brittany, we were much impressed by the importance of religion in the everyday life of the people. The very gamins who used to bathe from the piers never failed to cross themselves before they sprang into the water, many of those who were relieved from want by the great take of fish fell on their knees on the rocks to return thanks, or hastened to the calvary commanding a view of the bay, to kneel at its foot, and the little chapel on the cliff near our hotel was seldom empty, even when there was no special occasion for anxiety or gratitude. I used often to go and rest there, and more than once of

an evening, when I had thought I was alone, I discovered, as my eyes got accustomed to the gloom, that I was mistaken, for there was sure to be some fisherman's wife or mother, prostrate before the altar, praying for her loved ones at sea, or a group of tiny children telling their beads under the care of an elder sister. The Bretons, indeed, even in busy hard-working Concarneau, really care more for the unseen than the seen; they are most of them quite indifferent to what they eat and to the miserable surroundings in which they often live, but they love the little chapels in which they pray. These chapels are their true homes, in many cases the only ones in which they can be sure of rest and peace.

The fashionable quarter of Concarneau, with its well-built though ugly villas, facing the sea and with a fine view of the rocky beach, presents a very marked contrast both to the *ville close* and the comparatively modern town, but there is very much that is picturesque and interesting about it. No more charming walk could be imagined than that from the cliff chapel to Fouessant, on the north-west of the Baie de la Fôret, especially at low tide, when the sea-weed gatherers are at work and bathing is going on in the secluded little bays. The well-to-do French are seen at their best in these remote sea-side places, whole families enjoying simple pleasures together, content to sit for hours drinking in the fresh air and watching their children at play.

We had told our host of our disappointment at

not being able to get a boat to explore the harbours, and he at once suggested that he should lend us his private smack for a sail in the Baie de la Fôret, which he said was far more interesting than the shut-in basins, that can really be seen just as well from land. "If you like," he added, "you can go to Beg-Meil, a pretty little bathing-place beyond Fouessant, have a couple of hours there, and return with the evening tide." This sounded most delightful, and we gladly accepted. It was a glorious summer morning when we started, so hot that we could scarcely believe it necessary to take wraps with us, though our host insisted on supplementing our rugs with his own. Our embarkation was easy enough, for when we started nearly all the boats were again dispersed, and there was nothing to interfere with our placid enjoyment of the sail. Our two boatmen were evidently thoroughly experienced, and pointed out the various islands in the distance on our left, forming part of the glorious archipelago: the islet known as the Cigogne, with a now dismantled fort, the Isle aux Moutons with a fine lighthouse, the island of St. Nicolas, inhabited by about a hundred fishermen, who are often cut off for weeks together from any communication with the mainland, with many other isolated rocks, where sea-birds alone have their home, though now and then a few fishermen take refuge on them in stormy weather.

In less than an hour we entered the lovely little bay in which Beg-Meil, that greatly resembles Port Manech, is

built; and after a somewhat difficult landing, for the tide was now running out, we took up a position on a rock, from which we could watch the beach, bright with the crowds of holiday makers in their gay summer toilettes. Later we strolled inland, very soon leaving the fashionable element entirely behind, and entering a beautiful well-cultivated district, with comfortable homesteads, and evidently thriving farms dotted here and there amongst the undulating pastures and heaths, the latter golden with gorse and broom, whilst every now and then we caught a glimpse of the distant sea, with groups of fishing-boats clearly defined against the horizon. Here, as at Pont Aven, the ways of the people are not in the least modified by the invasion from without, and when we returned to the beach we found groups of natives, waiting on the pier for the incoming steamer, whose costumes were as distinctive as those we had seen at Plougastel and at Quimper.

We had a long wait before it was possible to get to our boat, and when, after a somewhat perilous climb into it from the rickety tub which had brought the steamer passengers ashore, we started for Concarneau, all was changed. The wind had risen and it had begun to rain. "There is a storm coming up," said one of the boatmen, "if Madame is afraid, she had better stop at Beg-Meil till to-morrow." "Madame" was not afraid, but rather glad of a chance of a new experience, which she certainly obtained, for almost before we had left the sheltered bay behind us the squall was upon us. The rain began to pour

down in sheets, the waves broke over the sides of the boat, and we were glad, indeed, of all our wraps, that our men supplemented with a spare sail, wrapping it carefully about us. Several times, it seemed to me, we were on the brink of destruction, so dangerously near were we to bristling rocks, but each time that I expected a crash we passed safely by. Then what appeared to me a fresh peril occurred in the close proximity of other smacks fleeing like our own to shelter, but when our boatmen showed no anxiety on that score, I took heart and began to feel that I was really getting an insight into the hard conditions of a fisherman's life.

It was only when we came to the *chevaux de frise* that guards the entrance to the harbour of Concarneau, with but one narrow passage in the middle of the obstruction, that either of our men seemed in the least uneasy. One of them glanced at us and told us to hold tight, which we had been doing all along. Then, with a look of stern purpose in his face, our helmsman seemed to steer directly for the very worst point of the terrible-looking rocks, and I could not help shutting my eyes, as I clung desperately to my husband. There was a slight jar, a sound of scraping, and we were through. The worst was over, for now we were in comparatively smooth water. The next moment the sun came out, the rain ceased, and a magnificent rainbow spanned the sky. In another few minutes our uninjured bark was daintily threading her way amongst

the crowds of boats heading for the pier. It was no easy task to get to the landing-place, for the harbour was again crowded with fishing-smacks, and ours was finally brought-to with several others between it and the shore. There were, however, plenty of willing hands to help us climb across them, and I could not resist feeling a certain elation at having successfully braved what had seemed to me the perils of the deep. It was a little daunting when our men, who were full of gratitude for a tip of a franc each, observed, "Madame is such a good sailor she ought to go with us again when it is really rough!"

Before we left Concarneau, we drove to the Château of Kerioret, a modern building in the fifteenth-century style, that was left to the Department by the Princess Narischkine in 1890, and is now fitted up as a museum, in which, amongst other very interesting exhibits, is a complete collection of Breton caps, that are a useful aid to the identification of those still worn in Brittany. Our guide seemed to feel no little contempt for our enthusiasm over the treasures under his care, and when, after reading some of the labels, I made a remark about them, he observed, "You need not believe what is written there, for it is not true." In the chapel I asked him if he knew where the Duchess Anne used to kneel, and he replied, "How can I know? perhaps she was never here!"

Chatting with our landlord later about the museum, he told us that his father had been the first curator, and

it was he who chose many of the best exhibits. "You ought to know my father," he added, "for he, too, is an artist, *hors concours* for many years. Perhaps you know his work, his name is Deyrolle-Guillou." "Of course, I know his pictures," exclaimed my husband, "and I knew he was living in Concarneau, though I had not realized that he is your father." "Well he is, I am proud to say," was the reply, "and if you like I will arrange for you and Madame to have an interview with him in his studio. I seldom speak of him to my guests, for if he admitted every one, he would never get anything done, but when my house is full, he often puts people up for me."

The interview with M. Deyrolle-Guillou was duly arranged, and the half-hour we spent with the veteran painter is one of our pleasantest memories of Concarneau. The artist himself, a noble-looking, elderly man with white hair, in painting blouse, thumb in palette, answered our ring, and led us into his studio, a vast old-fashioned room, the door opening on to a beautiful garden, in which he told us he poses his models. Pictures were everywhere, some that had already been exhibited at the Salon, but, alas, were returned unsold, and on the easel a large unfinished composition of peasants dancing after a pardon, all the subjects Breton—Breton furniture, Breton brasses, Breton faïence. "You love everything Breton, I see," I ventured to remark, "and I do not wonder, for I think Brittany is the most interesting country in the world." "You are right, Madame," he replied, and he waxed

eloquent over the characteristics of the people, urging me, if I had not yet seen it, to read Anatole Le Braz's *Au Pays des Pardons*, "a true masterpiece, for he knows the Bretons better than any other living man." "Surely not better than you, Monsieur," I suggested. "You who are always painting them." "Ah! but you see they *pose* for me; *he* has caught them in their most unself-conscious moments, which is quite another thing." Then the talk drifted to art, and M. Deyrolle-Guillou observed, sadly enough, that artists are no longer prosperous in France. "All the money is spent in automobiles now. I make my living by selling little panels at 100 francs each; my big pictures, into which I put my best powers, remain on my hands. I chose the hotel business for my son, it is better than his father's profession." We took our leave reluctantly, for we had greatly valued our brief interview, and we left Concarneau, feeling much impressed with the simple dignity and total absence of false pride of the great artist and of his son, who from amongst all those who frequent his hotel, had selected us for the privilege of an introduction to his father.



LOW TIDE, CONCARNEAU.

## CHAPTER X

FROM CONCARNEAU TO BELLE ISLE EN MER, BY WAY OF  
LORIENT, AURAY, CARNAC AND QUIBERON

It was with very great reluctance that we left our bright, breezy, bracing quarters at Concarneau, to continue our eastward journey, passing at first over familiar ground, though our fellow-passengers were different to those we had met before, for amongst them were a number of Carthusian and some few Benedictine nuns, whose presence proved that some members at least of the persecuted sisterhoods are still allowed to reside in southern Finistère. Lorient, the first place new to us, a sea-port with no sea view, is disappointing, for it is completely modernized, and its one noteworthy feature is the vast dockyard, though even that is completely shut in by lofty walls, and can only be seen to real advantage from the tower of the parish church. It is different with the little port of St. Louis, built on the opposite side of the estuary formed by the junction of the rivers Scroff and Blavet, for it retains the ancient fortifications built by order of Richelieu, commands the entrance to the harbour, and

owns, in addition to a fine beach with a grand sea-view, many beautiful gardens.

From Lorient it is but a short journey to Hennebont, a very typical old Breton town, built on the Blavet, a little above its mouth, and though on a much smaller scale, somewhat resembling Concarneau, with its *ville close*, its modern town and land-locked harbour, that is always full of shipping at high tide. Many of its narrow, tortuous streets, and time-worn houses are little changed since the days when Jeanne de Montfort and her escort used to ride through them, and it retains important fragments of the old ramparts, as well as one imposing tower.

In the inland districts of eastern Finistère, there are several other interesting towns that have retained their mediæval character, in spite of all attacks that have been made upon it by so-called modern progress. Of these, Pontivy, on the upper waters of the Blavet, is a very noteworthy example, for with dogged resolution its people have clung to their ancient traditions through many vicissitudes, and its grand old castle, long the favourite home of the Dukes of Brittany, still bears witness to the days when it was an important stronghold. Here, on January 29th, 1790, in the Church of the Recollets, the young Breton volunteers took the solemn oath to fight against the enemies of the Revolution, taking for watchword the inspiring motto "*Vivre libres ou mourir*," an event commemorated by a monument near Notre Dame de la Joie, an interesting fifteenth-century church.

During the triumphant reign of the first Emperor, a new quartier, little more than a huge barrack, was built on to Pontivy, that was to be henceforth called Napoleonville, but the new name was never adopted by the townsfolk, although Napoleon III did his best to enforce its use.

About six miles to the south of Pontivy, also on the Blavet, is the interesting little village of St. Nicholas des Eaux, with a sixteenth-century chapel dedicated to St. Nicodemus, the fine tower and spire of which are a landmark for many miles round. On the first Saturday in August takes place the *Pardon de St. Nicodème*, a most beautiful and typically Breton ceremony, for the disciple who came to Jesus by night is credited with being the special protector of cattle, and the people for many miles round bring their animals to be blest at his shrine, and to drink the water from a fountain near his chapel.

Round about the quaint calvary of Melrand, a short distance from St. Nicholas des Eaux, also take place many characteristic scenes, for it is a convenient resting-place for the pilgrims on their way to and from the pardon. It merits examination on its own account also, for it differs considerably from other monuments of a similar kind in Brittany, the cross of the Lord being upheld by a pedestal with well-carved heads on either side, whilst above the figure of the dying Redeemer appears God the Father resting His hands on cherubs' heads.

Another village between Pontivy and Auray, to which many pilgrimages are made, is Baud, chiefly famous for

the presence of the so-called Venus of Quinipily, a fine antique statue, possibly of Greek origin, that stands upon a pedestal in the court-yard of the ancient château of Quinipily, and on the subject of which there has of late years been much learned discussion. Whence this Venus came is unknown, but she is credited in popular belief with being a sorceress, who will help those who know how to approach her properly, but avenge herself terribly on any who neglect to treat her with due honour. No efforts of the priests can shake this conviction, and the Venus receives nearly as much homage as the Blessed Virgin herself.

We arrived at Auray, which we intended to make our next sketching-ground, in time to drive out to the scene of the great pardon of the 26th of July the same day. We had heard so much of the wonder-working image of St. Anne, in honour of which the great new basilica had been built, and of the extraordinary scenes that take place during the week of the pardon, that we expected to be ourselves roused to enthusiasm, but, alas, disappointment awaited us at every turn, and we got a great deal more enjoyment out of our visits by the way to the Carthusian convent, with the *Chapelle Expiatoire*, the *Chapelle Sépulcrale*, and the *Champs des Martyrs*, than we did out of the time spent at St. Anne d'Auray itself.

The approach to the convent is very beautiful, and beneath the venerable trees in a beech wood close by, were camped many picturesque groups of pilgrims, priests

and peasants sharing a simple *al fresco* meal as they rested after their long tramp to the various sacred spots. We were received at the gateway by a white-robed nun, who led us in solemn silence to the revered spot where rest the bones of some of the martyred *émigrés* who were shot near Quiberon in 1795. We began to ply our guide with questions, but she shook her head and laid her fingers on her lips as if in reproach for our irreverence. We had not, alas, read our guide-book properly before we came, or we should have known that the Chartreuse is now a home for deaf-mutes, under the care of a few nuns who are allowed to remain here for their sake. We were presently handed over to one of these nuns, who escorted us with a number of other visitors through the chapel and cloisters, treating us all, though there were two officers and several priests amongst us, as if we were a party of school-children.

We were told the whole wonderful story of St. Bruno, as the copies of Flandrin's frescoes were pointed out to us, our instructress shaking her finger at any one who ventured to smile, yet now and then actually indulging in something very like a wink, as she brought out some astounding facts, as much as to say you need not believe that unless you like. Before we left we asked our nun if she would have to leave her native country, and she replied, crossing her hands on her breast, "*Oh jamais, jamais, je reste ici*," but a deep sigh followed, for she evidently has her doubts on the subject. Our leave-taking was quite touching, for one of the deaf mutes picked a bunch of roses and gave some of

them to me, and our nun watched us till we were out of sight, waving her hand again and again.

The *Champs des Martyrs* and the *Chapelle Expiatoire* were less interesting, and we contented ourselves with a glance at them, making our next halt at the entrance to a railed-in meadow containing the monument to the Comte de Chambord, surmounted by a statue of him wearing the royal robes, to which he had no right, beneath which are the strangely-assorted figures of Bayard, Joan of Arc, Du Guesclin and St. Geneviève.

At last we arrived at the goal of our pilgrimage, the mushroom town of St. Anne, the large modern church, the wide open space about it, flanked on every side by booths stocked with candles and *objets de piété*, the Scala Santa, which two or three pilgrims were even then ascending on their knees saying a prayer on each step—all presenting an appearance of spick and span newness that greatly damped our ardour. "It looks like a regular money-making place," was the irreverent comment of one of us, and, though we saw cause to modify this hasty judgment, the great gulf that divides St. Anne d'Auray from the primitive sanctuary of her namesake of La Palude, was brought more fully home to us when we stood before the gorgeous golden image that replaces the old wooden statue, said to have been dug up in the seventeenth century on the site of the church, by a peasant named Nicolazie, apropos of which a quaint legend is told.

Nicolazie, though a very poor man, was so respected



OLD MARKET HALL AT AURAY.

for his probity, that he was consulted in disputes by the whole neighbourhood, and used often to tramp many miles to give his opinion. One dark night when he was returning home from Auray and could hardly see his way, a supernatural light suddenly appeared to guide him, not leaving him till he reached his own door. Another time, when he was taking his cattle to drink at a spring, where the Fountain of St. Anne now stands, the light reappeared and he saw that it came from a candle held by a beautiful and matronly woman, whom he at once recognized as St. Anne, and who, as he knelt before her in speechless admiration, told him she had come to order him to have a chapel built in her honour. "Ten hundred years ago," she said, "I had a sanctuary here, but now I am neglected and all but forgotten." The vision faded, but a bright star appeared above the spot where the grandmother of the Lord had stood, which slowly set, sinking into the ground at the feet of Nicolazie. He took this for a sign that he was to dig there, and deep down below the surface he came upon a wooden image of St. Anne, which he left where it was whilst he fetched the curé of the village to see it. The latter came at once, and, greatly impressed by the remarkable incident, looked upon it as a supernatural revelation.

Thanks to the efforts of the curé a chapel was built to serve as shrine for the image, which soon manifested miraculous powers. The fame of the cures effected by it spread far and near; a Carmelite monastery was built on to the chapel, and finally, in the last decade of the nine-

teenth century, was erected the present vast and ornate basilica, which, with its lofty tower and tapering steeple, surmounted by a huge statue of St. Anne, presents a very great contrast to the barren-looking districts of which it is the most conspicuous object. The one touch of poetry in the whole group of buildings is to be found in the cloisters, but even they are spoiled by a most inartistic crucifix in the centre, into the base of which girls anxious to get married stick a pin, muttering a prayer to St. Anne.

No doubt on the eve of the pardon, when every approach to the basilica is crowded with pilgrims, who sleep in and outside the church, and on the 26th of July itself, when *éclat* is given to the ceremonies of the great fête, by the presence of many ecclesiastics of high rank, something of the charm and glamour of primitive Brittany is, for the nonce, shared by St. Anne d'Auray, but for the rest of the year, even the least exacting will find little attraction about it.

It is, alas! very much the same with Auray itself, in spite of its picturesque situation on the river Loch, for it is completely modernized, and its one beautiful relic of the past, the fine old market-hall, with which we fell in love at once, was already doomed to destruction when we arrived, and we had the melancholy satisfaction of witnessing the final scenes in its long career of usefulness. There is always something deeply pathetic in the last time, and in this case it was most touching to watch the packing up of the unsold fruit and vegetables

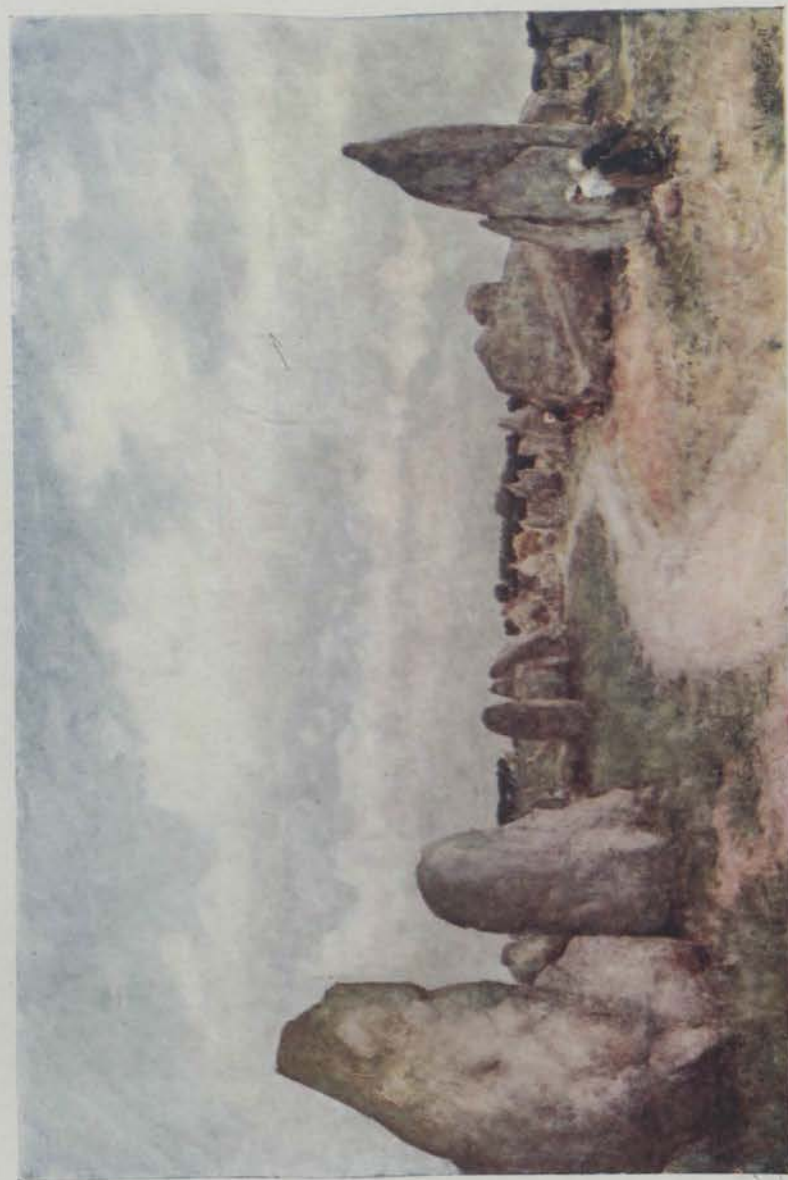
and the removing of the stalls from a scene hallowed by the memories of many centuries. We could scarcely believe that the grand old hall, with its unique wooden staircase, was really to be pulled down; and when the actual work of demolition began we were almost as indignant as the market-women themselves, who mobbed the workmen in such numbers and with such fierce energy that they were driven off for a time. Possibly the hearts of the men were not in the work; but it had to be done, the stern fiat had gone forth, and they returned to the attack with a cordon of police to protect them, quickly converting the beautiful relic into a mass of *débris*, that was soon cleared away, leaving the site ready for the erection of what the authorities call a "really convenient, modern building." Once more the extraordinary inconsistency of the French was forcibly illustrated, for Auray is not very far from Pont Aven, where at that very time hundreds of francs were being spent in getting up the *Fête des Ajoncs*, the purpose of which, it was announced, was to encourage the people to retain unchanged their ancient costumes and to keep up their old customs.

Auray was certainly not a cheerful place when we were there, for, in addition to the strong feeling about the hall, there was much smouldering discontent among the workmen, and on the walls were several placards duly stamped and legalized, stating the demands of the shoemakers for one sou more per pair of shoes, and a ten hours' day for men, with the following suggestive rider: "We all know

that *ce bon monsieur* claims to be the friend of the working-man. Well, so he is, if you will work for nothing; but we have put up too long with this *bon monsieur*. This is our final decision, note it all ye workmen of Auray!"

Not only did the fate of the old hall and the general air of gloom in the town depress us, we were also shocked by the cruelty to animals tolerated in Auray; for on market-days many carts came in full of living sheep and calves, piled up one above the other, unable to move, but with their heads hanging helplessly down, and their legs tied tightly together; whilst here and there in the streets, in all the glare and heat of the midsummer sun, lay many a poor little creature gasping for breath, in the last stage of exhaustion, awaiting its turn for a violent death.

It was indeed a relief to turn our backs on Auray, and great was the change from it to the old-world village of Carnac, set down in the midst of an enchanted land, that is literally saturated with the poetry of the long ago, where the remote past is far more tangible than the present. The significance of the latter may be overlooked, but the history of the former is written in stone, in huge characters, that challenge the attention at every turn, yet, though so apparently easy to read, have defied the skill of the greatest thinkers, who have tried in vain to form them into intelligible sentences or indeed even into words. Here human learning is set at nought and the imagination paralyzed by the problem presented, yet



ALIGNMENTS OF KERMARIO, CARNAC.

it is impossible to elude that problem, and few who enter the confines of this rendezvous of megalithic monuments, however indifferent they may be at first, will escape falling under the spell of their repellent fascination, that affects the very children who play amongst them, though they, like their parents before them, are unconscious of the subtle influences of their environment, but make the saints responsible for everything that cannot be easily explained.

We had expected to have to drive from Plouharnel Carnac to the inn in the village, but we found a tram awaiting our train, and noted advertisements everywhere of the *Hôtel de la Plage*, so we elected to try it. Our tram, which passed several outlying menhirs and dolmens striking the characteristic note of the district, landed us close to the hotel, which turned out to be a very comfortable one, built actually on the beach of the beautiful bay of Quiberon, where absolute peace and rest could be enjoyed, after our delightful but arduous explorations of the neighbourhood.

Carnac itself, with its old stone houses and church, though thoroughly in touch with its surroundings, has nothing remarkable about it, and the much-lauded museum of local curiosities is disappointing, for the exhibits are badly arranged; but this is of little consequence with the real thing close at hand. We began our researches with the tumulus of Mont St. Michel, which has been too much altered by excavation to retain much of its original

character, though the view from the summit of the country round it, with the long rows of alignments, looking like a vast aggregation of stone tombs, must be much the same as it was, when the unknown men of mighty muscles were engaged in their superhuman task of upheaving the huge masses of stone.

Mont St. Michel is crowned by a little chapel, now, alas, disused, for it would have been truly fitting for prayer and praise still to ascend from it to the God so many generations have worshipped here; and close by is a remarkably fine stone cross with a *pietà*, half-shrouded by a veil, carved on one side and on the other our Lord on the cross between two figures. Lichen had nearly filled up the outlines of the beautiful design, but we scraped it away, much to the astonishment of the children who had gathered about us, eager to take us to the alignments, which they called *Les soldats de St. Corneillez*. We, of course, asked them why, and they replied by singing us a wonderful song about how the holy St. Cornelius, who is the patron saint of Carnac, was one day fleeing from the heathen soldiers who sought his life, and, finding no ship in which to escape, turned his enemies into stone. Seeing that these remarkable tales interested us they poured forth other legends in which saints, fairies and evil spirits, the church, calvaries, menhirs, dolmens and tumuli were mixed up in a hopeless jumble. Charming children of the soil they were, with hair bleached nearly white by constant exposure to the sun, and lovely blue eyes that gazed

frankly at us as they told their wondrous tales. Simple-hearted and natural too, very different from the impudent gamins of Douarnenez and Quimperlé; for, in spite of their persistent determination that we should hear their versions of Carnac folk-lore, they really cared more to please us than to reap a harvest of sous. To test them we pretended we had come out without any money, but though they seemed at first a little disappointed they quickly cheered up and chatted away as eagerly as ever.

We were taken to the alignments of Kermario, Kerlescan and Menec, and to the remarkable dolmen of Cruz-Moquen with a cross rising from it, where a peasant woman, a living link between heathenism and Christianity, was kneeling on the pre-historic stone, with hands uplifted in earnest prayer. We were quite sorry to part with our body-guard, that had grown to a small, ragged regiment before our excursion was over, and we turned to go without giving any sous. The later comers dispersed at once, but our first friends remained in a little group at the top of the lane leading down to our hotel watching us wistfully, and when we looked back at them, waving their adieux. Presently, however, just as they, too, prepared to go, we stopped and beckoned to them. Oh! how delighted they were, as on fleet bare feet and with faces beaming with joy, they sped to us. When we gave them each two sous their surprise was unbounded, and they thanked us again and again, quite overwhelming us with their gratitude.

After thoroughly exploring Carnac we passed on to the

equally fascinating Locmariaquer, driving all the way instead of utilizing the tram, so that we were able to stop when we liked and walk along the charming *chemins creux*, or hollow ways, that intersect the country, and though they can only be traversed on foot or horseback, lead to some of the most interesting of the pre-historic relics. It was, indeed, a stony land that we were in, for the hollow ways are often shut in for long distances by stone walls, but for all that tokens of fertility and prosperity were very numerous. Fields of golden grain and white buckwheat ripe for the harvest, alternated with orchards and pastures, where herds of cattle were grazing, and well-built farms with cottages draped with vines or overshadowed by fig-trees laden with fruit.

It was rather a disappointment when we reached the picturesque village of La Trinité, to find the old ferry, that used to give a touch of poetry to the transit of the estuary of the Crach, replaced by a hideous iron bridge which is peculiarly out of character at a spot that, before its erection, was one of the most beautiful on the Bay of Quiberon ; but when at last, late in the day, a turn of the road brought us in sight of Locmariaquer, with its grey houses dominated by its grey church, all else was forgotten in our enthusiasm over the glorious scene spread out before us. Built as it is at the mouth of the beautiful Auray river, at its entrance into the island-studded Bay of Morbihan, the position of the quaint little village—that is named, by the way, after the Blessed Virgin—is most romantic, and even without



STONE CRUCIFIX, CARNAC.

its world-famous heirlooms of the remote past, it would still retain a strong individual charm.

Drawn to the water's edge by the fascination the sea always exercises upon us, we decided to go first to the island of Gavr'inis to see the celebrated chambered tumulus, one of the very finest in Brittany, reserving the exploration of the monuments on the mainland for the cool of the evening. We had no difficulty in securing a smack to take us across, and our boatmen told us we should arrive in about half-an-hour, but we had scarcely got under weigh, before the wind dropped and the men had to take to their oars. This rather pleased me, for I am never so happy as when there is only a plank between me and eternity, but it was terribly hard work for the rowers, who were quite exhausted, when after threading our way in and out of the archipelago, fresh beauties revealed at every turn, we at last reached the islet and climbed up the steep path leading to its one house, an old stone farmstead where live the guardians of the place, a childless old peasant and his wife.

It was the wife, a little woman so small as to be almost a dwarf, who acted as our guide, and, as she led us along beneath the avenue of trees leading to the tumulus, we tried to get her to talk to us, but she only nodded her head, and it was presently borne in upon us that she did not understand French. In her short black petticoats, with an ancient shawl folded across her breast, and her head enveloped in a big white handkerchief

pinned under her chin, she looked not unlike a gnome, so that when she paused at a low door at the base of the tumulus, and having first made signs that we must pay our fee, proceeded to unlock it, quite an uncanny feeling came over me, which increased when the quaint little personage took my hand and led me into the dark passages. She managed to make us understand that we were to remain where we were whilst she shut the door behind us and lit her candle. What a weird experience it was, as, bent nearly double, we crept after our guide, who had no need to stoop, along the narrow passages, peering now and then in obedience to her gestures into the openings on either side, and coming presently to a square central chamber from which there was apparently no outlet, where we were surrounded by pillars of stone incised with crude designs, the meaning of which has been so variously explained, that appeared to us to resemble the tattoo marks of savages more than anything else.

We were disposed to take a little rest in the strange, prison-like chamber, for it was a great relief to be able to stand upright, but our guide meant us to examine everything carefully, and held my hand firmly in hers to compel my attention, as she let the dim beams of her candle fall first on one side and then on the other of the restricted space. I began to feel that we were entirely in her power, and that if she chose to lead us into the very heart of her island, there to remain for the rest of our lives, far from the light of day, we could do

nothing to prevent it. Finally, however, we were brought safely back to the entrance and our guide pointed to the top of the mound, making us understand that we were to climb there and look at the view. Of course we obeyed, expecting her to follow us, but when we looked round she had disappeared.

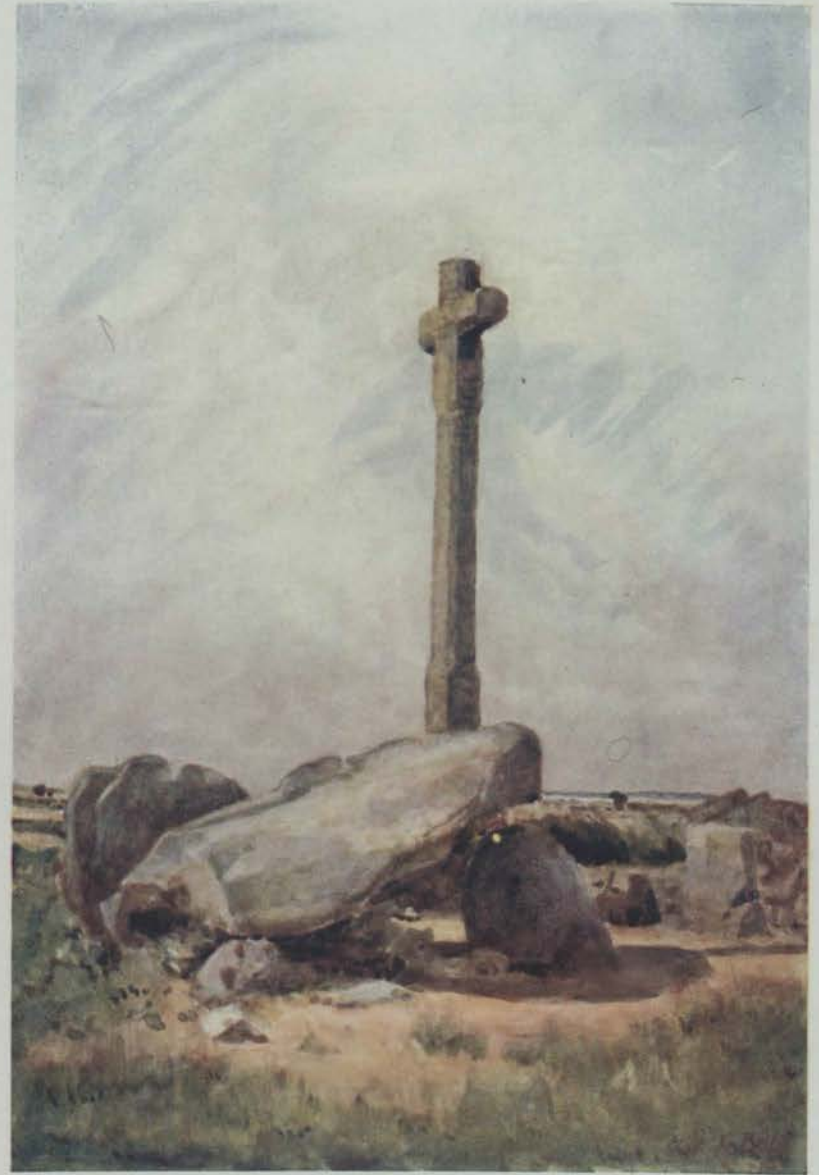
We were quite sorry to lose sight of our gnome, and when we had enjoyed the prospect from the tumulus we decided that we would seek her in her own home, under the pretext of wanting something to drink. She met us at the door, and when we made signs that we were thirsty by pointing to our mouths, she drew us across the threshold with evident delight. She then made us sit down on an oak settle, and brought us each a great bowl of fresh milk, which she produced from an oak chest serving as a table. It was delightful to sit in the great cool room, almost the only furniture of which were the settle and chest with a *lit clos* let into the wall, and we would gladly have lingered for an hour, but we had still much to see before our return to Carnac. We rose to take leave, offering the gnome some money for the milk, but she imperiously declined it, and suddenly seizing my husband's hand by one finger, she drew him to a low door leading into an inner room. Again the eerie feeling came over me, and I hastened to follow, thinking that, perhaps, I might be left to return to Carnac alone, but the friendly little body only wished to show us some photographs of a golden crucifix that had been found

on the island and is now in the National Museum at Paris.

The finding of this mediæval relic, of beautiful and ornate design, in this remote spot is full of significance, for it must certainly have belonged to a church, though no trace of such a building remains. Even in Gavr'inis, which at its most prosperous time can have had but a very few inhabitants, Christianity evidently triumphed completely over heathenism at a very early date, and it is truly remarkable that it should at the same time have owned one of the most curious and complete of all the pre-historic monuments of Brittany, and also one of the finest examples of early Christian art that have been preserved.

Our guide became a little impatient over our long examination of the photographs, and was anxious that we should also admire her room, which is evidently the pride of her heart, and was certainly most picturesque, with its gleaming pots and pans, supplemented by rows of golden gourds ranged upon an oak dresser. The gourds especially took my fancy, and when I looked longingly at them, their owner picked out three of the best and presented them to me with a very winning smile, that made it impossible for me to refuse them, though they were a little difficult to carry.

As we went back to our boat we noticed our men perched in a great fig-tree picking the fruit, and we remarked on the meanness of stealing it from the poor little gnome, but she evidently did not mind, for she



DOLMEN OF CRUZ-MOQUEN, CARNAC.

nodded to them in a friendly way as they climbed down, and as soon as we were settled in the boat they gave their booty to me. There was still no wind, and we were very late in getting back to Locmariaquer, but this was really an advantage, for we saw the bay at its best in the glamour of the evening light, and we were able to extract a good deal of information from our taciturn boatmen, one of whom at last relented so far as to take the quid of tobacco out of his cheek and to put it in his cap whilst he talked to us. "The guide," he said, "was not poor at all; he wondered why we called her *pauvre*, she made quite a lot of money by showing the tumulus, though she was not allowed to keep all that was given her; half goes to the owner, a doctor, who lives over there," he added, pointing to a distant island. "She is better off than we fishermen are, for she and her man have their house rent free, and no one tries to take the bread out of their mouths. Many go to the island straight from Auray and do not come to Locmariaquer at all, so that we sometimes get hardly any passengers whilst she is making money fast."

Another advantage of the long delay involved in the trip to Garv'inis was that we saw the Locmariaquer menhirs and dolmens by moonlight, which lent to their usually stern and forbidding grandeur a mysterious beauty, that was further heightened by the contrast between their solemn rigidity and the moving groups of peasant men and women who were returning home from their work in the fields, or tending the cattle in the farmyards through

which we had to pass. A ragged guide, with whose services we would gladly have dispensed could we have found our way without him, introduced us to the Mané-er-H'roeck, or Mountain of the Fairies, originally seventy feet high, that was struck by lightning and broken into four pieces, which even in their prostrate condition present a most impressive appearance. There was some talk at the time of the last Paris Exhibition of removing these huge blocks to the capital, and though the impracticable scheme was abandoned, it is much to be desired that the Government, next time work is required for the unemployed, should have them set up again *in situ*, a task that would be far more worthy of national enterprise than the construction of the unsightly and useless viaducts in which the French delight.

From the Mané-er-H'roeck we were taken to the great dolmen known as the Dol-ar-Marc'hadourien, or Merchant's Table, beneath which is a kind of altar approached by an avenue of menhirs, and to the recently-restored Mané-Rutual dolmen, with many another remarkable monument, and we went back to our carriage with a very wholesome conviction of our own ephemeral insignificance as compared with these immortal relics. We were both very silent in the long drive to Carnac, but my husband made one remark: "I would give some of the remaining years of my life to know who built those monuments and what they were for;" to which I answered, "I think it would be better to devote those years to your wife and children,"

a flippant reply, for which I felt duly penitent the next minute. So strong indeed was the impression made on us both, by the riddle of the stones, that we lingered a long time at Carnac, and when we did make tracks for Quiberon we missed much of the general beauty of the narrow peninsula, with the sea on either side, in our eagerness to identify the menhirs and dolmens we passed.

We spent only one day at Quiberon, a bright merry little place which it is difficult to associate with the tragic memories of the terrible drama of 1795, of which the opening scenes were enacted in it, and the closing ones near Auray, when the French royalists were defeated by General Hoche, to whom a statue was erected in 1902, an honour not quite so unmerited as is supposed, for he was but obeying orders when he had all his prisoners shot.

The chief attractions of Quiberon as it is now, are its grand sea view, its piers and jetties, about which picturesque boats are generally grouped, and its fine beach, that was crowded when we were there with holiday-makers in brilliant summer attire, who were happily disporting themselves near their many-coloured tents, that resembled an Oriental caravanserai, or chatting together in their gorgeous bathing costumes before or after their plunge, for in France there is none of the shame-faced scurrying for shelter characteristic of English bathers. From the terrace of the Hôtel de Penthièvre we could see all that went on, and were greatly amused when some of the dripping figures ran up the steps to exchange greetings with their friends;

one fat old gentleman who only needed a trident to make his resemblance to Neptune complete, especially delighting us, as he waddled along followed by his wife, who was anxious to wrap a dressing-gown about him, a solicitude of which he was quite unconscious in his eagerness to pay his respects to a certain stately dame before her tent should swallow her up.

Late in the afternoon we drove down to the chief pier of Quiberon to take passage in the steamer for Belle Isle en Mer. We were rather early and had time to watch the hauling in of a seine net full of tiny fish, the owner of which told us he had landed several thousands in the last hour. "They are very good in the soup," he said, "and easy enough to catch, though some stupid fellows always bring their nets up empty."

The Belle Isle steamer, when it did come in, crowded with passengers, looking more or less weather-beaten, did not much impress us, for though it was a Government mail-boat, it was both small and dirty, and the man who was taking the tickets wore patched linen clothes and sabots. In the brief voyage the cranky vessel pitched and tossed as much as our smack had done coming from Beg-Meil, though the sea was perfectly calm. Nearly all our fellow-travellers were sick, and we had to cling desperately to the railings to keep our footing, but when, after passing the islands of La Teigneuse and Houat, that form the outposts of Belle Isle, we entered the harbour of Le Palais, just as the sun was



SARDINE BOATS AT LE PALAIS, BELLE ISLE EN MER.

have little distinctive about them, though their situation gives to them a certain picturesqueness.

We were fortunate in securing rooms in the chief hotel facing the harbour, and from them we were able to get a very good notion of the ways of the people, which to our disappointment differed very little from those of their fellow country-men of the mainland. We had expected that in this remote island, the largest and most important belonging to Brittany, ancient costumes would have been scrupulously retained, but as a matter of fact the grey linen suits of the so-called *détenus* are the only distinctive clothes worn. These *détenus* are boys of from ten to twenty years old, who have been sent to the reformatory here to be educated, after their conviction for some trivial offence such as petty theft, and their presence gives a very special attraction to life at Le Palais, for instead of being shut away from intercourse with others, they are allowed to take their share in all that is going on. In the harbour or the offing they are to be seen hard at work in the white boats reserved for them, scouring the decks, swarming up the rigging, or rowing swiftly to and fro; parties of them engaged in various out-of-door jobs are met with in the streets at every hour, and their band, an excellent one, is a chief feature of every fête. Would that this excellent system could be everywhere adopted, for these boys, instead of deteriorating through intercourse with their fellow *détenus*, are trained to be really good citizens. They learn to love the home of their exile

and are glad and proud if, in later life, it falls to their lot to form part of the garrison always stationed at Le Palais.

It is impossible to be dull in the island capital, in the summer at least, for there is always something interesting going on there. Now it is a big take of sardines, tunnies, or lobsters that causes the excitement, when the shrill questions of the official seller as to the quantity and prices of the fish shouted from the quay, are answered from the incoming boats, and crowds assemble on the piers and at the water's edge to aid in landing the spoil. Occasionally variety is given to the home-coming of the fishermen by a fight between two of them who have had too much to drink, or there is an angry dispute amongst the women bidding for old clothes at the corner of a street, or amongst the men waiting to plunge their sails into the steaming vats of dye ranged along the quay. Moreover, the daily routine was broken into several times in every day by a mighty inrush of tourists, who had come over in excursion steamers to do the whole island in a few hours, when all the approaches to the harbour would be blocked with ramshackle old vehicles, miserable-looking horses and gesticulating drivers competing for fares.

Of an evening too, there were often delightful impromptu concerts, when strolling players would get leave to perform at the cafés, and at the first sound of the music or singing, the whole population would come trooping

beginning to sink, we felt that we would gladly have endured far more discomfort for the sake of the beautiful scene that met our eyes. The long piers encircling the basin, between which there is just one narrow entrance, were crowded with spectators watching for our boat, and as, with a warning shriek and puffing out masses of black smoke, she threaded her way clumsily amongst the graceful fishing-craft that were heading for the same point, she must have looked like some evil monster bent on a mission of destruction. As we entered it, the restricted basin already seemed full of shipping, and very impressive was the effect of the big trawlers with their tawny sails furled, the sardine smacks with their blue nets hanging up to dry, and the dainty white yachts with their flags flying, especially when, in the commotion caused by our lumbering vessel, they began to toss and heave to the accompaniment of the clanking of their mooring chains. Room was, of course, made for the mail-boat, but it took a long time for her to reach her landing-stage, and we were able to get a general notion of the town as seen from the water, before we could land.

Dominated as it is by the Citadel, begun in 1572 by Cardinal de Retz, and completed in 1687 by Vauban—who also had the beautiful inner harbour constructed—and further strengthened by massive fortifications, some dating from the sixteenth century, others quite modern, the key note of Le Palais is its apparent impregnability. The quays, bordered by white houses, and its narrow streets

together to listen and to stand spell-bound for hours on the same spot, the tap-tap of their sabots, or the cry of some infant in arms forming an involuntary accompaniment to the performance. One minstrel, a young girl with a really fine voice, was a special favourite, and when she sang of a certain Breton lad who lost his sweetheart through death, something like a sob of emotion used to prelude the burst of applause. The fact that her last note had hardly died away before she rushed round to collect sous rather spoiled the effect, but her audience did not seem to mind that, and she must have reaped a good harvest, for the very poorest gave something.

Our most exciting day at Le Palais was, however, that of the regatta, when the weather conditions were such as to test to the uttermost the skill and endurance of the competitors. As we sat at déjeuner, we could see the fairy-like yachts bravely pursuing their course, breasting the great waves like sea-birds in the teeth of the strong breeze, and to our great dismay we presently noticed that the foremost was in real difficulties. There was a rush to the balcony, and in full view of hundreds of breathless watchers, the little boat capsized and went straight to the bottom. But, as is always the case here, the life-boat was in close attendance, the crew of four men were rescued by her, and the race went on as if nothing had happened, nor did the untoward accident mar the happy *abandon* of the evening festivities, in which the *détenus* in their smart dress uniforms played a very conspicuous part, for after

performing outside the chief cafés, their band, with Japanese lanterns hung on to their instruments, led a procession round the town.

As in duty bound, we of course made excursions to different points of the island, which is well cultivated and dotted with thriving-looking villages, the houses of which had been freshly white-washed, whilst the long, sloping slate roofs were overgrown with yellow lichen, that gleamed like gold in the bright sunshine. Most of the crops were already gathered in, but the luxurious hedges of tamarisk, that thrives remarkably well here, with a few fields of stunted maize and patches of the ubiquitous buckwheat now beginning to redden, relieved the general monotony of the inland districts, whilst the coast scenery surpassed in sombre grandeur our highest expectations.

The Grande Phare, with its unrivalled prospect, Port Goulphar, with its picturesque creek, Donnant with its sheltered bay, the charming sea-side village of Sanzon or Fort Philippe, the Pointe aux Poulains, near to which is the Fort Sarah Bernhardt—a squat building with windows carefully evading the grand view spread out on every side, that is the daily goal all through the season of many pilgrims, though the great actress chose its site under the impression that it really was beyond the reach of the madding crowd—the thriving community of Bangor, and the vast stretch of sand known as *Les grands Sables*, all received their due meed of recognition, but it was, in our opinion, in the inappropriately named Grotte

de l'Apothicaierie that the indescribable charm and enthralling fascination of Belle Isle really culminates.

Approached by a hundred steps cut in the cliff, its outlet and inlet—for it is really rather a domed passage than a cave—guarded by groups of bristling, sinister-looking rocks, distorted by the unremitting assaults of the waves into all manner of weird shapes, that are for ever laved with snow-white foam, the Grotte de l'Apothicaierie might more fittingly have been called a prison-house of the deep; for from its crypt-like recesses goes forth unceasingly the moan of the tortured waters, pleading in vain for release from the bounds they may not pass, even here where their strength is so forcibly illustrated.

With a feeling approaching to awe we began the descent of the hundred steps, pausing again and again to look down upon the turmoil around us. A sudden turn brought us to the entrance of the gallery, its roof forming an almost perfect arch, its sides green with sea-weed, its floor encumbered with masses of *débris* that had evidently fallen from above. A narrow ledge ran along one side of the channel, and, almost holding our breath, we crept cautiously along till we came to a ledge of rock on which we could sit down. There we remained a long time, unable to hear each other speak, looking silently about us and watching the great waves dash in from either side, meeting with a mighty crash beneath us and covering us with foam. Now the waters of the seething cauldron beneath us surged up so high that it seemed as if we



THE HARBOUR, LE PALAIS: BELLE ISLE EN MER.

the top, however, she at once ceased to be a sprite, for she adorned herself with a bedraggled fashionable hat, and put up a huge umbrella, why it was impossible to say, for the wind was so high she could hardly keep her feet weighted with so much sail.

An unexpected difficulty arose when we were about to leave Le Palais, for, having exhausted our French money, we tendered a five-pound note in payment of our bill. Our landlady to our surprise refused to accept it, declaring that she had never seen such a thing before, and we were obliged to take it to the bank. The clerk there was equally ignorant, and after asking us a great many questions, he went to consult his superior, leaving us with the window open and quantities of notes lying unprotected on the desk close to it. We could quite easily have helped ourselves to thousands of francs before the clerk returned with permission to give us change—an incidental proof of the honesty of the French, for theft must be unknown where such carelessness is of everyday occurrence. After all, we caught the last boat to Quiberon, though we had to jump on deck without any help from the gangway, that had already been removed. We reached Vannes quite late at night, so that we saw nothing of the country between it and the coast, but we noted as we neared the ancient capital faint lights on the hedges, looking like fairy-lamps, that we found came from glow-worms.

## CHAPTER XI

### VANNES AND THE SOUTHERN TOWNS OF LOIRE INFÉRIEURE

IN Vannes we found ourselves back again in *Bretagne bretonnante*, for in spite of the addition of extensive modern suburbs, the old town, that has played a very important part in the history of Brittany, still retains the stamp of antiquity in its narrow tortuous streets, clustering about the thirteenth-century cathedral, the whole enclosed within an almost unbroken circle of ramparts, a small portion dating from Roman times and the rest from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century. Not even in Morlaix or in Quimper, did we notice so many fine old houses; for along the quays of the little port, in the *Rue des Halles* and in the *Rue de la Monnaie* are long rows of ancient tenements, no two of them alike, some with façades of slates arranged in beautiful designs, surmounted by semi-circular towers, with square or domed roofs; others with projecting upper storeys that almost touch those of their opposite neighbours, pointed gables and long sloping slate roofs flecked with patches of golden lichen.

On market-day the whole of Vannes, ancient and modern,

might be sucked down by them, but the next moment, as though in obedience to a signal, they sank back with a hiss and groan, only to dash up again as a fresh wave, churned into yeast, burst into the confined space.

We had still to climb up the steps leading to the cliff at the further end of the grotto, and this we presently did, but a large rock at the top blocked the view, so we made haste to return to our first point of vantage. What was our surprise to find our seat occupied by a little maiden, who might have been an emanation of the foam, so thoroughly in touch with her surroundings was her appearance, for her eyes were the colour of the sea in repose, and her hair looked like sea-weed. She made room for us on her perch, and we saw that she had a covered basket on her knee, which she presently opened, revealing not, as we expected, treasure-trove of the deep, but post-cards! Yes, post-cards supposed to represent the very scene we were in! Could incongruity possibly go further? Our sea-maiden looked very disappointed when we laughed at her wares, and, touched by the pathetic expression of her sweet face, we expended fifty centimes in caricatures of the Grotte de L'Apothicaire. Delighted, she pocketed the money, placed her basket on a niche out of danger, and skipped and danced about the cave as if she were, indeed, its familiar spirit. When at last we began our upward climb she preceded us, not by way of the steps, but up the sheer face of the cliff with her basket on her head. Arrived at

with the approaches to it, presented a scene of surpassing beauty and animation, excelling even that we had witnessed at Quimper, for there the interest was concentrated in the market-place and hall, here buyers and sellers, wearing as great a variety of characteristic costumes as the pilgrims of Locronan, were here, there, and everywhere. Near the cathedral the stalls of fruit and vegetables gave an almost oriental richness of colouring to the usually sombre quarter and the great ugly market-hall was transformed into a perfect flower-garden, by the brilliant toilettes of the dealers in poultry and eggs, massed in the centre, who contrasted strongly with the more soberly-garbed women who were selling wheat and barley, and stood stolidly behind their sacks of samples awaiting custom with apparent indifference. Somehow the latter especially fascinated me, they looked so weary and yet so patient, and it made me quite angry to notice how often the grain was tested and left unsold. One old lady dressed as a peasant, but in very costly materials, especially riled me, for she went to every open sack, let the grain slip through her fingers, shook her head and passed on, as if nothing were good enough for her, to treat the poultry-sellers in exactly the same way, punching every one of a bunch of living fowls hung up by their legs tied together, and tasting the butter, always with the same air of superiority. She was evidently a well-known character, for when she left the hall without having bought anything there was a general titter.

From the poultry and grain markets we wandered to those

reserved for pigs and cattle, where we were relieved to find much more humanity shown to the dumb creatures than at Dinan or at Auray. The pigs indeed seemed to be on the best of terms with their owners, and we actually saw one trot after its master, when he went to an inn to have a drink, settling itself down at his feet like a dog, to wait his pleasure.

The cathedral of Vannes is so much spoiled by restoration that it retains little of æsthetic interest, though the general effect of the interior is fine, especially when, as on market-day, it is full of reverent worshippers, many of whom, after praying at the various shrines, conclude their devotions in a side chapel containing a very realistic *pietà* in white marble, so placed that the devout can kiss the wounds on the figure of our Lord. It was pathetic to see the fervour with which this ceremony was performed, old and young succeeding each other in an unbroken stream all through the long hot day, eager to press their lips upon the sacred spots, from which the surface of the stone is already quite worn away.

Another interesting, though now unimportant, town of Morbihan is Ploermel, named after St. Armel, a holy man of the sixth century, who is said to have saved the people of the neighbourhood from a terrible dragon, and in whose honour a chapel was erected on the site of the present church. The latter, founded in the twelfth and well restored in the sixteenth century, is a low and somewhat heavy-looking building, but the sculptures of the exterior

are interesting, and it also owns a series of beautiful sixteenth-century stained-glass windows, which give a wonderful charm to the interior. Retaining part of its fifteenth-century *enceinte* and many quaint mediæval houses, with façades adorned with well-carved wooden figures, Ploermel must be little altered since the time when the Huguenots made their desperate stand in it against the troops of the League in 1594, and the armed retainers of the seigneurs of the neighbouring châteaux of Josselin, Rohan, and Comber were familiar figures in its streets.

From Ploermel delightful excursions may be made into the still beautiful, but now restricted, Forest of Paimpont, which has been identified by certain scholars with the Broceliande of the troubadours, where the last of the Druids met their fate, and in which took place the thrilling adventures of the Knights of the Table Round in their quest for the Holy Grail. Deep in the recesses of this enchanted land are hamlets, rarely traversed by the foot of the stranger, still so thoroughly in touch with the long ago, that many of the inhabitants believe the woods near their homes to be haunted by the mysterious "Lord of the Forest and the Fountain," who used to appear mounted on a black charger, wearing a suit of black armour and waving a black pennant, to reward his faithful subjects or to wreak vengeance on those who had broken his unwritten laws. Those who have leisure to explore his realm on foot, will find here and there tokens of the former presence of the mighty wizard Merlin and the

beloved maiden Vivien who was to betray him. Here is the stone on which it is said they used to be sometimes seen seated at evening-tide talking of love, and not far away is the cromlech, surrounding a natural depression in the ground, known as Merlin's Tomb, whilst within easy reach is the miraculous Fountain of Baranton, that was long watched over by a servant of the Lord of the Forest, a mighty black man, with but one foot and one eye. Gone is the silver cup with the silver chain binding it to the marble basin, and gone is the dreaded guardian, but for many centuries drops of water from this fountain were flung on Merlin's Tomb when rain was needed. Pilgrimages are even now made to it in times of drought, and some there are who claim to have been rewarded, after performing the prescribed rites, by a sight of the renowned Knight, who even whispered his name—*Braş de fer*—to one of the favoured, adding that he was in the service of Anti-Christ, a legend affording very striking proof of the multiplicity and diversity of the threads that make up the tangled web of Breton folk-lore.

Something of the same confusion of memories is associated with the ruins of the Castle of Rohan, that gave its name to the princely family who have played so great a part in the history of Brittany, and with the often-restored and rebuilt château of Comber, said to have been the early home of the fairy maiden Vivien, that retains its original chapel, flanked with four well-preserved towers. It is, however, in the town and Castle of Josselin that the past

and the present of this deeply interesting district are most effectively merged into one, for both were founded many centuries ago, and in their chequered life story a golden thread of well-authenticated fact leavens the mass of tradition that has gathered about them.

Picturesquely situated on the left bank of the Oust, and named, as is the castle, after the son of the founder of the latter, a certain Guéthenoc de Parhoët, the town of Josselin owes its origin to the discovery in the ninth century, of a miraculous image of the Virgin amongst some briar bushes. A little chapel was built to enshrine the image, later replaced by the Gothic church of Notre Dame du Roncier or of the briars, begun in the twelfth, completed in the sixteenth century, and recently well restored by the present representative of the Rohan family, to whom the castle belongs. The image was burnt in 1795, but the ashes were carefully preserved by the few who remained faithful among the faithless, in the great upheaval of the Revolution, and fêtes are still held in honour of the revered remains on Whit Monday, August 15th, and September 8th, when thousands flock to do homage to them and the little town resumes for the nonce something of its mediæval appearance.

The Castle of Josselin, perched on a rock above the Oust, is really the successor of several earlier buildings, and has itself been constantly added to and restored, yet for all that it retains, especially in its river front, with the three round slate towers flanked by pointed turrets, much

of the distinctive character of the best military architecture of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, whilst the interior façade, of considerably later date, has the combined strength of structure and beauty of detail that distinguished the later development of the French Gothic style.

Many are the interesting historical associations connected with the Castle of Josselin. In it, for instance, the dreaded Constable of France, Oliver de Clisson, who with his wife Marguerite de Rohan is buried in the church of Notre Dame du Roncier, spent the last years of his life, and from it are said to have gone forth on March 27, 1351, thirty Breton warriors led by Du Beaumanoir, keeper of the Castle, to do battle in a wood half-way between it and Ploermel with thirty Englishmen under the Duke of Pembroke. According to local belief the latter were defeated and their leader was killed, and a modern obelisk has been erected to mark the spot of the Breton triumph, but the fact that Froissart, though he was living at the time, makes no mention of the incident militates somewhat against its actual occurrence.

To pass from the haunted forest of Paimpont and the ancient towns of Ploermel and Jossel into much modernized Redon was indeed a change, for in spite of its fine situation on the Vilaine and the Nantes canal there is little that is impressive about it. There is, it is true, a certain dignified beauty in the eighteenth-century church of St. Sauveur and the isolated fourteenth-century belfry, all that is left of a fine abbey, destroyed

by fire in 1782 ; and there are some quaint old houses in the Grande Rue, but none of these tempted us to make a long stay in Redon, and we decided to push on for Le Croisic at once.

Our train was timed to arrive at five o'clock, but we had scarcely left Redon before our engine broke down, with the result that we missed the connection at St. Nazaire, and had two hours to wait there. Many of our fellow-passengers who were stopping at St. Nazaire were very indignant at having missed their *table-d'hôte* dinners at their various hotels, and instead of meekly accepting the inevitable, they made a determined attack upon the station-master, a very dignified-looking gentleman in spotless uniform, who, lantern in hand, for it was now dark, listened to all they had to say in absolute silence, turning courteously from one to the other as the various complainants took up their parable. This only increased their indignation, and it really seemed as if the innocent scapegoat would be actually maltreated, so fiercely did the malcontents, especially the ladies, shake their fists in his face. At last he spoke, though only to say, "I refer you to the Government for redress, it is no fault of mine that your train was delayed." To our surprise the effect was immediate, the magic word Government conquered at once, and the crowd dispersed, several of the most angry, actually wishing the enemy *bon soir* as they turned away.

There is much that is picturesque about St. Nazaire



LE CROISIC.

for one thing, for the house used to be called the Hôtel d'Anjou, and our own arrival was a proof that they had been wise. We refrained from mentioning that we had ourselves intended to go to the Hôtel Regina, and that we thought the change of name a mistake, for we should have been sorry to damp the enthusiasm of the owner of the beautiful old house.

Built in 1615 for the aristocratic Calvé-Barjulé family, whose interlaced initials are carved at the base of one of the fine staircases, the present hotel was one of the finest houses of Le Croisic when the town had more than double its present population and its well-to-do residents were able to equip several vessels to aid the king in the defence of the country. Several storeys high, with a long façade and an imposing-looking balcony above the chief entrance, the historic building has also the effective feature of having part of the first floor supported on arches, giving a most picturesque appearance to the open space spanned by them. In a corner of this courtyard, shut off by trellis-work draped with greenery, we used to have our *café au lait* and watch the constant going to and fro between the kitchen and the living rooms, for on our service was concentrated all the energies of a first-rate staff of servants, and for the week of our stay we lived in the very lap of luxury amongst most delightful surroundings.

Unfortunately, except for the distinctive caps of the women, costume is now extinct in Le Croisic, though not so very long ago the *paludiers*, as the men are called

who work in the *marais salants* or artificial basins in which the sea salt is retained with the aid of a system of channels and sluices, used to wear the most picturesque of the many picturesque survivals of the time, when every class in Brittany had its own peculiar dress, by which its members could be recognized at once. Specimens of that of the *paludiers* can still be seen in the Museum of the Bourg de Batz, and now and then some old man appears on fête days in the full white shirt with embroidered collar, the long blue velvet jacket richly trimmed with gold braid, and finished off with gold fringe, and the ornately trimmed broad-brimmed felt hat, that were the pride of his forefathers, but his children and grandchildren look at him askance. They know better in these days of monotonous equality than to make themselves conspicuous in any way.

In spite of the very ordinary appearance of the natives of Le Croisic and the fact that a great element of the picturesque is lost through fish taken in the offing being transferred at sea to steam-tugs, instead of being landed direct from the smacks as at Le Palais and Concarneau, the general effect of the town with its long quays, rows of stately houses, and far-stretching perspective of river, marsh and distant sea, is very impressive, whilst the views from the two artificial mounds known as Mont Esprit and Mont Lenigo are full of charm and character. From the first can be seen the wide expanse of the *marais salants*, not only of Le Croisic, but of the Bourg de Batz and La

Guérande, the former looking like a fortified island protected by white outworks, for its approaches are lined with rows of low hills of salt waiting for removal. Nearer at hand is the *Chaussée de Pen-Brun*, an artificial promontory defending the salt preserves from their chief enemy, the sand that is ever endeavouring to encroach upon them, and from this neck of land rises the great hospital for scrofulous children, where hundreds of suffering little ones have been restored to health.

From Mont Lenigo the view on the south and east is much the same as that from the twin height of Mont Esprit, but on the north stretches the beautiful Bay of Le Croisic with the islands of Dumet, Hoëdic and Houat in the foreground and beyond them the mouth of the Vilaine and the white coast line of Morbihan, whilst nearer at hand are the Pointe du Croisic and the fine lighthouse, with its revolving fire rising from the Plateau du Four.

The town of Le Croisic is peculiarly rich in interesting historic buildings, including the sixteenth-century church of Notre Dame de Pitié, a simple dignified structure with a fine sixteenth-century portal, the seventeenth-century Hospital for old women, the unfinished Hôtel d'Aiguillon, built by Armand de Vignerol duc d'Aiguillon and great-nephew of Richelieu, when he was governor of Brittany between 1753 and 1768, with several beautiful sixteenth-century houses, one of which, on the quay, commanding a magnificent view, with a grand double staircase leading up

to a noble entrance and several suites of vast panelled rooms, was offered for sale whilst we were at Le Croisic for 25,000 francs.

Almost an island, for it is connected with the mainland by but one narrow isthmus, Le Croisic has, in addition to its other attractions, a long stretch of grandly rugged coast with many sheltered bays for bathing, and the drive from it to the Bourg de Batz is very fine, the view changing at every turn. Batz itself, however, that presents so dignified an appearance from Mont Esprit, is somewhat disappointing, for it is much smaller than Le Croisic and its only noteworthy relics of the past are the ruined fifteenth- to sixteenth-century church of Notre Dame du Mûrier and the much-restored sixteenth-century St. Guenolé—the choir of which, by the way, has the same strange twist to the left as that of the cathedral of Quimper and is, moreover, lower than the nave—that retains some quaint old decorative details, such as the carved bosses of the side aisle arches, one representing a number of devils persecuting a saint, another four cherubs holding up a handkerchief with the face of Christ imprinted on it.

We had time, before our train started, to go for a walk amongst the *marais salants* outside Batz to watch the *paludiers* actually at work amongst the weird-looking pumping windmills and the deep sinister-looking pits and trenches, that even in the bright sunlight on a summer's day, produced a deep impression of gloom. Men and women in shabby old clothes, sodden with damp and

whitened with saline incrustations, were busy skimming the surfaces of the pools or scraping the salt into piles, whilst others were filling sacks with it, and here and there a patient horse harnessed to a rough cart waited in a dejected attitude for its load to be completed. On every side, and far away in the distance stretched an apparently endless series of similar *marais salants*, whilst the distant scenery was everywhere dotted with salt-hills looking like a vast liliputian camp. We tried to get some information about the salt industry from the *paludiers*, but they had little to tell us except that times were bad; every year they said the demand for their salt seemed to grow less, and the wages they could earn were scarcely enough to keep body and soul together.

La Guérande, built on a hill overlooking the open sea, is a far more interesting place than Batz, for it retains almost intact its massive walls, strengthened by ten towers and pierced by four gateways, that were built by Duke John V in 1431. The effect of the *enceinte*, draped as it is with venerable creepers, that are reflected in the dark waters of the moat below, is very fine, and the town itself, clustering about the beautiful thirteenth- to sixteenth-century church of St. Aubin, with a very fine outside pulpit, has quite a mediæval appearance.

The country between La Guérande and St. Nazaire, where we had another long wait on our return journey, is not unlike that of southern Hampshire, but it changes greatly as the little inland town of Savenay is approached,

and our train being a very slow one, stopping at every station, we had plenty of time to note its characteristics. The buckwheat harvest had begun, and the men and women engaged in reaping it or in binding up the dwarf red sheaves, gave no little animation to the fields, whilst a further element of variety was supplied by the constant change in our fellow-passengers. One party especially amused us, a father and mother in shabby peasants' clothes and two overdressed girls of about twelve years old, who were evidently their children. The parents each hugged a huge sack, nearly bursting with its contents; the daughters carried dainty baskets of flowers, marking still more the contrast between them and their father and mother. Presently, as we neared a small village station, the woman suddenly jumped up and heaved her sack out of the window. I could not help laughing and asking her what she had done that for, to which she replied, "I was passing my door and why should I carry the thing when I could pitch it into my garden?" I then asked the man why he had not done the same, and he said, "Oh, the effects in mine are breakable."

The little town of Savenay, situated in a beautiful valley, a miscalled junction, where, as usual in France, trains are warranted never to meet, has something of the same savour of the long-ago as La Guérande, except that there are no ramparts, and no special industry. The life of the people is, in fact, entirely concentrated in the church, and if there were no services there to rouse them from their apathy, they would probably all fade away

from pure inanition. We had plenty of time to become acquainted with the sleepy little place before we could resume our journey eastwards through the fertile southern districts of Loire Inférieure, with their many prosperous, but completely modernized towns, that prepare the way, as it were, for the great commercial city of Nantes, built on the six arms into which the Loire divides at its mouth, and combining the advantages of a seaport with those of a well-protected, land-locked harbour.

Founded long before the Roman invasion of Brittany, Nantes has been intimately bound up with the history of the province, of which it is the true, if not the nominal, capital, and its castle, founded in 938, has been the scene of many important events that affected the whole of France. In it in 1491 the beloved Anne of Brittany was married to Charles VIII, thus peacefully uniting the duchy to the kingdom with which it had been for centuries at war; in it Cardinal de Retz was imprisoned from 1652 to 1654; and from it was issued the famous Edict of Nantes, which gave freedom of conscience to the Huguenots, after the long wars of the League, during which Nantes had made a futile attempt to regain her independence. From the first the seeds of the Revolution took root and flourished exceedingly in Nantes, but this did not save her from terrible scenes of bloodshed in 1793, when the infamous Jean Baptiste Carrier was sent to wreak vengeance on the moderate party, and thousands of innocent men, women and children perished, some being guillotined,

others shot down *en masse*, and yet others drowned in the Loire in the so-called *noyades*, boats loaded with prisoners with their hands and feet bound, being scuttled when out of reach of land.

The castle, re-built in 1466 and kept ever since in excellent preservation, is still the dominant feature of the town, though it is to some extent rivalled by the cathedral of St. Pierre, that was founded as long ago as the third century, and has been again and again rebuilt and added to, assuming its present appearance as recently as the last decade of the nineteenth century, when it was thoroughly restored and also considerably modified, both inside and out. For all that it is an imposing-looking building, and owns in the tomb of Francis II, the last Duke of Brittany, and his wife, Marguerite de Foix, the masterpiece of the Breton sculptor, Michel Colomb, who received the commission for the work from the Duchess Anne.

Other noteworthy churches of Nantes are St. Jacques, with remains of the original thirteenth-century building dovetailed into a later structure, the seventeenth-century St. Croix, and the modern St. Nicolas in the thirteenth-century Gothic style. The municipal buildings of Nantes are all modern, for even the fine collection of pictures, in which the French school is very well represented, owned by the town, have recently been removed from the old market hall, that long contained them, to a new gallery. There are, however, a number of fine eighteenth-century houses on the quays, and the general appearance

of the town, with its many bridges, shady boulevards and well-kept streets, if not exactly picturesque, is pleasing in the extreme, whilst its busy suburbs, with their iron-works, shipbuilding yards, factories, etc., give an impression of great activity and prosperity.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE FRONTIER FORTRESSES OF BRITTANY

IN spite of the many attractions of Nantes, it was not sufficiently paintable to tempt us to remain in it, and we decided to go on at once to Chateaubriant, the first of the frontier fortresses we wished to explore, and our last stopping place in Loire Inférieure. We were from the first charmed with the straggling old town, that is built on rising ground above the ponds and marshes formed by the junction of the Chère and the Rollar. With its grand old castle, part of which has recently been admirably restored, its eleventh-century church of St. Jean de Béré, and many extremely fine old houses with ornate slate façades, Chateaubriant—named after its founder Brient I, who died in 1041—still bears the impress of the stormy days when, as one of the outposts of Brittany, it was constantly subject to attacks from the hostile French.

Many were the sieges Chateaubriant endured that have left their mark in history, the most destructive of which was that of 1488, when the castle was taken by the redoubtable La Tremouille, and much of it razed to the ground, to rise up again, however, in fresh strength in the

following century under Jean de Laval, the husband of the celebrated beauty, Françoise de Foix, who was brought to the fortress to be married to him when she was only twelve years old. A man of stern and gloomy temper, Jean de Laval is said to have treated his child-bride from the first with great harshness, shutting her up in the gloomy keep when he was away, and allowing her scarcely any liberty when he was at home, a libel that is refuted by the historical fact that the building of the fine Renaissance palace added to the castle during his tenancy, was superintended by Françoise herself. All that is really known of the life of the ill-fated châtelaine is that she had one child, a girl to whom she was devotedly attached; that she was for several years the mistress of Francis I, who is supposed to have been in love with her when he was only Duc d'Angoulême, and that she died at Chateaubriant on October 16th, 1537; but these simple facts have been added to by tradition, until she has become the heroine of a long-drawn-out romance of passion and of vengeance.

Jean de Laval, who consented when Francis I married, that Françoise should be one of the new Queen's ladies of honour, is said to have apparently condoned his wife's infidelity, and when, her royal lover having left France for his unfortunate eastern expedition, she returned to Chateaubriant, to have received her with the honours due to her rank, as if nothing had happened to estrange him. The next day, however, she and her

daughter were taken to a room in the keep hung with black, and containing, in addition to a little simple furniture, a coffin bearing on its lid the name and titles of the unfortunate lady, who, in spite of all her entreaties, was shut up in the gloomy apartment to await her fate, her only consolation the companionship of her child, who, however, died a few days later. For six months Françoise remained in suspense as to her husband's intentions towards her, and then one dark night the end came. She awoke from a troubled sleep to find her bed surrounded by armed men, and two surgeons bending over her, who opened the veins of her arms and legs, and left her to bleed to death. She was buried beside her daughter in the chapel of the Convent de la Trinité, and to all the other gruesome details concerning her was later added a rumour that life was not extinct when she was consigned to the tomb, for when that tomb was rifled at the Revolution her hair was found to have grown so long, that it formed a network across the planks of the oaken coffin. The ruins of the castle in which she was murdered are said to be haunted by the ghosts of the three chief actors in the drama of her life, who appear together at midnight on the 16th of October, Jean de Laval, wearing a red-hot crown and a sulphur-coloured mantle pursued by demons; Françoise and Francis in robes of white, walking hand in hand amongst an escort of angels—a legend very significant of the view taken in France of such sins as those of the fair châtelaine.

We spent the greater part of our time at Chateaubriant up at the castle, the interest of which is intensified by the fact that it is still in thorough touch with everyday life, for part of the well-restored older building is inhabited; whilst the Château Neuf contains a fairly good museum, the law courts, the prison, and the barracks of the gendarmerie, who are always passing to and fro in the beautiful grass-grown court between it and the ruined keep, pausing often, for even the police are human, to chat with the children whose favourite playground it is. We were duly escorted by a peasant woman who proved a very good guide, over the ruined donjon, by way of the spiral staircase leading to the supposed death-chamber of the fair Françoise, and we refrained from expressing any doubt of the story related to us with fresh variations. When at last we had inspected everything, even the heterogeneous collections of stuffed birds, shells, old faïence, etc., in the museum, we rested in the fine cloisters, that are still the most beautiful feature of the Renaissance palace. There we tried to call up once more the days when the château was first completed, and Françoise herself was superintending the final touches, all the time perhaps corresponding with her absent lover, for in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris are preserved many verses exchanged between her and King Francis, undated, but evidently spread over a considerable number of years.

We had intended to go direct from Chateaubriant to Vitré, but alas for human plans! we had not been told

that we should have to change at a certain wayside station, and just when we ought to have been arriving at the frontier city, we found ourselves approaching a very different place, the comparatively uninteresting Rennes, its proximity heralded by many unsightly field advertisements, such as *Grand Bazar Parisien*, to which we resolved nothing would induce us to go. After all we were not sorry for our mistake, for the scenery between Chateaubriant and Rennes is very beautiful, dense woods alternating with vast tracts of richly-cultivated land, dotted here and there with most prosperous-looking farms, round about which, by the way, we noted haystacks of a somewhat peculiar kind, the hay being piled up about the trunks of trees, the branches of which appeared in a quaint tufted bunch at the top.

The situation of Rennes, built as it is on the confluence of the Ile and Vilaine, is very fine, and it still retains something of the air of combined dignity and prosperity that distinguished it in its golden age—the second half of the eighteenth century. The rivers are spanned by four picturesque bridges, and the town is divided into two parts known as *La Ville Haute* and *La Ville Basse*, the former almost entirely modern, it having been rebuilt after the great fire of 1720, the latter retaining several fine old houses as well as the beautiful fifteenth-century *Porte Mordelaise*, a fine relic of French military architecture, by which the Dukes of Brittany used to make their entry and one tower of which is now the town

hall. Other noteworthy buildings of Rennes are the *Palais de Justice*, originally the *Parlement*, the grand suite of rooms, designed by Jacques Debrosse and decorated by Antoine Coypel, preserved exactly as they were when the deputies used to meet in them, the *Palais Universitaire*, now a museum containing some very fine French and Flemish paintings, the cathedral of St. Pierre, completed as recently as 1844, and the older church of Notre Dame.

Intimately bound up with the history of Brittany, Rennes suffered terribly in the Revolution, almost as much as Nantes, for there, as at the seaport, the town was almost depopulated by the ruthless executions. Under the Empire, however, the prosperity of Rennes revived, and has never since really declined, for it is still a centre of industry, manufacturing and importing large quantities of woven fabrics, as well as doing a very large business in market produce. It is not, however, exactly picturesque, nor is there anything distinctively Breton about its people. The women, indeed, have even all but given up the caps that are clung to with such pathetic fidelity in western Brittany, for the so-called *coiffe polka* which they wear is the very smallest extant representative of the ornate coiffures of the past, consisting merely of a flat bit of net a few inches in circumference, fastened on to the top of the head with a strap of black velvet passed under the chin.

Rennes, that we entered unwillingly, we left willingly enough, and after a short journey through very beautiful country, we arrived at last at the beautiful old city of Vitré,



THE CASTLE, VITRÉ.

that, with its noble castle rising up above the left bank of the Vilaine, presents a truly dignified appearance as the train approaches the station. Further acquaintance did but add to our admiration of the old-world town, that preserves better even than Chateaubriant its mediæval character, for it retains nearly intact the greater part of its ramparts, and whole streets of ancient houses with roofs pitched at many a different angle, projecting façades covered with slates worked into geometrical patterns, and embellished at the corners, with wooden statues of the Virgin or the saints, that must have looked down upon the fierce struggles between the Catholics and the Huguenots, and were allowed, in spite of the stern hatred of idolatry of the latter, to retain their positions even after the great Protestant victory of 1589.

Specially fine amongst the relics of the long ago at Vitre are the mediæval tenements in the Rues Baudrairie, St. Louis, Notre Dame de la Poterie, and d'Embas. Through the open doorways, with their lintels of massive beams, peeps are obtained of low rooms with fine old carved *armoires* and *lits clos*, the dim light admitted through the diamond-paned windows gleaming on the burnished brass and copper utensils, that are the pride of their owners. As the eyes become accustomed to the gloom the figures, may be, reveal themselves of two or three old crones, gossiping together over their knitting, who, when they become aware of the presence of strangers, will courteously invite them to enter, and, perhaps, proudly

lead them through a narrow passage giving access to a damp moss-grown court, overlooked by other rooms, in which younger women are busily employed ironing the caps with long lappets, worn by every self-respecting citizen of Vitré, or embroidering the net of which they are made, to the accompaniment of the clatter of a hand-loom being worked by the father of the family in the background.

Here and there in the older quarters of the town are historic mansions, such as the *Limoyne de la Borderie*, and the *Hôtel du Bourg*, with imposing-looking façades, adorned with stone pilasters and arches, lofty roofs with pepper-caster turrets, and windows protected with fine, open-work iron-work, all probably already standing when the cathedral of Notre Dame, or St. Melaine, begun in the fifteenth and completed in the sixteenth century, was being built. Rising as it does at the point of junction of the Rue Baudrairie and Notre Dame, this fine church, with its noble stone spire and quaint outside pulpit, is thoroughly in harmony with its surroundings, and although, except for the sixteenth-century triptych in Limoges enamels and one good Renaissance stained-glass window, the interior contains little of art interest, the general effect is good. Moreover, it is never empty, groups of reverent worshippers are to be seen in it at all times of the day, for the people of Vitré, whatever they may have been in the past, are staunch Catholics at the present day, and the recent persecution

to which the faithful have been subjected has but intensified their devotion to their religion. The other churches of Vitré are quite modern, but the ancient belfry of St. Martin, that serves as entry to the cemetery, keeps the district it dominates in touch with the long-ago. Another less prominent, but more pathetic, link is the *boite aux prisonniers*, on the wall of a street leading to the market, into which we noted many of the poorest passers-by dropped a sou. We added our own contribution, feeling as if we were back in the days when captives were put to ransom, and it was something of a shock to us to learn that the money collected is chiefly spent on tobacco for the *détenus* in the castle, part of which is used as a prison.

For once there was no disillusion when we made close acquaintance with an historic building we had long wished to see, for the castle of Vitré has been so well restored as to be quite unspoiled. The commanding donjon, the crenelated ramparts, the drawbridge and postern, the machicolated turrets flanking the entrance, the inner courtyard, with the ancient well protected by a roofed-in wall, the projecting oriel window from which, according to tradition, the Princesse de la Tremouille used to take her part in the Huguenot services, the spiral stone staircases leading from floor to floor of the massive towers, with the glorious view of the town and the surrounding country commanded by the narrow windows, and the grand circular balcony, are now, so far as their appearance

goes, much the same as they were when the forces of the Holy League were camped in the valley of the Vilaine and the fate of Vitré trembled in the balance. Nor were we disappointed even in the contents of the turret-rooms that are used as a museum, for they contain many true art treasures. The collection of old French faïence was the finest we had seen in our wanderings. There were several good paintings, including the beautiful "Sœur Aînée" of our Concarneau friend M. Deyrolle-Guillou, and also some really fine casts, such as those of the "Bugler seated on his dead horse blowing his horn," and the Effigy of St. Ives, both true works of art.

As beautiful as the view from the castle itself, and in a way more pleasing because more intimate and homely, is that from the so-called *Promenade du Val*, that encircles the base of the ramparts, and from which every detail of the lovely valley can be distinctly seen, with the Vilaine, spanned here and there by picturesque bridges, pursuing its serpentine course.

With children playing happily beneath the walls, peasants working in the fields below, and washerwomen busily plying their beetles by the riverside, the clothes lying in heaps beside them giving a touch of brilliant colour to the scene, the *Promenade du Val* is an ideal walk, not unlike that along the ramparts of the far-famed citadel of Rothenberg, for both grow in fascination with familiarity and continue to haunt the memory of those who have once enjoyed them. All our spare time at

Vitré was spent strolling about in this ideal spot or resting on one of the many stone benches provided for the wayfarer, and we were very unwilling to give up an afternoon to what seemed the sacred duty of making an excursion to the *Château des Rochers*, sacred to the memory of Madame de Sevigné. Nor did we feel after seeing it that the time had been well spent, for it was the one thing that disappointed us at Vitré.

We started for the château just after watching the great eclipse of the sun, of which we had a very good view from the town, but of which, in spite of the untimely crowing of the many cocks and the growling of the yet more numerous dogs, we seemed to be almost the only people to take any notice. Still under the impression of the awe with which the strange phenomenon had inspired us, we did not take much heed of the country through which we passed, though we did note a charming group of whitewashed houses, clustering about a chapel with a graceful spire, in a park-like garden, which our *cocher* told us was a hospice for old women. Arrived at the entrance to the château we were received by a shabbily-dressed woman, who would not allow us time to have a general look round, but hurried us at once into the chapel, a very ugly one, with rows of arm-chairs and footstools opposite a tawdry altar, above which is a very good painting in the French primitive style. A glance at it was all we were permitted, before our guide whirled us into a small room on the ground-floor of one

wing of the long façade. This she told us was the bedroom of Madame, and the various *objets de toilette* in it had been used by her. The bed-cover, she added, was embroidered by her daughter, and she pointed out her portrait by Mignard. We were anxious to have a good look at all these treasures, but that was not in the programme; one franc each we must pay for our brief inspection, and then, when we imagined we were to see the rest of the house, we were calmly told *c'est tout*.

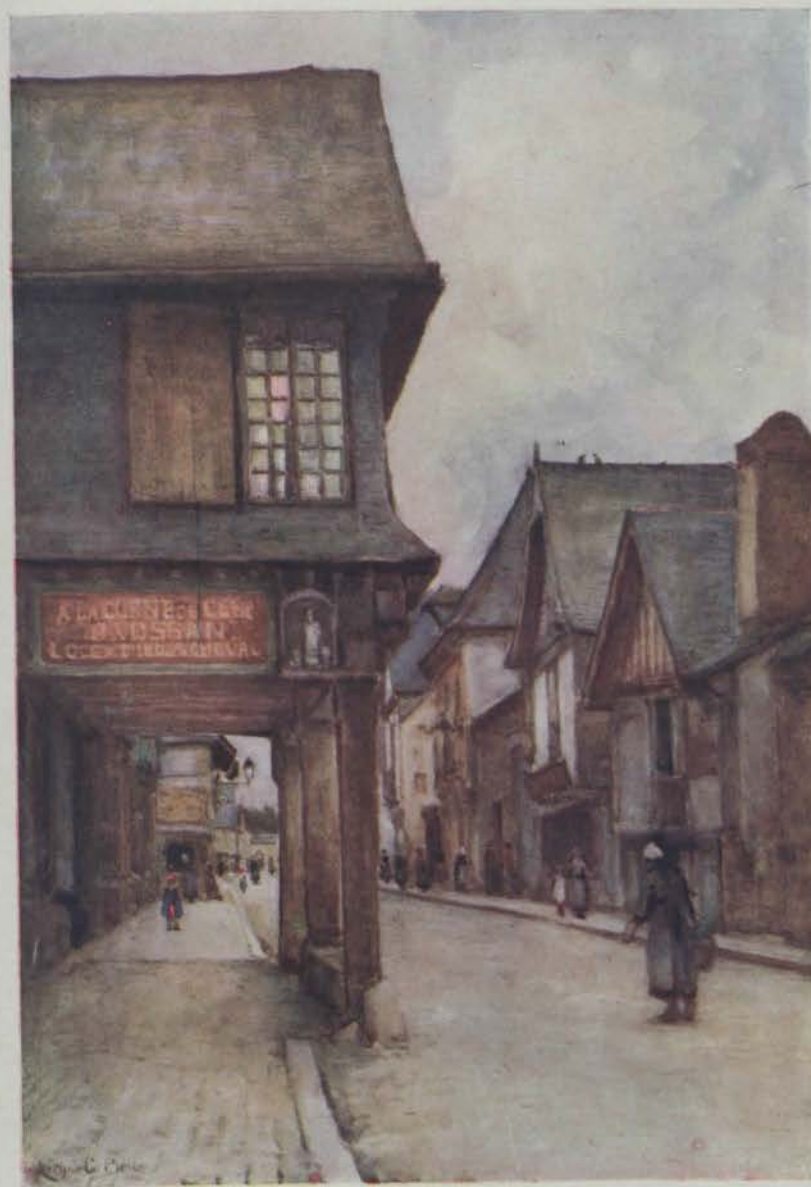
We were allowed to walk round the garden of the château and look at the orange-trees and roses, a privilege of which we availed ourselves, but again we were disappointed, for we were not permitted to enter the park, though we would gladly have identified the "Mail," the "Allée de la Solitaire," the "Allée de l'Infini," the "Honneur de ma Fille," and the other quaintly-named haunts of the famous writer. The one thing that did impress us in the formally laid-out garden, designed, it is said by Le Nôtre, was a quaint and complicated sundial set in a geometrical flower-bed, and so constructed that the time is marked on every side at once. We wondered if this dial had been invented by one of the guests of the much-loved châtelaine, but our guide could tell us nothing about it. From the garden, however, we did get a fairly good idea of the house, which, with its rows of dormer windows, is a fairly good example of the domestic architecture of the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, though the isolated tower, added

in the seventeenth century and containing the chapel, cannot be said to harmonize very well with the rest of the building. We were now able to realize to a small extent the environment in which so many of the beautiful letters to the absent daughter were written, letters that pathetically betray the loneliness of the neglected wife, and also the strange fact that the son of Madame de Sevigné, who inherited so much of her charm, never fully won her heart.

Between Vitré and Fougères the country is of much the same character as that through which we passed on our way to Rennes, but we noticed that the little black and white cattle we had seen pretty well everywhere in Brittany, were now replaced by mixed herds of larger breeds, very much like those to be seen in England. Our train stopped at several pretty villages, one of which, Chatillon en Vendelais, especially charmed us. Built on a small lake with a fine church, a ruined château, and a great crucifix dominating a quarry, in which many men were at work, it presented so picturesque an appearance that we were almost tempted to alight at the station, but prudence prevailed, and we went on to our destination without a break, passing near Dompierre Du Chemin, the scene of the knight Roland's famous leap, when he made his horse spring across the gulf between two huge rocks again and again, till the poor animal, exhausted by the effort, missed its footing and fell to rise no more, though its rider escaped to be the hero of many later adventures.

In Fougères, long the key of the defences of eastern Brittany, and now one of the busiest and most prosperous of its modern towns, the present has all but obliterated the past, though the ruined castle, the remains of part of the ancient walls, and the old wooden houses of the Rue de la Pinterie, the projecting first storeys of which, upheld by wooden beams, form picturesque arcades, still serve to recall the days when it was, strictly speaking, a *ville close*, sufficient to itself, and a rallying-point of strength to the entire neighbourhood.

The now peaceful valley in which Fougères is situated has been the scene of many a fierce struggle between the French and Bretons, as well as between rival candidates for the Dukedom of Brittany, and the present castle is the successor of several earlier ones that have been completely destroyed. The town, too, has been burnt down again and again, and the wonder is, not that there is so little left of the original *ville close*, but that any part of it should have escaped. Fires occurred no less than nine times between 1723 and 1788, and there is little surprising in the fact that in 1795 the Conseil d'Etat du Roi should have ordered the destruction of all the wooden houses in Fougères, declaring that they were a continual source of danger. The municipal authorities, with perhaps some feeling of romantic attachment to the old traditions of their native place, failed fully to obey the edict, but no repairs of any existing structures of the kind have been permitted, so that the few survivals are doomed soon to die



OLD HOUSES, VITRÉ.

of old age. The castle itself, however, seems likely to suffer from the opposite cause, for it is being so vigorously restored that there is danger of its losing the venerable and dignified appearance it has so long presented in its decay.

We explored the castle under the nominal guidance of a deaf old soldier, who allowed us to wander about much as we chose. As usual, we found a museum installed in what was left of the keep, and, to our surprise, we recognized in one of the rooms treasures we had been familiar with long years ago in Paris, for the Cluny Museum has presented to Fougères, now the head-quarters of the shoe-making industry in France, its unique collection of European and Oriental shoes. We wondered, as we examined the infinite variety of beautiful specimens of what was once an artistic handicraft, whether the hard-worked *cordonniers*, whose presence in the streets, carrying their bags of shoes on their backs, is the chief characteristic of modern Fougères, ever climb to the castle to seek inspiration from the work of their predecessors of other lands. The very air of the town is redolent of the leather which is the only material used for shoes in these degenerate days, and whole families are engaged in the industry of making them, most of the women and children working at home, the men in the factories; but, alas, the ancient privileges enjoyed by their forefathers have all been rescinded, and, from being an art requiring individual initiative, their occupation has become a mere trade. It is the same with their brethren the

tanners, of Fougères, who were long the aristocrats of their profession, wearing a special costume, for they alone had the right of making or using scarlet dye. Though their successors are still numerous, and get plenty of work, their *cachet* of dignity is gone, and there is now nothing to distinguish them from their fellow-citizens, either in their every-day or their gala attire.

Though the churches of Fougères have been greatly modernized, there is much that is pleasing about St. Sulpice and St. Leonard. The former, begun in the fifteenth and completed in the seventeenth century, has a slate-enclosed spire, with a strong deflection to the east, the result, it is said, of the mythical Abbé Poussinière having alighted on it in his flight through the air, carrying a certain tailor who had annoyed him from Fougères to Rennes. The chief charm of St. Leonard, that has been recently enlarged, are the remains of mediæval stained-glass windows in the older portion, dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the quaint gargoyles of the exterior. From the terrace of a recently-laid-out garden adjoining the church of St. Leonard, a very fine view is obtained of the castle and its surroundings, as well as of the valley it commands. It is there, in fact, that the great importance of Fougères in the olden days can be best realized, for the course of the whole system of its ancient defences can be clearly made out, as well as the various points from which an invading force could converge on it.

Not nearly so important as Fougères, though it has

played its part with distinction in the long drama of the struggle for the mastery between France and Brittany, the château of Combours, that may be reached by way of Antrain, deserves notice as a minor link in the chain of frontier fortresses, and also as the home in which Chateaubriand, to whose family it still belongs, spent the happy years of his early boyhood. The drive of twenty-five kilometres from Antrain is through a somewhat monotonous country, but certain points of the road command extensive views of the forest of Villequartier, with the heights dominating the forest of Rennes, and on the north of the marshes of Dol. Built above a little lake, the château was founded in 1016, and completed in the fifteenth century, and has been so well cared for by its successive owners that it has retained unchanged its original appearance. Its square tower and pointed turrets rise in solemn dignity above the village that has gathered at its base, in which, in feudal times, used to live the retainers of the Chateaubriand family. Many of the houses are unchanged since the days when the poet grumbled at "l'abominable rue de Combours," retaining the sculptures in wood on the façades and the ornately-carved ceilings that were familiar to him as a child. Though the streets are generally deserted, the whole place is crowded on market-day, when the peasant farmers and their wives bring in their grain and cattle, some few of them wearing the distinctive costumes that are, alas, except for the various caps still worn by the

women, amongst which the winged-helmet, known as *la coiffe de miniac*, is the most ornate, all but abandoned in the border districts.

Combourg is but a short distance from Dol, whence we made our way *via* Pontorson to St. Malo, our long and delightful trip, in which we had made a complete circuit of Brittany, over at last. As usual we arrived several hours before our steamer started, for in spite of the great increase of traffic between the Breton seaport and St. Malo, there is still no boat-train on the French side. We wandered disconsolately about the steep narrow streets, crowded with English travellers in the same position as ourselves, who—unlike the patient onion-sellers waiting on the *Vera*, amongst whom, perhaps, were some of those doomed to go down a few months later in the *Hilda*—were restlessly eager to get through the time as quickly as possible.

It was rather a rough night, and we remained on deck till the dangerous passage amongst the bristling reefs that guard the entrance to the harbour was satisfactorily achieved, and in the early morning as we steamed along the familiar coast of Hampshire, we grumbled at the discomforts of the night, for the *Vera* is an old-fashioned boat with no private cabins, and even the first-class sleeping accommodation leaves much to be desired. Little did we realize then, as we cannot fail to do in future voyages, how easily mere discomfort might have been changed for dire disaster, for even in the finest weather

a slight mistake of the pilot would be enough to wreck a boat, threading her way amongst the intricacies of the pass where three months later the *Hilda* was to meet her terrible fate.

We were, of course, glad to be back again in old England, and we could not help contrasting favourably the quiet proceedings at the Custom House with the noisy, fussy turmoil of the examination of the luggage at St. Malo; but for all that, we have often since longed to be back again in old-world Brittany. Its warm-hearted conservative people, with their tenacious ideality, and their unworldly devotion to their primitive ways, had altogether won our affections. Long may it be before so-called progress stamps out their individuality, or the growing scepticism of their French neighbours, destroys the child-like faith that is the purifying leaven of their simple lives, and thanks to which their country, even at this late day, still deserves her beautiful name of *Le Pays des Pardons*.

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