THE
BRETONS AT HOME

BY

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TRANSLATOR OF "THE LAND OF PARDONS"

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

ANATOLE LE BRAZ

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR BY

GASTON FANTY LESCURE

AND THIRTY-TWO OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

METHUEN AND CO.

36 ESSEX STREET W.C.

LONDON

THE SPINNERS

First Published in 1909

TO THE MEMORY
OF
MY FATHER
GEORGE HEWLINGS PARKINSON

PREFACE

THIS book is the story of a journey through Brittany, with the thoughts and memories which such a journey suggests. In a country so rich in legend and historical association, the ordinary details of travelling are naturally eclipsed by the human interest; so that the book has become not so much an account of towns and buildings, as a picture of the Breton people themselves, as they were in the past, and as they can be found to-day.

That it is a true picture I owe entirely to the kindness and hospitality of my Breton friends, with whom I have spent so many happy months during the last six years. Without their ready help and unvarying encouragement, this work would never have been written, and I owe them my warmest thanks.

I hope that travellers in Brittany will find my book both useful and interesting. By following its itinerary they will certainly acquire a truer knowledge of the Province than can be obtained by spending their time in the

ordinary tourist resorts, which have ceased to be distinctively Breton.

If my book should in any way lead to a better appreciation of our cousins the Bretons, I shall be amply recompensed.

F. M. G.

BARNINGHAM,
WORTHING,
May, 1909

CONTENTS

PAGE

AUTHOR'S PREFACE vii

INTRODUCTION BY ANATOLE LE BRAZ xvii

CHAPTER I

Landing at Saint Malo—Dol—Story of Saint Samson—Mont Dol—Combourg—La Chénaie—Dinan—Du Guesclin—Plancoët—Manor of Guyomarais—Corseul—Montafilant . . . 1

CHAPTER II

Guingamp—Reminiscence of the Pardon—Legend of Nôtre Dame de Bon Secours—Sainte Françoise d'Amboise at Guingamp—Ménez Bré—Guenc'hlan and Saint Hervé—The Fountain of Saint Hervé—Bulat Pestivien—The Temple of Lanleff 21

CHAPTER III

Manor of Kercabin—La Roche Derrien—The Castle of Coadélan—Legend of La Fontenelle—Port Blanc—Tréguier—Tréguier in Winter—The Pardon of Saint Yves—Legend of Saint Tûdual 42

CHAPTER IV

The Automobile—Lannion—Reminiscence of a Lannion Dance—Ker-dluel—Nôtre Dame de la Clarté—Ploumanac'h—Trégastel—Isle of Avalon—Legend of the disappearance of King Arthur—Tonquédec—The Ankou of Ploumilliau . . 58

CHAPTER V

PAGE

Lieue de Grève—Saint Efflam and the Slaying of the Dragon—Plestin—Lanmeur—The Crypt—Saint Mélar—Saint Jean du Doigt—Arrival at Morlaix 72

CHAPTER VI

Landivisiau—Church—Saint Tivisiau—The Fountain—Lampaul—Guimilliau—La Roche Maurice—Landerneau—Le Folgoët—Legend of the Fool—Lesneven—The Horse Fair—Lambader—Screen—Journey to Le Faou—Legend of Saint Jaoua 91

CHAPTER VII

Landévennec—Saint Guennolé—King Gralon's Tomb—A Dance at Le Faou—Abbey of Daoulas—Calvary of Plougastel—Rumengol 107

CHAPTER VIII

Yeun-Elez—The Story of Job Ann Dréz—Corn-cam—Braspartz—Pleyben—Cléden Poher—Chateauneuf du Faou—Spézet—Motreff—Arrival at Le Faouet 124

CHAPTER IX

Le Faouet—King Morvan—Le Faouet during the War of Succession—Chapel of Saint Barbe—Story of Foundation of Chapel—Pardon of Saint Barbe—Legend of Saint Barbe—A Rope Walk—Rostrenen—Story of Saint Yves at Rostrenen—Gouarec—The Chauffeur's Story—The Grave of Saint Tryphina—Laniscat—Mur 144

CHAPTER X

Castel Finans—The Legend of Comorre and Saint Tryphina—Lunch at Saint Aignan 165

CHAPTER XI

PAGE

Guémené-sur-Scorff—Castenec—La Roche-sur-Blavet—Legend of Saint Gildas and Saint Bieuzi—Saint Nicodème and its Pardon 180

CHAPTER XII

Baud—The Venus of Quinipili—Hennebont—Story of the Siege 197

CHAPTER XIII

Carnac—The Benediction of the Beasts—Mont Saint Michel—The Legend of Saint Cornély 216

CHAPTER XIV

The Peninsula of Quiberon—The Dolmen of Rocenaud—Cæsar's conquest of the Veneti—The Massacre of Quiberon—Lotivy—Quiberon—Locmariaquer—Gavr' Innis 237

CHAPTER XV

Vannes—Saint Patern—Saint Tryphina—The Story of the Constable's Tower—Françoise d'Amboise—Peninsula of Rhuys—Sarzeau—Saint Gildas—Castle of Succinio 254

CHAPTER XVI

The Wedding at Locqueltas—A Breakdown—Drive to Baud—Josselin—The Forest of Brocelianda—Merlin's Tomb—Fountain of Baranton—Rennes 272

INDEX 301

WORKS CONSULTED FOR THIS BOOK

"Chroniques de Froissart," by Jean Froissart.
"Histoire de la Bretagne," by Arthur le Moine de la Borderie.
"Histoire de Bretagne," by Dom Lobineau.
"Vies des Saints de Bretagne," by Dom Lobineau.
"Vies des Saints de la Bretagne Armorique," by Albert le Grand.
"Vie de Saint Gildas," by A. le Moine de la Borderie.
"La Legende de la Mort," by Anatole le Braz.
"Mémoires d'outre Tombe," by Chateaubriand.
"Les derniers Bretons," by Souvestre.
"Barzaz-breiz," by Hersart de la Villemarqué.
"Antiquités de Bretagne," by Freminville.
"Origin and Character of the British People," by N. C. Macnamara.
&c., &c., &c.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

IN COLOUR

By GASTON FANTY LESCURE

THE SPINNERS	*Frontispiece*
	FACING PAGE
A PAINTER OF SAINTS	1
CHAPEL OF N. D. DE LA CLARTÉ	64
SUNSET (CÔTES-DU-NORD)	78
OLD WELL (LOCRONAN)	121
AFTER MASS (CHÂTEAUNEUF DU FAOU)	136
STATUE OF SAINT YVES (CHAPEL OF PORT BLANC)	154
JOBIC	164
A REFRESHMENT BOOTH	195
BLIND PEASANT SPINNING	244
A WEDDING PROCESSION (MORBIBAN)	272
CHAPEL OF TRÉCESSON	295

IN MONOTONE

FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY F. M. AND W. A. GOSTLING

FACING PAGE

THE CASTLE OF COMBOURG 8
GUINGAMP 21
THE SOUTH PORCH OF BULAT CHURCH 37
THE MANOR OF COADÉLAN 46
A BRETON KITCHEN 46
AT PORT BLANC (ANATOLE LE BRAZ COLLECTING FOLKLORE) 52
THE CHAPEL OF N. D. DE PORT BLANC 62
THE STATUE OF DEATH (L'ANKOU) AT PLOUMILLIAU CHURCH 70
THE STATUE OF SAINT EFFLAM IN PLESTIN CHURCH . . 81
AT MORLAIX 89
THE FOUNTAIN OF SAINT TIVISIAU 94
THE FOUNTAIN OF LE FOLGOËT 96
GROUP OF OLD STATUES IN LAMBADER CHURCH . . . 100
THE CALVARY OF PLEYBEN 132
AT MOTREFF (PHILOMÈNE IN THE FOREGROUND, AND JEAN MARIE VITRÉ SITTING ON THE WALL) 140
THE CHAPEL OF SAINT BARBE 150
THE SITE OF THE CASTLE OF COMORRE (SHOWING THE LOOSE RUIN OF THE OUTER WALL) 170
GUÉMENÉ-SUR-SCORFF 180
THE CHAPEL OF LA ROCHE-SUR-BLAVET 185
INTERIOR OF THE CHAPEL, SHOWING THE "BELL" OF SAINT GILDAS 185
THE GROAC'H HOUARD OR VENUS OF QUINIPILI . . . 198

FACING PAGE

THE DOLMEN OF CRUCUNO 221
THE STATUE OF SAINT CORNÉLY AND HIS OXEN ABOVE THE DOOR OF THE CHURCH OF CARNAC 221
MONSIEUR ZACHERIE LE ROUZIC 237
THE CASTLE OF GUILDO, NEAR PLANCOËT 264
THE ORATORY AND FOUNTAIN OF SAINT GILDAS . . . 267
THE PROCESSION FROM THE MAIRIE 275
THE WOMAN WITH THE CAKE BASKET 275
THE WEDDING FEAST 279
THE CASTLE OF JOSSELIN 291
THE CASTLE OF TRÉCESSON 298
THE HOUSE OF DU GUESCLIN AT RENNES 299

Allez de chapelle en chapelle ; faites parler les bonnes gens, et, s'ils ont confiance en vous, ils vous conteront, moitié sur un ton sérieux, moitié sur le ton de la plaisanterie, d'inappréciables récits, dont la mythologie comparée et l'histoire sauront tirer un jour le plus riche parti.

ERNEST RENAN

INTRODUCTION

L'ÉTUDE qu'on va lire sur " Les Bretons chez eux " n'a nul besoin que l'on porte témoignage en sa faveur. L'intérêt, à la fois si vivant et si renseigné, qu'elle présente parlera plus haut et mieux que tous les éloges. Mais c'est pour moi un plaisir, dont pour rien au monde je ne voudrais me priver, de dire, au seuil de ce beau livre composé à la gloire de mon pays et de mes compatriotes, combien je mis fier qu'ils l'aient inspiré, combien je suis heureux que Madame Gostling l'ait écrit.

Certes, il ne manque pas d'ouvrages anglais consacrés à la Bretagne. On pourrait même, sans trop se risquer, avancer qu'ils sont légion. Et je ne sais pas si, de toutes les provinces de France, l'ancienne Armorique, n'est pas celle qui a fourni à la litterature d'Outre-Manche les thèmes les plus variés et les plus abondants. Et cela s'explique, si, cependant, elle est de toutes les provinces de France celle aussi qui offre les paysages les plus significatifs, les mœurs les plus curieuses, les costumes les plus pittoresques, l'âme, enfin, la plus originale et la plus profonde. Mais il y a peut-être encore une autre raison qu'il n'est pas inutile de faire valoir, parce que je ne vois pas qu'on l'ait suffisamment mise en lumière, si même on ne s'est pas souvent appliqué à l'obscurcir. La Bretagne n'est pas seulement pour l'Angleterre

une voisine, presque ou même titre que la Normandie, la Picardie et la Flandre ; elle est plus et mieux encore : elle est une parente. Eh ! oui, si séparés que nous soyons, et par la mer, et par l'histoire, il y a entre nous, Armoricains, et vous, Anglais, un antique lien familial qui, parfois, a pu se tendre violemment, mais qu'il n'était au pouvoir d'aucune vicissitude de rompre. Nous avons pu échanger des coups, au cours des siècles, et, si nous en croyons nos landes de Mi-Voie ou d'ailleurs, nous nous sommes même, paraît-il, distribué les horions les plus terribles dont les annales de la guerre aient retenti. Mais n'est-ce pas un vieux proverbe qu'on ne se bat jamais plus ardemment que lorsqu'on se bat entre gens de la même famille ? Nous étions de la même famille, quand vos Jean Chandos et nos Du Guesclin se mesuraient dans leurs luttes épiques ; et nous le sommes demeurés, aujourd'hui que nous échangeons des visites, au lieu d'échanger des coups.

Grande ou Petite Bretagne, c'est toujours de la Bretagne, et, Bretons de l'autre rive du Channel ou Bretons de ce côté-ci de la Manche, nous sommes, les uns et les autres, des Bretons. Nous avons, dans le passé, de communes origines qu'il ne dépend pas de nous de renier, lors même que nous en aurions l'envie, et c'est une envie qui a beaucoup de chances pour ne nous reprendre plus. Renan, cette illustration bretonne, recevant dans sa maison d'été de Rosmapamon Sir John Rhys, cette illustration anglaise, invoquait, dans son discours de bienvenue le texte si eloquent de la vieille loi d'Edouard le Confesseur :

"Lorsque les Bretons armoricains se rendront dans ce royaume, j'entends qu'ils y soient accueillis et protégés comme des concitoyens, comme des membres de la famille

anglaise, car ils sont issus du même sang que les Bretons de ce royaume." *

Voilà, ce me semble, une consanguinité dûment inscrite dans la législation ; mais la législation n'a fait, en cette circonstance, que confirmer une réalité historique et prêter une voix à l'instinct obscur qui, à travers les temps et malgré certaines oblitérations momentanées, a continué de survivre dans les cœurs. Quoi d'étonnant, dès lors, si une sorte d'attraction secrète nous oriente, nous autres, Bretons du continent, vers la grande île bretonne d'outre-mer ? Pour moi, je n'ai jamais franchi la Manche, sans m'imaginer que je voguais vers le berceau de mes ancêtres, et je n'ai jamais touché le sol anglais, sans éprouver le sentiment que je rentrais dans une autre patrie. Il est vrai que, ce sentiment, je n'étais pas plus tôt débarqué que tout conspirait à le fortifier en moi. Etres et choses s'accordaient à l'envi pour me persuader qu'en changeant de rive, je n'avais pas changé d'atmosphère. Jusque sur le chemin de Londres, tout le long de la voie ferrée, les ajoncs en fleur me riaient de leur beau rire d'or. Mais, si le paysage m'était fraternel, que dire des âmes ! Puisque l'occasion m'en est offerte, je veux me donner la satisfaction de proclamer ici, ne fût-ce qu'en passant, quelle dette de reconnaissance j'ai contractée envers le royaume d'Edouard le Confesseur ; aux heures les plus douloureuses de ma vie, l'Angleterre m'a été douce comme une mère ; j'ai dû le meilleur des réconforts à la paix verdoyante de ses horizons, comme à la discrète, à la délicate hospitalité de ses habitants. J'ai goûté sur ses

* "Britones Armorici, quum venerint in regno isto, suscipi debent et in regno protegi sicut probi cives de corpore regni hujus ; exierunt quondam de sanguine Britonum hujus regni."

bords quelques-unes de mes émotions les plus chères et noué chez elle quelques-unes de mes plus nobles amitiés. Je ne suis pas près de l'oublier, s'il est exact que ce soit une vertu bretonne de n'oublier jamais.

Que si les Bretons se sentent si facilement chez eux sur la "terre d'en face," comment la Bretagne, à son tour, ne solliciterait-elle pas les Anglais? Chaque été les voit arriver par bandes, et rares sont ceux qui ne s'en retournent pas chargés d'une moisson de poétiques souvenirs. Beaucoup ne font que passer très vite, il est vrai, et se contentent de cueillir, comme en courant, la fleur des choses. Mais il en est aussi qui, gagnés par le charme du pays, conquis par la séduction de la Viviane armoricaine, ne se séparent plus qu'avec regret de cette contrée enchanteresse dont le sortilège est d'autant plus puissant qu'il ne se révèle qu'à la longue et par une espèce d'initiation sacrée. Il en est même qui, comme mon collègue et ami, le Professeur Quiggin, de Cambridge, s'y attardent à dessein, tout un hiver, dans une ferme villageoise, sur les harmonieuses collines du Trégor, afin de se faire paysans avec les paysans et d'apprendre d'eux, avec le secret de leur vieille langue, le suret de leur vieille âme, peuplée de nobles chimères, riche de tous les songes du passé.

Mais, entre tant de pèlerins que l'Angleterre envoie vers la Bretagne, je ne crains pas de dire que l'auteur de ce livre m'est apparu comme le plus fervent. Et, si je le dis, c'est que j'ai de bonnes raisons pour le penser. Madame Gostling a, naguère, raconté elle-même comment, lors de son premier voyage dans cette Armorique dont, tout enfant, elle rêvait comme d'une terre de promission, elle découvrit par hasard, dans une station de chemin de fer, entre deux trains, un

ouvrage français, encore inconnu d'elle, qui avait pour titre: "Au Pays des Pardons." Elle l'acheta, l'ouvrit et, du coup, dit-elle, comprit la Bretagne. Il devint son bréviaire et son guide. Tous les lieux qui s'y trouvaient nommés, elle voulut les parcourir. C'était se vouer à parcourir la péninsule armoricaine d'un bout à l'autre, et c'était, en même temps, pénétrer dans ce que l'âme populaire bretonne a de plus intime, de plus spécifique et de plus éternel; à savoir l'instinct religieux, la hantise de l'Au-delà, la passion et presque la folie du divin. L'ouvrage en question a compté d'autres lecteurs: mais une de mes plus grandes récompenses de l'avoir écrit, outre la satisfaction même de l'écrire, c'est qu'il ait contribué à développer chez Madame Gostling le goût et le sens de la Bretagne. On sait avec quel talent et, mieux encore, avec quelle foi, elle l'a traduit dans sa langue, après l'avoir, en quelque sorte, repensé, revécu, sur les lieux mêmes, devant les sanctuaires qu'il évoquait, auprès des personnages qu'il mettait en scène, et dont le Docteur Gostling, en des photographies d'un art merveilleux, a fixé, dans "The Land of Pardons," les aspects les plus caractéristiques ou les traits les plus saisissants.

Cette traduction maîtresse fut comme la première offrande de Madame Gostling au doux génie de la Bretagne. Entre son cœur et l'âme si profondément humaine de cette terre, de cette race, une communion s'établit qu'une série d'autres voyages ne fit que rendre plus étroite. A connaître davantage ce pays un peu secret et qui ne se livre qu'à bon escient, Madame Gostling se mit à l'aimer d'un amour chaque année plus vivace et plus averti. Aimer la Bretagne est une condition nécessaire pour la comprendre. Les choses comme les gens s'y enveloppent volontiers dans une

espèce de pudeur farouche qui ne se fond que lentement aux rayons d'une chaude sympathie, comme la brume des vallées armoricaines aux feux du soleil. Mais aussi, quand ces apparences toutes superficielles se sont dissipées, quelle spontanéité d'accueil dans les choses! Quelle confiance et quel abandon chez les gens! Madame Gostling,—je le dis à sa grande louange,—n'a pas eu beaucoup d'efforts à faire pour s'en apercevoir. Elle est venue à la Bretagne, le cœur ouvert, les mains tendues, et la Bretagne l'a presque tout de suite adoptée: je veux dire que la Bretagne s'est donnée à elle, comme elle se donnait à la Bretagne. Or, quand la Bretagne se donne, c'est là un don rare, mais c'est aussi un don complet. Si je voulais montrer à quel point Madame Gostling est désormais nôtre, je n'aurais que l'embarras du choix entre les témoignages. Il n'y a pour ainsi dire pas une humble bourgade où elle n'ait droit de cité. Dès qu'elle paraît, chacun s'empresse. Ce n'est pas une étrangère qui revient, c'est une compatriote qui rentre, c'est une absente qui reprend sa place au foyer commun. A combien d'effusions touchantes n'ai je pas assisté, aux jours où j'avais la joie d'accompagner dans leurs excursions, ou mieux dans leurs visites familiales, le docteur et Madame Gostling! Plus d'une fois, ma parole! il m'est arrivé de me demander si le pèlerin d'outre-mer, ce n'était pas moi, tellement j'avais l'impression, à la façon dont on fêtait leur retour, que c'étaient eux qui me faisaient les honneurs de mon propre pays.

Oui, l'auteur du présent livre est partout chez elle en Bretagne, et c'est pourquoi elle a cette bonne fortune—dont il convient de la féliciter comme d'une aubaine d'autant plus précieuse qu'elle est moins fréquente—d'avoir réussi à

surprendre "les Bretons chez eux." Je disais, en commençant que ce ne sont pas les livres sur le Bretagne qui manquent dans la littérature anglaise. Mais la qualité vaut-elle toujours la quantité? Sans vouloir chagriner personne, je sais, pour ma part, plus d'un miroir magnifiquement encadré, où la Bretagne, si elle s'y penchait, refuserait avec horreur de se reconnaître. Avec quelle douce émotion, en revanche, ne se retrouvera-t-elle point dans les pages sincères qui vont suivre! Car la voici bien, la Bretagne—ma pauvre, ma chère Bretagne—la voici bien, telle que j'eusse aimé la montrer moi-même, s'il m'avait été donné de la contempler avec les yeux et à travers l'âme de Madame Gostling; la voici, telle qu'une exquise sensibilité de femme, et sans doute telle qu'une gracieuse imagination d'Anglaise à demi Celte étaient seules capables de se la représenter et de la peindre; la voici, sans faux ornements et sans apprêts mensongers, telle que vous la rencontrerez par les chemins, vaquant à son humble vie de tous les jours qu'elle ennoblit de belles histoires, constamment prête à s'évader de la réalité dans la chimère, pauvre de biens terrestres, mais riche des biens de l'âme, un peu trop insouciante peut-être des contîngences, mais cherchant partout l'infini et le mêlant à tous ses propos. . . .

Je m'arrête, de peur qu'on ne m'accuse, si je continuais, de dérober au lecteur le plaisir de découvrir lui-même ce que votre livre, mon amie, va lui révéler beaucoup plus agréablement que n'importe quelle préface, signée de n'importe quel nom. Un mot seulement, et j'ai fini. Vous souvenez-vous de ce lumineux soir de mai où nous marchions côte à côte, sous les grands ombrages frémissants de la forêt de Paimpont, toute pleine encore des inexprimables prestiges de

Brocéliande ? Dans le religieux silence, les arbres semblaient méditer ; par instant, nous croyions sentir sur nous le frisson de leur pensée ; je vous demandai tout à coup :

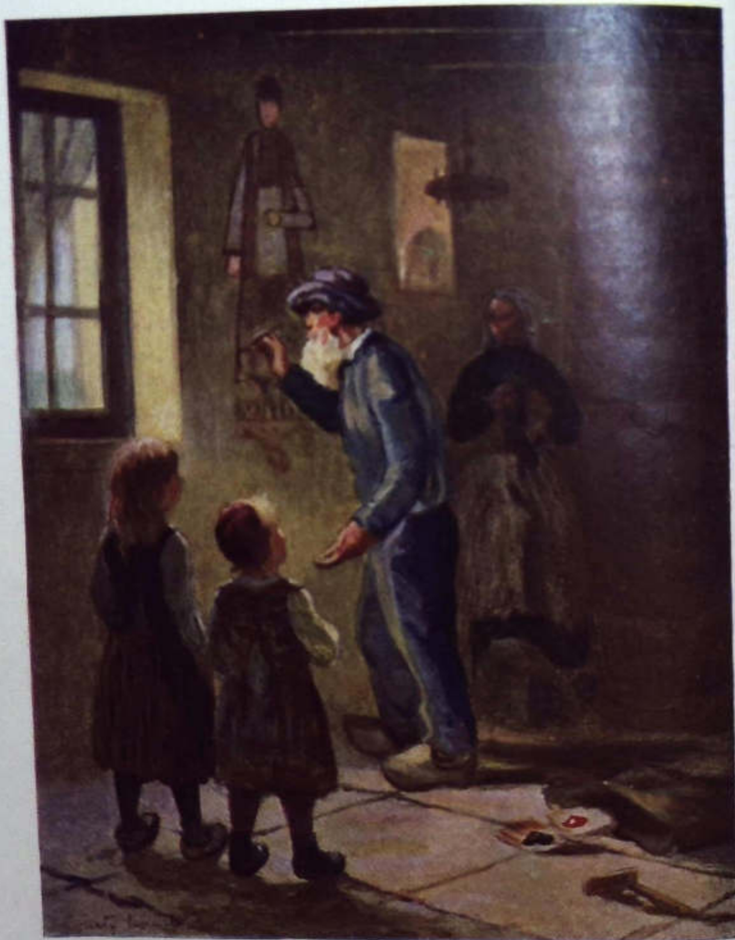
"Que vous disent les voix de la forêt ?"

Ce qu'elles vous disaient, je le sais maintenant.

Vos "Bretons chez eux" viennent de me l'apprendre. Ce n'étaient pas seulement les magiques murmures de Brocéliande, c'étaient toutes les musiques de la Bretagne qui chantaient en vous.

ANATOLE LE BRAZ

Rennes, le 28 novembre, 1908



A PAINTER OF SAINTS

THE BRETONS AT HOME

CHAPTER I

Landing at Saint Malo—Dol—Story of Saint Samson—Mont Dol—Combourg—La Chénaie—Dinan—Du Guesclin—Plancoët—Manor of Guyomarais—Corseul—Montafilant.

"CARNAC PLAGE
"15th August, 1906

"I WONDER what you will say! I have been invited to a wedding, one of the huge Breton weddings, such as one scarcely ever meets with in our days; and I have promised to go on condition that you two dear souls come with me. Five hundred will sit down together; oxen will be sacrificed, and calves! There will be dancing, *such* dancing! Cider will flow like a river, so that the young men will see visions, and the old men will dream dreams! Oh, my friends, come, and of all things bring the camera."

"It is a chance not to be missed," said I, laying down the letter; "we need a little holiday, let us order the plates and be gone!" On coming to think it over, we found that we needed our holiday very badly indeed, and as the wedding was not to take place for another week or two, we decided to go to it by a rather circuitous route, so that the

trip finally resolved itself into a whole glorious month of such skies, and autumn tints, and gold-flecked, dancing waves, as one only gets in Brittany.

It was about seven o'clock in the morning when, having made that superficial toilet which is all a choppy sea permits to some people, we went out on deck and found ourselves approaching Saint Malo. The old grey town with its battlements and towers was bathed in a soft mist which fell lightly, but with a melancholy persistence that was damping, not only to the clothes, but to the spirits.

In spite of its history and picturesque mediævalism Saint Malo is a disgusting place, a place of smells and hotel touts, a place of cheating and swearing, a place of lost baggage, lost tempers, lost everything. . . . And yet to some of us a dear old place, for is it not the entrance to the dear old country, the beginning of so many, many pleasant holidays? After a brief but exhausting fight with the touts, we engaged the least villanous looking porter we could find, and made our way through the Douane straight to the station.

Do you know that station, with its amazing posters of Cook's tours in England, its trippers, priests, dogs, groups of white-capped sisters? In the little restaurant that lies behind the bed of carnations one can get a cup of hot coffee before the train starts. Ah, that first cup of French coffee! How good it is after the enforced abstinence of the steamboat. Its aroma comes back to me with the notes of a canary hanging in his little cage beside the door, and singing a welcome to every customer. . . .

No matter at what time the boat arrives there always seems a train waiting at Saint Malo. Soon we found ourselves in the damp, misty country. It was not a cheerful morning. Late summer more than any season needs

the sun, and the sky was dull and grey. Fortunately, however, there was but a thin film of cloud, and soon in patches the blue began showing through, like a smile behind a frown, or any other well-worn simile. The smile kept growing, and the frown fading, till the sun himself took courage at last, and sky and earth broke into a cheerful laugh.

Everywhere orchards were rosy with apples, the boughs almost touching the ground with the weight of the fruit, the green foliage of every tree shot with dull crimson or ruddy gold. Past Cancale of oyster fame, past la Frenais with its handsome new church, lying among fruit trees, we hastened. In the carriage were four fashionably dressed women, who talked incessantly about the best methods of removing stains from dresses, while the husband of one sat reading in masculine solitude, and his little boy tried to commit suicide out of the window. At Dol we left them to their interesting discussion, and made our way along the station road toward the old town of Saint Samson.

As we passed through the market-place Dol seemed busy and gay; for it was market day, and white-capped, black-gowned women were bargaining with one another over miserable ducks which lay tied together by the legs, gasping in the hot sun. Other women, who had already finished their weekly business, were on their way to the Cathedral to return thanks to Saint Samson for favouring them at the expense of their less crafty neighbours.

It was always a religious place, this Dol. Even before the days of Christianity it was the seat of some mysterious cult. In what is called the *Champ Dolent* stands a gigantic menhir, regarded with such veneration that at an early date it was thought advisable to surmount it by a cross, so that the honour paid to the heathen stone might be appropriated

by the Christian symbol. A local legend says that a great battle took place in this same Champ Dolent, and that the slaughter was such that there was sufficient blood to turn a mill wheel in the neighbourhood. In the midst of the battle two brothers took one another by the throat, when the enormous stone rose up from the earth and separated them. It is a fact that a great battle did take place here between Clotaire, king of the Franks, and his son Chramme. It was fought about the year 560 A.D., when this part of Brittany was still half pagan. Chramme was defeated; he could have saved himself by flight, but he had placed his wife and two little daughters in a cottage hard by, and being unwilling to abandon them, was captured. His savage father had him tied to a bench, and strangled within sight of his family; after which the cottage was burned, together with its occupants both living and dead.

There can be little doubt that when the holy Bishop Samson first came from Great Britain to Dol he and his forty monks had a hard fight to wage against the horrible pagan worship which centred round the great menhir, and it was surely he who first placed the cross upon the top of it, for that, we are told, had been his custom whenever he found such idols in the land of his birth.

Many of my readers will no doubt remember the charming story told by Albert Le Grand of this Celtic "Samuel." How his father and mother, nobles of Pembrokeshire, being middle-aged and childless, visited a certain holy man supposed to be endowed with special powers, and how the hermit told the husband to make a menhir of silver of the exact height of his wife, to give it to the poor, and that in return a son should be born who should be a mighty Churchman, and a great missionary. The months passed, the longed-for son arrived, and his mother, like a second

Hannah, presented him to the Church. At an early age he was sent to that noted school for saints, Llan-Iltud, where he had for companions most of the early Celtic missionaries, who afterwards Christianized western Europe. Surrounded by the solemn Welsh mountains, and the still more solemn company of priests and monks, the boy grew to manhood, strong, brave, and wise; his character formed, his tastes guided by the greatest schoolmaster who ever lived, Saint Iltud. Samson had lived most of his life and had already been consecrated a bishop at York, when the call came to him to leave the land of his birth, and carry the gospel to Northern Brittany. Accompanied by forty monks, he sailed across the Channel, and landed in the Bay of Saint Brieuc. The neighbourhood was then a desolate wilderness, covered with dense forest, and infested by wild beasts. Legend says that close to the place where they took the shore was a tiny hut, before the door of which sat a man gazing out to sea. As soon as he saw the monks, their ruddy goat-skin *cappas* partially covering their coarse woollen tunics, he rose eagerly, and taking Samson into the cottage, showed him his wife and daughter, who were writhing in pain, possibly from rheumatic fever caught in that swampy region. In those days the monks possessed a considerable knowledge of drugs, and we may be sure that the learned and prudent Samson had not forgotten to stock his medicine chest before leaving Great Britain. The women were soon relieved, and the man, who in spite of his rags was the Gaulish chief of the district, offered the good bishop the pick of his land, all ravaged and burnt as it was at the hands of Saxon pirates. It was precisely what Samson needed. He made a tour of inspection, found a sacred well, and there, not far from that mighty menhir spoken of above, which still formed a centre for pagan

worship, he and his monks set up a group of solitary cells or huts such as in those days constituted a Celtic monastery. In the midst of the little encampment, probably over the well, in order to secure it for the Christian Church, a chapel was raised. In course of time this was replaced by a large church, then by a vast cathedral, which has been enriched and beautified by successive bishops, and around it the town of Dol has grown up.

About a mile to the north of Dol, from the midst of flat meadows and swamps which have been alternately inundated by the sea, and covered by forests, rises a granite island, reminding one somewhat of the Mont Saint Michel, near Pontorson. It is called Mont Dol, and when the whole neighbourhood was covered with a vast forest, the Romans raised on this solitary height a temple to Diana, goddess of hunting. It was regarded as a very sacred place, so that on the introduction of Christianity certain monks formed a settlement there in order to teach their religion to the many pilgrims who came to worship Diana. Following the usual custom of the early missionaries, these monks gradually replaced the worship of the heathen goddess by that of Mary, and to-day the chapel that crowns Mont Dol is surmounted by a great gilded figure of the Virgin, just as the old temple of the Romans was crowned by one of the Virgin Huntress.

We drove through cornfields and apple orchards to the quaint little village that lies under the shelter of the rock, and dismounting by an enormous chestnut tree, said to have been planted by a Canon of Dol in 1656, made our way to the top of the hill. The chapel is more picturesque from the distance, and there is not much to be seen save the view, which is very extensive. But there is a pretty farmhouse, and a great stone with an impression, said to

be the footmark of the archangel Michael, left on the occasion when he stepped from Mont Dol to Mont Saint Michel. Is it possible that this legend is the record of a special devotion to Saint Michael practised on the mount? Who can say? Such stories are often souvenirs of actual events, and if we remove the embroideries in which the popular imagination has wrapped them, we shall frequently discover facts of great interest. It is never safe to despise a legend, especially in so poetic a land as Brittany.

It was evening when we turned to come down from the mount. The broad flat landscape lay grey in the rising mist, from which the towers of the cathedral rose yet more grey.

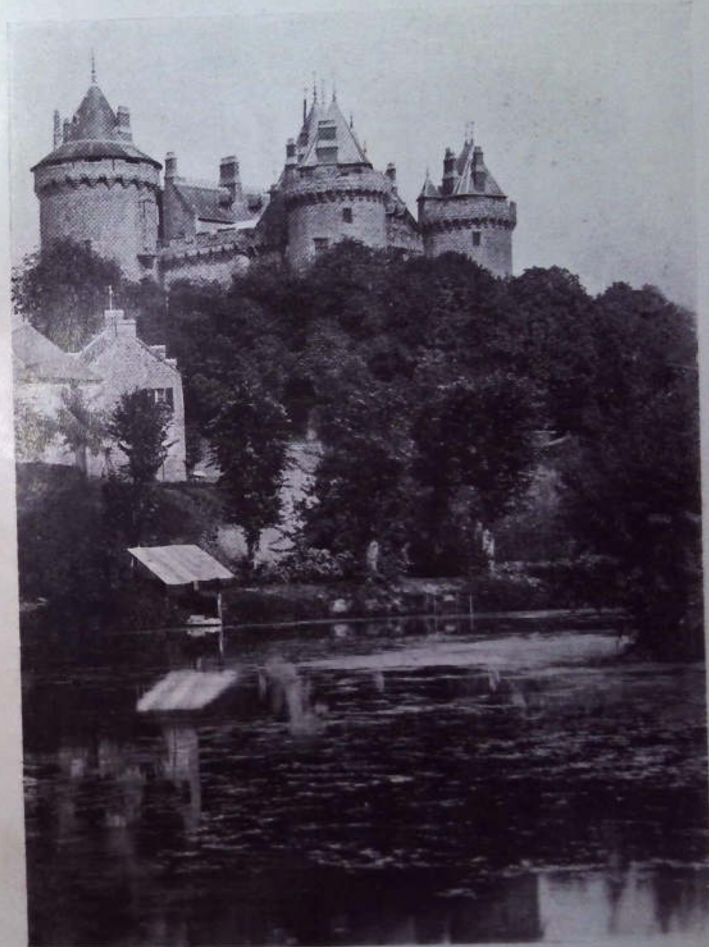
We dined in the coffee-room of the Hôtel de la Grande Maison, an ancient inn clean and comfortable, and afterwards strolled up to the old Gothic cathedral, and finding our way in, sat down to meditate in the gloomy nave lighted only by a single candle. Suddenly, down the narrow road, came the sound of footsteps, the regular tread of men bearing a burden. Slowly, with many a groan, the door of the great porch opened, and into the darkness came a procession of black, silent shadows. In their midst they bore a coffin, blacker even than themselves. In the dim yellow light of the candle, silently they laid their burden on the bier that stood ready before the choir, and so withdrew noiselessly as they came. Only one watcher remained, an old man who knelt, and began telling his beads. From my corner I could see his face, wrinkled, grey, and toilworn. Who lay within the coffin, that he should watch alone through the dreary night? What did he see as he gazed straight before him at the long folds of the black-fringed pall? Was he looking through the

boards at the gentle face of his old wife as she lay resting after her many years of faithful love and patient toil? . . . I never knew, for he had not seen me, and I could not interrupt him in his prayers; so, creeping to the door, I too passed out into the night, and left the old mourner with Saint Samson to comfort him.

Next morning the mist had cleared away, and the sky was radiant. Everywhere they had been cutting sarrasin, and the crimson stalks, gathered in bundles tied together at the top, stood like tiny tents, so that the meadows seemed full of rose-pink fairy encampments, set up on the carpet of russet brown that covered the floor of every orchard. What a world of colour it seemed after grey-green England! Along the high banks bordering the railway, brambles were running among the grass, like newly lighted flames, and all the distance was full of a blue haze, from which the straw thatch of cottages glimmered faintly.

At Combourg an amazing carriage was waiting to take us to the town, a carriage so old that Chateaubriand himself may have ridden in it when he arrived unexpectedly to visit his father.

Combourg, an ancient and somewhat slovenly town, is grouped around a fine mediæval castle which, from a rocky mound, dominates the neighbourhood with its great towers, each crowned, as of old, with pointed roof and battlements. At foot of the mound, on the outskirts of the little town, is a lake or mere, covered with water-lilies, and haunted by flocks of black ducks. On its low grassy banks women were kneeling in groups, washing, the sound of their wooden rackets filling the quiet air like the hammering of carpenters building the scaffold for that master of Combourg who perished in the French Revolution. The whole scene was



THE CASTLE OF COMBOURG

set in a frame of poplars, grey-green against a soft blue distance, while from the village spirals of white smoke curled upwards to the pale autumnal sky. The castle alone stood out clear and distinct as it does in my memory, a splendid memorial of feudal power and tyranny, helping one more than any amount of study to realize the enormous gulf which in those days lay between the noble and his serf, and the utterly slavish dependence of the poor upon the rich.

The present castle dates from the fourteenth century, and is said to have been built by Geoffroi de Malestroit, Sieur de Combourg, who died in 1463. But long before his days there was a strong fortress on the rock ; it figures again and again in the history of Brittany, and was besieged more than once by the English.

We lunched at the new restaurant of a very ancient inn, sitting down with several commercial travellers, one of whom had been out "hunting," and found it very difficult to forget the fact. However, we forgave his boasting when we found that we owed an excellent jugged hare to his prowess, and that of his dog, a thin, wiry setter, who refused to believe that game bones were likely to disagree with his digestion. The glass door of the dining-room opened on the old "place," where stood the market hall, its heavy wooden beams supported by granite pillars, over which drooped the broad eaves of a slate roof, where white pigeons preened their snowy wings among orange-coloured lichen.

After a good lunch, Combourg appeared brighter than on our arrival ; certainly the Grande Rue must have improved considerably since the boy Chateaubriand found it so abominable when he passed through with his mother and sister, on their way to Mass.

Later we went over the castle, now inhabited by la

Comtesse de Chateaubriand and her husband. The great hall has been divided in the middle and now forms two rooms, less impressive, but decidedly more homely and useful than the apartment described in the "Mémoires d'outre Tombe." "When my father walked away to a distance from the fireplace, the huge hall was so badly lighted by its solitary candle that he was no longer visible; we could still hear him walking in the darkness; then he would slowly return towards the light, gradually emerging from the dusk, like a phantom, with his white gown, his white cap, his long pale face." On the whole, the rooms seem rather small after the imposing exterior, but are extremely comfortable. The little salon with its view over the park is charming, and so is the study, where are the favourite books of the great author, his chair and table. There, too, is an oak carving of the black cat said to haunt the castle, and in a glass case, its skeleton. This cat was built up in one of the walls about three hundred years ago, and its phantom, accompanied by the wooden leg of a former Lord of Combourg, walks the staircase of the tower in which Chateaubriand's little bedroom is situated.

We saw this room, a tiny slip of a place, built in the thickness of the wall, furnished with a big carved Breton armoire, and a high-backed chair or two. Near the ceiling, the white-washed wall is pierced by the two small, deep-framed windows, through which the boy had a view of the battlements of the castle, where "the martins used to bury themselves in the holes of the old walls."

"When the moon shone and sank in the west, I knew it by the beams of light which fell across my bed from the lozenge-shaped window-panes. Owls flitting from tower to tower passed between the moon and me, outlining their

moving wings on the curtains of my bed. Sometimes the wind seemed to trip with light steps, sometimes it wailed; suddenly my door would be shaken violently, groans would rise from the base of the tower, then the sounds would die away, only to begin again!"

How many nights of terror the boy must have passed in this lonely chamber before he gained that "courage of a man" which he attributed to his father's stern treatment in making him sleep alone in the isolated tower!

On the "Cour Verte," the broad, flat sward from which rise the steps of the principal entrance, flocks of turkeys were feeding.

"Pour Noël?" I inquired of the stout, well-to-do custodian who had been showing us round.

"Oui, madame, pour Noël. Mais on mange les dindons toute l'année, n'est ce pas?" and she looked as though she did. She was somewhat better fed than the Chevalier when he had to chew linen soaked in water to appease his hunger! *Vive la République!*

On leaving the castle we were fortunate enough to find a wagonette and a sulky little horse to take us and our luggage to Dinan, where we had decided to spend the night. The road passes La Chénaie, the birthplace and home of Lamennais, and we were anxious to reach the old house before the light began to fail. But it was one of those long straight roads more suitable for an automobile than a horse, which, as the driver said, was not as fresh as in winter. The way seemed interminable. As far as the eye could reach the road ran on and on, unwinding itself like a fawn-coloured ribbon, and along it the sulky little beast went ambling, while on the front seat, his felt hat drawn down over his eyes, his blue blouse inflated by the wind, sat the driver looking like a huge stolid pincushion.

As we remarked on the enormous crop of apples with which the trees were bowed down, he so far emerged from his Breton reserve as to inform us that cider would be cheap next year, which was a good thing, since it was at present "trois pièces de cent sous la barrique!"

He likewise found great solace in one of our Egyptian cigarettes, puffing away at it vigorously, and telling us he had never smoked one before.

At the little village of Saint Pierre we noticed an interesting old café, with the legend—

> "Tenu par Lemur dit Chambord,
> Aujourd'hui pour d'argent,
> Demain pour rien."

A charming nest of a place, this Saint Pierre, with a churchyard raised high above the street, and a rich flamboyant church standing higher still.

It was already darkening to evening when we crossed the old bridge and drew up beside the gate of La Chénaie. The house is so buried among trees that we had a long search to find even a tolerable point of view. But the woods are haunted with the spirit of the author of "*Paroles d'un Croyant*," and as we walked up and down the long avenue of beech trees, we almost felt him beside us, for the place has changed but little since the days when the great philosophical theologian dwelt there.

It was too late to ask to see the interior of the house, and hastening back to the wagonette, we were soon once more on our way to Dinan. Beyond Chénaie the woods soon ceased and we mounted to a high plateau, a district of gorse and heather. As we crossed this open country, the night rose out of the east, grim and threatening, trying to overtake us. The pincushion whipped up his tired horse,

but the evening gained upon us, and the sky grew full of gigantic clouds, antediluvian clouds, such as Noah must have looked upon as he was finishing the ark. They filled the eastern heaven with vast swelling masses that toward the west were torn up into huge ragged curtains, between which the crimson sun glowed in pure amber depths. Then from out the west came, as it were, monstrous cloud dragons, grey of body, red of face, that struggled and fought all over the blue sky. The sun for a while seemed to laugh at them till, growing tired of the sport, he sank below the horizon, and in a moment the cloud monsters lost their touch of life, stretched out longer and longer, broke, dispersed, and stars came peeping calm and watchful.

And now the towers of Dinan rose against the faint glow still lingering in the west. Presently we begin descending into the valley of the Rance. Now we are crossing the viaduct that spans the river; the driver persuades his steed to make one last effort, by which we climb the hill, and enter the ancient town.

At the Hôtel de la Poste, an old and comfortable inn, situated on the town wall, our arrival in the shabby wagonette at that late hour excited much curiosity, and the landlady inquired whether we had had an accident with our automobile. On learning that there was no automobile, and that we had merely driven over from Combourg, her interest died away into contempt, and she regarded us as a couple of mad English.

The front of the hotel looks out on the long marketplace, where stands the statue of Bertrand du Guesclin, the hero of Brittany, who was born at Broons, not far from Dinan.

He was noted for his extreme ugliness, as well as for his bravery. When a little boy, he was not allowed to eat with his brothers and sisters at the table in the great

hall of the castle, but had his meals given to him in a corner. He bore this treatment till he was six years old, when, one day, a capon being brought to table, his mother began serving her other children before him.

Suddenly Bertrand rose. "Is it for you to eat first?" he cried. "Give me my proper place; I am the eldest."

Then seating himself at the top of the table, he began helping himself to the food, and when his mother threatened to strike him, he rose and overturned the table, scattering the meats and drinks on the floor.

After this, no more injustice for Bertrand. He became the leader among all the boys of the neighbourhood, a regular little bandit, and the stories told of him are endless. One relates how he stole his mother's jewels, and robbed an English knight in order to repay her. But we shall meet with him again, when we return to Rennes.

We only spent a night in Dinan, which is too well known to need description; and next morning, making our way through the crowded market to the station, were soon on our way to Plancoët, the little old-world town where Chateaubriand spent most of his babyhood. It lies on the hilly sides of a stream, and, though mostly rebuilt, still possesses some very picturesque buildings, among them, on the side of the steep Rue de l'Abbaye that leads to the Chapel of Nazareth, the house occupied by the great writer's grandmother.

It was at this Chapel of Nazareth that the little René was relieved of the vow his nurse had imposed upon him at his birth. He had been a delicate child, and the peasant woman who brought him up had vowed that if she reared him he should wear the colours of Our Lady of Nazareth till he was seven years old.

As we climbed towards the chapel, we pictured the little

fellow in his white coat, shoes, gloves and hat, and a blue sash tied round his waist, walking along in front of us with his nurse and his relations. He has described the curious ceremony in his "Mémoires."

"At the Offertory, the celebrant turned to me and read some prayers" (he was seated in front of the altar), "after which my white clothes were taken off and hung as an ex-voto offering beneath a picture of the Virgin, and I was re-dressed in a violet frock."

About ten miles from Plancoët lies the Manor of Guyomarais, where died Armand Tuffin, Marquis de Rouérie, Chief of the Chouans. It will be remembered that, toward the end of the eighteenth century, the Royalists of France banded themselves together, and that in Brittany they were distinguished by the name of Chouans, from the cry they uttered as a signal, a cry that resembled that of an owl. During several years they kept up a struggle against the Republic, and were greatly dreaded on account of their cruelty. Armand Tuffin had distinguished himself greatly among these rebels, but was at last defeated, and a price set on his head. For some time he managed to elude the vigilance of the Republican soldiers, but falling into bad health he took refuge at Guyomarais, the home of some devoted friends, where he died, and was buried in a little copse adjoining the house. But the pursuit was so close that the burial was scarcely over when the soldiers arrived, and the corpse was taken up and beheaded.

It was a lovely afternoon when we reached the old chateau. It lies along the far side of an immense court-yard, shut in by high iron gates, and flanked on either side by picturesque farm buildings. A cheery old man, who proved to be the steward, answered our ring, and took us through the farmyard to see the grave of the Marquis.

A heap of rough stones overgrown with ivy marks the spot. On the summit is a small iron cross, with a little plate engraved with the name and date. Around are trees, sunshine, the peaceful quiet which has succeeded the stormy time in which the Marquis de Rouérie lived his strenuous and restless life.

The old steward was full of jokes, and asked endless questions about the camera, the shining brasswork of which excited his admiration. He also interested himself in the most obliging way about our journey, inquired as to the details of life in England, the cost of food, clothes, everything, and finally asking if we would have some cider, took us to his little room that opened off the side of the big courtyard. Here we found his wife, a charming, rosy-cheeked old woman, to whom he hastened to impart all the information he had gathered from us: how monsieur was a doctor, how much the camera cost, where we were staying, what part of England we inhabited, how many servants we kept, what we had paid for the hire of the carriage. . . . Then they tackled us together. How long did it take to become a doctor? Where did one study? People were very fond of doctors, were they not? At least it was so in France.

Here the old woman left our two men to talk together, and turned to me.

"Has madame any children?" she inquired.

"No, madame had not."

Why, how strange, neither had she, never had had any. Madame, likewise, had never had any.

Ah, well, no doubt the husbands were enough: they took a great deal of seeing after; though, indeed, hers was a good man as men went. But what would you! Men were all alike! They were doubtless part of the cross the *Bon Dieu* had laid upon woman to fit her for Paradise. Here

a short discussion ensued on the respective merits of our men folk, during which they adjourned to the other side of the court to inspect a new cider press that was being erected.

With many a good wish we left the couple at last, and the old white horse that had brought us from Plancoët took us back again to the inn, where we found supper waiting for us.

A good supper it was too, an orgy of game and new-laid eggs, of great cakes of yellow butter and foaming jugs of home-brewed cider. It was the season of *la chasse* in Brittany, and everywhere we went nothing else was talked about. However, the savoury messes of hare and partridge well atoned for the somewhat monotonous nature of the conversation, for if the men can shoot, the women can certainly cook.

Next morning, early, I became conscious of much traffic passing the inn. There was a mooing of cows, a bleating of sheep, in fact, all the commotion of a market to be held somewhere in the neighbourhood. Then the sunlight forced open my eyes, and gazing fixedly at me from the opposite wall was the picture of an extremely severe-looking old lady in a large Breton cap. She seemed so surprised and shocked at finding me still in bed, that at last I could bear her reproachful aspect no longer, and scrambled down from my high couch. All the time I was dressing she watched me about the room in a disapproving way, as, from another frame, did her hen-pecked-looking husband, till I felt quite embarrassed, and was glad at last to shut the door upon them both, and go down to the cheerful veranda, where a cageful of birds provided a pleasant musical accompaniment to my breakfast.

We had ordered the same white horse to be in readiness,

and about nine o'clock started off for Montafilant, an ancient ruined castle that lies some four or five miles beyond the Chapel of Nazareth. The road mounted steeply for a time, then, having reached the table-land, started straight off toward the east. At last, leaving the main road, we turned to the right, and began descending into a deep and exquisite valley, which, as we reached the little rush-fringed stream winding about among the rich meadows that filled up the narrow bottom, broke into other valleys, veritable gorges, deep and thickly wooded, with towering granite peaks jutting up here and there.

On the highest peak of all, a sudden hill steep as a sugar loaf, stands the castle of Montafilant, on the spot where, for a time, dwelt the cruel Count Comorre, the Breton Bluebeard, of whom we shall have more to say hereafter.

In Roman times this district of Brittany was the headquarters of the Curiosolites, one of the five great tribes which then inhabited the peninsula. Their town Corseul lay near by, and long after the introduction of Christianity the worship of Mars was carried on at Corseul, and that of a goddess called Sirona on the height of Montafilant. Indeed, as Le Moyne de La Borderie points out, the obstinate adherence of the inhabitants to paganism proved the ruin of the whole neighbourhood. Here is the legend.

When the saintly Malo, or, as he is more correctly called, Machutes, first came to Brittany he found that Christianity had not penetrated to this district. He decided, therefore, that his work must chiefly lie among the Curiosolites, and determined to celebrate his first Easter Mass in the Temple of Haute Bécherel at Corseul, the very centre of the worship of the god Mars.

The people received him coldly, but without open hostility, and he and his monks began preparing for the

feast in the midst of all the mysterious pomp and splendour of the vast pagan shrine. It was only then that they discovered that by some oversight they had omitted to bring either chalice or wine for the Eucharist. Two or three monks were sent to buy some in the town, but in all Corseul no one was found willing to sell either cup or wine, a fact which proves how not only pagan but antichristian the district was. In the end the saint performed a miracle to provide the necessaries, but he never pardoned the insult to his religion, and though he scattered monasteries broadcast over his diocese, monasteries that soon became the centres of flourishing and wealthy towns, he founded none at Corseul, and gradually, as Christianity became more and more popular, the pagan town sank into insignificance.

It was a steep climb from the stream to the summit on which Montafilant stands, and the scene when we reached it was very curious. The once stately castle court has degenerated into the common farmyard of the little village which has grown up within the fortress walls. Cottages and barns are grouped around it, and in one corner is the castle well, still reaching down to the level of the valley stream. In one of the doorways an ancient woman sat at her wheel. She was so old and wrinkled, her claw-like hands looked so inhuman and spidery as they twisted the thread, that as I stood watching, she seemed to me like Fate spinning the destiny of Montafilant and the neighbourhood, so pagan was she, so elemental! As the sun shone in upon her she scarcely blinked her faded eyes; and the humming of her wheel mingling with the buzzing of bees, filled the soft air with a sleepy murmur. Two or three startled sheep which had fled at our approach came back and watched us inquisitively, while chickens scratched and pecked about in the straw at our feet. . . . Truly it is a peaceful old age that

Montafilant enjoys after the stormy days of its youth, for it must have seen some exciting episodes. It was built for such, with its wide, deep ditch, and five hugely thick towers; and the cunningly contrived entrance, as hopeless as that of Giant Despair's Castle. Indeed, situated in the deep intricate valley, hidden from, yet close to, the high-road which in those days led from Rennes to the great port Erquæ, it must have been a convenient haunt for robbers, and no doubt the former lords of Montafilant did not fail to gather contributions from travellers passing that way.

We lingered so long at the castle that we had some ado to catch our train at Plancoët. On our arrival at the station we found it crowded with priests, evidently on their way to some function or other. One, a red-faced young fellow, had his bicycle with him, and, his soutane tucked up round his waist, exhibited a very worldly pair of shepherd's plaid knickerbockers, of which I doubt whether his bishop would have approved. He must have known that he ought not to have been wearing them, for as he caught my eye he pulled down his black cassock and looked rather sheepish. We happened to get into a carriage labelled *Chasseurs avec Chiens*, into which he and his friend also climbed.

"Où donc est votre chien?" he inquired jocosely, and seemed disposed to continue the joke when a woman entered with a baby, which was a much greater nuisance than any number of dogs could have been.

GUINGAMP

CHAPTER II

Guingamp—Reminiscence of the Pardon—Legend of Nôtre Dame de Bon Secours—Sainte Françoise d'Amboise at Guingamp—Ménez Bré—Guenc'hlan and Saint Hervé—The Fountain of Saint Hervé—Bulat Pestivien—The Temple of Lanleff.

GUINGAMP, a quaint old name and a quaint old town. Among the billowy folds of the green valley of the winding Trieux, it lies like some ancient jewel, the glories of its mediæval church set in an intricate fillagree work of winding streets, gabled houses, and battlemented walls.

It was raining when we reached the station, just a burst of stormy tears, forgotten as soon as shed, that left the sky full of glistening white clouds. The omnibus, with its grey horses, was in waiting, and Victor the driver, a very old friend of mine, after an enthusiastic greeting, took our luggage tickets, and we were soon on our way to the Hôtel de France.

Guingamp always fascinates me, it is so deliciously out of date, so antiquated and inconsequent. I am sure the goods in the dull shops can never have been renewed since the time of Duchesse Anne, and only on market days do the streets awake from the lethargy into which they have sunk. One is able, therefore, to give all one's attention to the history and antiquities of the town and neighbourhood, a distinct advantage in so interesting a place as Guingamp.

As we passed the church, I glanced into the north porch, crowded as ever with country women paying their devotions to the miraculous statue of Nôtre Dame de Bon Secours, which, clad in gorgeous robes, stands high above the inner doors.

The triangular market-place was grey and shiny with rain, and the quaint dormers and angle turrets of the old houses seemed weeping for the glories of bygone days. But as we clattered into the courtyard of the hotel all was bright and cheerful.

"Bon jour, madame ; bon jour, monsieur ! Soyez-les bien venus" ; and a ringing of bells, a shouting and hurrying, a clinking of keys and hot-water cans, till at last, having climbed the winding stone staircase, we find ourselves installed in our big, low-ceiled bedroom on the second floor, looking down over the stable-yard to the river and green meadows beyond.

It was by no means our first visit to Guingamp, for it forms the entrance to one of the loveliest parts of Brittany, and has besides much historical interest. It was one evening in July, now many years ago, that I first entered the old town. How well I remember it ! At each of the three corners of the market-place, a great heap of dry gorse had been built, and surmounted by a cross. As evening deepened into night, the streets became thronged with peasants, all making their way to the church of Nôtre Dame, which was beginning to gleam all over with fairy lights.

Within, the walls were glowing with festoons of flowers, and round every arch and pillar wreaths of many-coloured lamps were burning. Thousands of pilgrims, all carrying candles, were making their way as best they could toward the high altar, to have them lighted by the priest who stood

there, a burning taper in his hand. Then out into the street they flowed, and the giant procession began to form. Gradually the air, not only of the church, but of the town itself, grew thick with the smell of burnt wax, and the great Festival of Fire, now called the Pardon of Nôtre Dame de Bon Secours, commenced in earnest.

From far and wide the people crowd to this festival, which is one of the most extraordinary in Brittany. Down every dark street flowed a double file of lights, each casting a bright reflection on the face of the person who bore it. Thus, most of the pilgrims being in black, and their bodies not distinguishable from the darkness, it seemed a procession of white-capped, white-winged cherubs, of various ages, floating in mid-air, while in their midst appeared rich banners, reliquaries, statues of favourite saints, and finally, *Madame Marie de Bon Secours* herself, in embroidered satin and sparkling jewelled crown.

Each parish was accompanied by its clergy, who walked in the space between the ranks of lights, and led the singing. For the streets were not only full of light, but of music, strange, weird, Celtic canticles, many of which date back to the days of the saints whose deeds they celebrate, and whose bones lie in the gilded cases borne by the white-robed singing men.

As one song died away, a new one approached, took its place, grew louder, louder, filled all the air, softened a little, then melted into the distance, and another came down the street. The favourite canticle was naturally that of the patron saint of Guingamp, Madame Marie de Bon Secours.

> "Oh, I have been on pilgrimage to every country round,
> To Tréguier, Carhaix, Léon, and all the holy ground,
> But no place is so favoured, and to the pilgrim dear,
> As the church of Madame Marie of Bon Secours near here !

'Tis she who giveth sight once more to eyes that long were blind,
She cures the deaf, and heals the lame, doth Madame Marie kind,
The languishing are cured by her, the dumb man learns to sing,
To every poor afflicted soul doth she her comfort bring."

For Madame Marie de Bon Secours, let me remark, is not just like any other "Madame Marie." We know that in Brittany the Blessed Virgin of each parish has her special place in the hierarchy of saints, her distinctive rank, and right of precedence among Virgins of other parishes. And Madame Marie of Guingamp is one of the most exalted, and holds a very sacred position in the hearts of her worshippers. A quaint and beautiful story, dating back to the fifteenth century, is told of her, sung as a ballad by the people of Basse Bretagne.

In the terrible days preceding the marriage of the Duchesse Anne with Charles the Eighth of France, Guingamp was besieged no less than three times by the French, under the Duc de Rohan. On one of these occasions, when all seemed lost, and the French were actually in the town, the duchess is said to have rushed into the church and, flinging herself on the ground, to have implored mercy of the Blessed Virgin. But let us hear the ballad.

"The duchess ran to the church, and throwing herself on her knees on the bare cold ground, cried aloud, 'Would you, oh Blessed Virgin, see your house changed into a horse-shed, your sacristy used as a cellar, and the sacred high altar defiled as a kitchen table?'

"She had scarcely spoken when the bells began sounding. The bells began sounding, and fear fell upon all who heard them. Then the Duke de Rohan called to his page, 'Page, page, my little page, who art ever so quick and prompt, go quickly to the top of the tower, and see who is ringing the

bells so gaily; and when thou knowest plunge thy dagger into his heart.'

"Up the tower stairs the page went singing gaily. Gaily sang he as he hastened up, but bitterly he wept as he came down, and to the duke he said, 'I went to the top of the tower, and no one was there; no one was there save the Virgin Mary herself, and with her her Blessed Son. It is they, oh my lord, who are ringing the bells!' Then the duke, when he heard, was sore afraid, and said he to his men, 'Give offerings, my soldiers, each one a crown, nobles give ten; I myself will give twelve to repair the damage I have done. Let us saddle our horses and begone, and leave their houses to the Blessed Saints.'"

And so he passed away, and the centuries came and went, but Madame Marie de Bon Secours still reigns triumphant in the old church at Guingamp.

On that July evening of which I was speaking, the procession, as it reached the lower end of the market-place, stopped, and the people began to take their places around the huge piles of brushwood that had been built at the three angles. Thicker and closer grew the crowd, and brighter the gleam of the thousands of lights. Then suddenly there was a hush. The priests with the sacred figure of the Virgin had approached the lower pile. There was a moment of breathless silence, for it is an ill omen if the fire does not take. Suddenly there was a crackling, and the song arose once more, louder and stronger than ever. Then the priests made their way to the other fires, and at the same time a flame sprung up from the first lighted, seeming, with its leaping, fiery tongue, to lick the very cross with which the heap was crowned; yet, strangely enough, never igniting it. And then all the Tantads were blazing, roaring, and the red glare lit up the old slate roofs

and nodding gables, as in the days when some pagan goddess was carried in procession to light the sacred midsummer fires in honour of the Sun-god.

But as I made my way through the "Place" last September, it was quiet and dull, and when I seated myself in the dark old church there were no wreaths of flowers to hide the strange triforium, Gothic on the north side, Renaissance on the south.

No, there was nothing to obstruct the view, save the huge heavy pillars that block the entrance to the choir, and I could plainly see the white face of that curious Lady of Guingamp, Sainte Françoise d'Amboise, whose statue stands on the north side of the choir. Very little of her home now remains, a public garden occupies most of its site. Yet to those of us who have read her history in the Chronicles of Albert l'Grand, she is a very real person, royal as well as saintly, this Duchess of Brittany, who spent so much of her married life in the old Castle of Guingamp.

Scarcely was she born when all the greatest lords of Brittany began disputing for her hand, for she was the daughter of Lord Louis d'Amboise, Prince de Talmont. Her parents, however, wishing her to have a chance of choosing for herself, sent her away to Vannes, to the court of her uncle, Duke John, where she grew up a perfect model of mediæval piety, and finally married the Duke's youngest son, Pierre, who afterwards became Duke of Brittany. In the early years of their marriage they held their little court at Guingamp, and it was there her husband ill-treated her in such an abominable manner, and finally begging her pardon, joined with her in turning the castle into a sort of monastery, where the Blessed Françoise and he did nothing all day long but say their prayers and attend Mass.

Among the old buildings of Guingamp, none is more

picturesque than the Abbey of Saint Croix, which lies across the fields on the south side of the town. We went there on the evening of our arrival, and found it used as a farm, the old chapel piled full of sweet hay and clover.

Next morning I was wakened very early by a young fox terrier puppy, who had got away from his mother and wandered out into the yard, where he lay sprawling on the stones crying pitifully. As no one else seemed to hear him, I had to find my way downstairs and out to where he was lying. He stopped crying as soon as he saw me, and nestled into my warm neck, while I searched for the rest of his family. After I had put him back safely among the other soft little white dumplings, his brothers and sisters, I found it too bright a morning to go back to bed, so determined to take the first train to Bégard and make the ascent of Ménez Bré, that mountain which stands in proud solitude watching over the broad plateau of the Côtes-du-Nord.

It was still early when we got out of the train at the little station of Belle Isle Bégard. No sign of a village was to be seen, nothing but a small café, where we were fortunate enough to hire a wagonette and horse to take us to the foot of the mountain. The road lay through a labyrinth of leafy tunnels, bordered on either hand with gorse, that earlier in the year must have looked like a golden dado. But now it was grey-green and ghostly, a fit haunt for the disembodied spirits which are supposed to frequent such places. Here and there gnarled tree trunks stretched sinewy arms across the road, suggestive of the ancient savages who once practised their barbarous rites on Ménez Bré, and among them rose a vast stone or menhir, covered with evil-looking blotches of orange-coloured lichen, horribly reminiscent of faded stains of human blood.

At last the horse stopped, and we found ourselves at the entrance to the broad grass-grown road that still leads straight up the mountain to the little chapel that crowns the summit. On either hand were ruins of stone walls, overgrown with brambles and gorse. The higher we rose the finer became the view, till, as we reached the top and sat down to rest, it seemed to us that all the kingdoms of the world lay stretched like a map at our feet.

Ménez Bré, as is well known, has ever been the bard's mountain, for it was the haunt of two Celtic poets: Guenc'hlan, the pagan, the man of Holy Race, who lived here, uttering his prophecies, and thundering his denunciations against his Christian foes; and Hervé, the saintly bard of later time. Strangely pathetic, indeed, that both the men with whom the mountain is so closely associated should have been blind, and therefore should never have seen the magnificent prospect.

As we sat watching the glorious stretch of sunbathed landscape, we could not but think of the wild old singer, perhaps the last representative of Druidism, who, if the popular legend speaks true, not only dwelt on Ménez Bré, but lies buried in the recesses of the mount. We know little about him, nothing, indeed, save what we gather from an old song or two which Monsieur de la Villemarqué attributes to him; but as we sat up on that solitary height, it was not difficult to picture him, clad in goat-skins, his wild grey beard and long white locks agreeing as ill with his lean active figure as did the feeble old harp he carried with his loud, strident voice.

And this, they say, is the song he sang—

> "As I was sleeping sweetly in my tomb,
> I heard the eagle calling in the night,
> Calling his eaglets and the other birds,
> 'Come quickly, quickly, flying on your wings.

> "'It is not flesh of dog, nor yet of sheep,
> It is the flesh of Christian that is here;
> Come quickly, quickly flying on your wings,
> My eaglets and the other birds of heaven.'
>
> "'Old raven of the sea, what hast thou there?'
> 'Ha, ha, it is the head of Christian Chief!
> His two red eyes are mine, I tear them out,
> As he hath torn thine eyes, oh Master Bard.'
>
> "'Oh, fox from out the wood, what hast thou there?'
> 'I hold a heart as mean and false as mine!
> He wished thy death, he made thee long to die;
> I hold his heart, 'tis mine, this Christian heart!'
>
> "'And thou, oh toad, that crouchest by his mouth,
> Why art thou there at corner of his mouth?'
> 'I wait here for the passing of his soul,
> I wait the passing of his cruel soul.
>
> "'Long as I live his soul shall dwell in me,
> As punishment for all his wicked crimes
> Against the bard who dwelt on Ménez Bré,
> Between Roc'h-allaz and Porz-gwenn who dwelt.'"

For Guenc'hlan, like all Druids, was of the school of Pythagoras, believing in the transmigration of souls, and would have taught us that existence consists of three circles: that of empty space, where nothing is either living or dead, where God, the Pure Spirit, dwells alone; that of migration, through which all must pass; and that of happiness, to which all will attain. But let us leave the old bard to his pre-historic slumbers. Few, save Celtic scholars, remember him now.

A far more familiar figure is that of Saint Hervé, to whom the little chapel on Ménez Bré is dedicated. The son of a Christian poet and a Druid priestess, Hervé may be taken to represent all that is best and most beautiful in both religions. Like most true bards, from Homer downwards, he was, as already stated, blind—blind from

birth; his statues always represent him being led by a guide and accompanied by a wolf, which, after the manner of early saints, he had convinced of its evil ways, and pressed into the service of the true Church. It is an innocent piece of symbolism, signifying, no doubt, the triumph of the gospel, as preached by the saint, over the paganism that prevailed in the district before his time. It is universally acknowledged that the animal attendant on the Hellenic gods and goddesses represented the totem cult that preceded the worship of the deity. And so I take it that the horse of Saint Eloi, the dog of Saint Bieuzi, the wolf of Saint Hervé are but survivals of the animal cults which these Celtic saints respectively found in vogue at their coming. Even the story of the wolf, as told by Albert le Grand, is suggestive.

It appears that the saint had been left in charge of his uncle's farm. One day, while he was engaged in his devotions, his attendant came rushing in, saying that a wolf had appeared and had devoured the ass with which he had been ploughing. As he spoke the ferocious creature came trotting up to the door.

"Fly, fly!" screamed Guiharen; "he will kill you as he did the ass!"

But Hervé, nowise dismayed, bade the man lead the wolf to the plough, and harness him with the harness of the dead ass. "He will do us no harm," said the Saint; "indeed, far from that, he will fill the place of the ass we have lost." "And," adds the story, "it was a beautiful sight to see this savage beast living for the future among the sheep and goats, eating hay and grass, and doing all the work of an ordinary domestic animal."

We know nothing of the cult that was originally practised on Ménez Bré. It must always have been a

worshipping place; its very situation made it so, and possibly Guenc'hlan's legend is but a surviving memory of the savage old religion of which the mountain was the centre. All over the summit are mysterious stone enclosures, in which worshippers may have assembled, as they did in the cromlechs of Carnac; and there is an extremely ancient well, which, though said to have been discovered by Saint Hervé, certainly dates back to much earlier times. The chapel, which probably covers the most sacred spot of all, is unfortunately modern, but has an ancient porch. In the chapel itself Mass used to be said once a year, at midnight, for all poor souls who had died without the last offices of the Church. After the service, to which all trembling and forlorn spirits were supposed to flock from every quarter, the priest repaired to the granite porch, and summoned the demons from far and near. Then, they say, arose a howling of tempestuous voices, a flapping of bat-like wings, and the legions of hell crowded in upon him thick and fast. He had to be a brave man, this priest, for if one fear assailed him the fiends would tear him to pieces. Making the sign of the cross, he would order one and all to show him their hands, just to make sure they had not taken possession of any of those souls for whom he had been interceding. Then, because a devil must have something to bear away with him, he gave to each a grain of corn, and so dismissed them.*

As we were looking at the terrible place, a ragged shepherd appeared with a few sheep, and volunteered to show us Saint Hervé's fountain, which we had been unable to find. He was a gentle soul, a bit of a poet himself, and told us the legend of the saint in a fashion all his own, as we made our way among the stone enclosures toward

* "La Legende de la Mort," A. le Braz, vol. i. p. 329.

the east of the summit. There, just where the mountain began to dip toward the plain, we came upon an old square well. The stones edging it were so ancient, that they seemed to form part of the granite frame of the mountain, yet at some remote age they had undoubtedly been hewn and fitted into place.

"There it is," said the shepherd, "that is the fountain of Saint Hervé. It is good for the sight; they say it will even cure the blind." And he proceeded to tell how Hervé had called forth the water to cure a man who had been struck blind for jeering at him. No doubt the fountain was once sacred to the sun, giver of all light, whence its reputation for the eyes. It is certainly much older than the days of the Christian saint, and his miracle may very well have been nothing more wonderful than the removing of the stones and earth which had accumulated over a holy well, of whose existence he had learned from that Druid sun-worshipper, his mother.

"When we asked down below they could not tell us where the fountain was. They didn't seem to know of it," I said.

"What do they know down below?" said the shepherd, contemptuously. "One must dwell on the mountain if one would know Saint Hervé."

"He is your patron saint?" I inquired.

"He is the patron of all who dwell on the heights," answered the peasant. "Saint Hervé was himself a bard, for all time he is the patron saint of singers."

One of the most charming expeditions from Guingamp is to the old village of Bulat, that lies up among the hills to the south-west of the railway. We had been told of the little place, and of its splendid church, but hitherto something had always prevented our visiting it.

However, the morning after our walk up Ménez Bré, we took the train to Pont Melvez, and started in the direction of the village. After crossing a stream by an old bridge, beneath which women were washing, we made our way gradually upward. The country became wooded and hilly, and at last, upon turning a corner, we saw in the distance a clock tower, which we felt sure would prove to be our destination. But we still had a long walk before we reached it, and passed another church, a strange little ancient place, called Pestivien. The building itself seemed sinking into the ground with age, and in the grave-yard was a handsome and very curious calvary.

After a steep and final climb, we found ourselves at the entrance of the village we had come to see. It lies high, the lace-like spire of its church forming a landmark for miles round.

Outside the grave-yard wall is a green, a real village green, the only one I remember to have seen in Brittany. Around it stand the granite cottages, and at the upper end are one or two groups of trees, giving a pleasant shade.

By the time we arrived at Bulat we were hungry with our long walk, and I am afraid that even the sight of the splendid church did not prevent our first thoughts turning anxiously towards lunch. We searched eagerly, and, at last, at the upper end of the green, found a cottage with a bunch of mistletoe hanging over the door, which in Brittany is the sign of an inn.

A dark room, with vast cavernous hearth, and two cupboard-beds, one above another. Behind the wooden screen, which in Brittany always protects from the draught of the door, a table, and two long forms, set under the window. For the rest, an eight-day clock, and some

well-polished cupboards, set on the earthen floor. As we entered an old woman rose from a chair near the hearth and came forward, asking what we wanted. I say that she asked, but, as a matter of fact, I could only guess her meaning, for she spoke not a word of French.

It was a trying moment for all concerned. The old woman regarded us suspiciously, as we glanced despairingly round in search of some one to help us out of our difficulty. Suddenly, on a shelf, I espied a loaf of bread, one of those huge golden discs so dear to the Breton peasant. Pouncing upon it, I tucked it under my left arm in the regulation fashion, and made as though I would cut it. Instantly the old woman's face cleared. Here was something she could understand. A huge hemisphere of home-made butter and a jug of cider were quickly produced, and we sat down to table. What more could the heart, or rather the stomach, of a hungry pedestrian desire? True, the only available knife lived in the old lady's pocket; but what of that! We used it turn and turn about, and very merry it made us all.

Presently a young woman, with a baby, strolled in, summoned by our hostess, as we learned later. The stranger proved to have some knowledge of French, and as we ate our bread and butter, acted as interpreter between the old dame and ourselves.

"She wishes to say," observed the young woman, after a long confabulation in Breton, "that she thinks you must like her, you smile at her so pleasantly."

To which, through the same intermediary, I made answer that I certainly liked her very much, and also her good bread, which was the best I had eaten in Brittany.

This remark gave such intense satisfaction to the old lady that she insisted on treating us all to brandy, which

we drank to her health, clinking our glasses in Breton fashion.

The conversation then continued with increased vivacity. After ascertaining, to her satisfaction, who we were, what was our usual drink in England, where we were staying, the number, names, and quality of our relations to the fifth generation, what they had died from, and where they had been buried, the old woman said something very distinctly and with marked emphasis, and then stood watching to see the effect.

"She wishes to say," repeated the interpreter, "that she has kept this inn for forty years, and she has never had a customer she liked so well as you."

Highly flattered, we rose to our feet and shook hands with the good old soul.

"You will permit me to take your photograph, madame, I hope?" said I. "I shall be very pleased to send you a copy if it turns out a success."

But at this our hostess became coy, vowed she had not on her Sunday dress, that her best cap was not home from the wash, made I know not what objections, till, to cut them short, my husband put his arm round her waist and coaxed her out into the sunshine, where I had taken up my stand in readiness with the camera. No sooner was the deed accomplished than who so proud as she! She smiled and bridled, and preened herself like a barndoor fowl, and really flirted with my good man to such an extent that, fearing for his peace of mind if it went on any longer, I moved the closure, and with many good wishes we took our leave.

Bulat, as I have already hinted, owes its very existence to its church. It is a magnificent fifteenth-century building, out of all proportion to the little village of which it forms

the centre. In the grave-yard is an ancient fountain, of great repute among the young married women of the neighbourhood, as it is said that the water, if taken with due formulæ and various incantations, is certain to ensure a large family.

We were looking at the worn steps leading down to the sunken granite square, where rises the fountain, when a stout rosy-faced sister accosted us, and volunteered to show us the church. As we picked our way among the grave-stones, I inquired whether the fountain had not been there long before the church.

"But yes," said she, "indeed, we owe the church itself to the fountain." And she told me the following story.

A certain Lord of Pestivien (the little village we had passed on our way up) having been married and childless for some years, determined that his wife should take the waters of Bulat systematically, vowing at the same time that if a son were born to them he would build a church to Our Lady of Bulat, the tutelary deity of the fountain. In due time the child arrived, and there, beside the fountain, they raised the splendid building that remains to-day a lasting tribute to the efficacy of the waters!

"See, madame," concluded the sister, leading us to the tower door, and pointing to two granite busts that leant forward from the springing of the arch, on either side, "those are the portraits of the founder and his wife, the Lord and Lady of Pestivien."

She was a merry old soul, and very proud of the church pointing out its various beauties and peculiarities with great pride. A curious lectern called forth much remark from her. It certainly was very strange; a peasant, almost life-size, carved in wood, dressed in the costume of the district, even to the sabots and broad-brimmed hat, and

THE SOUTH PORCH OF BULAT CHURCH

holding his hands above his head to support the book. The whole, with its vivid colouring, looked most realistic, and must have been an endless amusement to the children during sermon time. It stood just outside a beautifully carved low stone screen that closed in the choir. From the south the church is entered by one of those porches so common in Brittany, in which stand the Twelve Apostles; but the arch to the porch is unusual, and though ugly from an architectural point of view, picturesque and photographic.

But it is the mortuary chapel, added in the sixteenth century by the Pestivien family, that is the most curious and interesting thing about Bulat. It is of great size and beauty, elaborately carved and ornamented, and round its outer wall are grotesque representations of *L'Ankou*, or Death, some of which are particularly horrible. After our stout friend had satisfied herself that we really knew something of the building, she very kindly invited us to the parsonage to rest and refresh ourselves. Crossing to the west of the churchyard, we passed through a wicket gate, and immediately descended into a tiny hollow, where lay the priest's house and garden. I wish I could give some idea of the perfect beauty, and peaceful serenity of the place. The priest himself was absent, but the sister did the honours of the house so graciously that we scarcely missed him. Having seated us in his large, cool, oak-panelled study, she brought us various pictures and photographs to look at, and above all, the great, solid silver figure of the Virgin of Bulat, which is carried in procession at the Pardon in July. And all the time through the open window floated the scent of autumn flowers, and the lazy drone of bees, mingled with the chirping of thousands of grasshoppers.

At last, rousing ourselves from the pleasant enchantment

of this "Sleepy Hollow," we bade good-bye to our good friend, and turning our backs on Bulat, started off on our long walk to the station.

From Guingamp to Pontrieux is but an hour's ride, a mere bagatelle of a journey, which we made the same evening, taking up our quarters at the well-intentioned, but somewhat fusty, Hôtel de France. I cannot imagine its ever occurring to any one to stay at Portrieux, were it not for its proximity to that curious and interesting relic of paganism, the Temple of Lanleff.

After breakfast next morning, we set off along the country roads and winding hollow lanes to find the building. The air was crisp and fresh, and we walked gaily along for several miles till we reached the village. But here we stopped in dismay. Nothing was to be seen but a perfectly new and very ugly church; not a vestige of anything like a Gaulish temple. At last, passing a farm-yard, where two women were working, we paused and asked for the "old church." The first woman only shook her head, and pointed to the modern building we had already seen; but the other, a queer old witch-like creature, after looking at me fixedly for some time, suddenly grasped her companion by the arm, and said something in Breton about the *Temp coz*, which means the old temple.

"Ah," said the first woman, "it is the Temp coz you want! Come this way;" and opening the gate she led us across several yards and meadows to a mysterious wooded hollow, quite hidden from the road. There, beside an old, old fountain, lay the most curious of buildings. It consists of two circular stone enclosures built one within the other. The inner wall, which encloses a space about thirty feet across, is pierced with twelve arches, each supported by two squat pillars, on the capitals of which are carved grotesque

resemblances of goats in various attitudes, and other emblems, reminding one forcibly of certain Egyptian hieroglyphics. Between each pair of archways is another pillar, built into the wall, and, no doubt, formerly employed to sustain the roof of the inner enclosure. The exterior wall completely encircles the interior, so that if we regard the inner space as the nave of the temple, this outer enclosure may be likened to a circular aisle. It is vaulted above, and its outer wall is pierced by twelve windows, which, after the fashion of loopholes, are larger within than without. Exactly at the east of the outer enclosure are two arches, and above them an oval window, measuring only a foot in diameter on the outside of the wall, and quite three feet within. Although we examined the building with the utmost care, we could find no sign of its ever having been used as a Christian church. The carvings are such as I have never met with in any building employed for Christian worship, and the whole form and aspect of the temple suggests that it was a late Gaulish edifice, built during the Roman occupation of Brittany by persons who had seen and appreciated Roman buildings. True Roman it is not. The character of the masonry and the nature of the sculptures prove that, and there has been much dispute among learned men as to the origin and use of the singular building. But it seems to me that the old writer, Fréminville, struck the right note when he declared that: "About this time the Druids abandoned their open-air enclosures, and rude altars, that had no other dome than the vault of heaven, and following the example of their conquerors, erected to their gods stone buildings, the architecture of which was naturally a clumsy copy of that of their rulers."

As to the deity worshipped at Lanleff, the circular

form of the building, the number twelve represented both by the arches and windows, symbolizing the signs of the Zodiac, the oval aperture through which the first rays of the rising sun fell directly down on the altar of sacrifice, all point to its being a temple dedicated to the Sun, the supreme Gaulish divinity. And as if to render doubt impossible, at the entrance, upon the capital of one of the columns, is carved the representation of the sun surrounded by rays of light.

As to the age of the *Temp coz*, the figures of goats point to a date not much later than the Roman occupation, and the strange grotesque figures of men with enormous hands seem conclusive as to the early period to be assigned to this temple.

It is a weird place, and as one stands looking up at the window just above where no doubt the altar once stood, one cannot but speculate as to the nature of the worship that was practised in this hidden spot.

How strange that this eastern window, through which came the signal for the shedding of blood, should still find place, enlarged and glorified it is true, but should still find place in almost every church in Christendom.

As we left the temple, we found the woman drawing water from the well beside the door. She told some strange story of a miraculous footprint on the stone, and showed how water refused to wet it. But to my mind the real interest of the fountain is its situation, close beside the entrance to the temple. It is so symbolical, is it not? For here as elsewhere it was the sacred fountain which led the way to the sanctuary.

And to those descendants of the nomadic Aryans who first brought religion to western Europe, how natural it was that the temple should grow from the fountain.

Wandering across the plains with their flocks and herds, water was the one essential thing. When a spring was discovered it became the centre of a camping ground. Above it some shelter would be placed to protect it from pollution, and a guardian appointed to preside over the distribution of the water, and prevent quarrels among the shepherds. In course of time the shelter grew into a permanent shrine, and the guardian, if he was not already a priest, became one. If the tribe remained in that place the fountain developed into a centre of worship, and later, when temples were erected, they were naturally built over, or close beside the spring. In such sanctuaries the supreme god of the period was worshipped under the invocation of the tutelary deity of the fountain, just as to-day in the churches which have superseded the old temples, the true God is adored through the special intervention of those Christian saints who have supplanted the original naiads of the holy springs.

CHAPTER III

Manor of Kercabin—La Roche Derrien—The Castle of Coadélan—Legend of La Fontenelle—Port Blanc—Tréguier—Tréguier in winter—The Pardon of Saint Yves—Legend of Saint Tûdual.

TO see Brittany as a tourist is one thing; to study it as a student is another; but to wander about the deep lanes with that great Breton folklorist, Anatole le Braz, to sit in the farms and listen to the stories and legends he and the peasants have to tell is a revelation. Every one knows him, every one loves him and welcomes his friends for his sake; the whole land breaks into smiles at his approach. Every church becomes a shrine containing the relics of some wonderful superstition; every château is haunted by phantoms of smugglers or Chouans. It is like living in a continual story book!

This friend of ours had promised to meet us at Pontrieux, and after our return from Lanleff we sat up waiting for him for some time; but as it began to grow late, thinking that something must have occurred to change his plans, we went at last to bed. I never knew at what hour he actually arrived, or the manner of his coming. Once during the night I woke fancying that the inn was being attacked by highwaymen, and heard knocking, and mysterious whispering outside below my window. Then I dozed again, and presently became conscious of singing in the room below,

Breton singing, followed by chorus and much applause. Again and again I woke in the darkness, and still heard sounds of merrymaking. Then at last all grew still, and only the ticking of my watch broke the silence of the night. In the morning as we were sitting at breakfast in he came, radiant and genial as ever, explaining that after his late arrival several friends who had not seen him for some time, having been warned by the landlord, had assembled and held a party in his honour, whence the sweet sounds that had broken in upon my slumbers.

What a day that was! Our bags stowed away in the depths of a "Charrette Anglaise," as the Bretons call that two-wheeled conveyance in which any number from one to sixteen can be accommodated, we started off from Pontrieux toward the north-west. The country of this part of the Côtes-du-Nord is wild and beautiful, and in the hollows between the rolling hills are strange villages and pilgrimage chapels which no tourist ever thinks of visiting. I remember passing one such little sanctuary, dedicated to some saint whose uncouth name I have forgotten. Entering the ancient porch, we found the door ajar, and within an old blind beggar woman, feeling her way round and round by the walls. Her sabots, stuffed with straw, stood beside the tomb of the saint where she had been kneeling, and she was now making the tour of the chapel on her bare feet in pursuance of some vow. We watched her in silence, and M. le Braz whispered to me that she was probably one of those pilgrims who, in consideration of a small sum of money, undertake to visit a saint and pray on behalf of the person who employs them.

Poor old creature, she was evidently very much in earnest about the matter, and seemed quite unconscious of our entrance. It is always affecting to see the blind faith of these Breton peasants. They cling so tenaciously to the

superstitions and traditions which form a great part of their cult, and lavish such intense affection and devotion on the local saints to whom they pray.

On the way to La Roche Derrien, where we were to lunch with the doctor, we stopped for ten minutes at the Manor of Kercabin, the scene of the exploits of a celebrated smuggler, named Margéot. He and his gang levied blackmail on all travellers passing along the road from Pontrieux to La Roche. It is a strange sensation, after reading his history, to walk down the magnificent avenue of beech trees leading to the house, along which the spectre of the terrible chief mounted on his favourite mare Awellic still gallops on winter evenings. As we entered the courtyard at the back of the house and ascended the steps to the door, I could almost see the old ruffian standing there to receive the police after the famous fiasco of Kado Vraz.* Within, too, all was reminiscent of the story. In the vast hall, the scene of so many wild revels, three villainous-looking bandits were sitting drinking beside the hearth, waited upon by an old woman. They glared at us so ferociously that, although I knew they were only respectable farm hands, I shrank back in alarm behind Monsieur le Braz. He, however, seemed to feel no fear, as indeed was natural, seeing that the mighty outlaw was his great-uncle. He advanced to the old woman, and after a few words in Breton she showed us into a charming sunny room that opened off the hall, where we waited while our friend went upstairs to see the master of the house, who was ill in bed. Then there was the usual cider drinking and pleasant interchange of compliments; but in spite of all I heaved a sigh of relief as I passed out of the entrance door, feeling as though I had escaped from some terrible peril,

* See "Vieilles Histoires du Pays Breton, Anatole le Braz," p. 108.

and all down the avenue I could not help looking for traces of the blood of the bandit Kado Vraz among the fallen coppery leaves.

La Roche Derrien, where we were hospitably entertained by Dr. Rolland in his charming home, calls up memories of that long War of Succession which ravaged Brittany for so many years. The town lies grouped around a rocky height, on which once stood the famous castle the scene of the capture of Lord Charles de Blois, whose wife claimed the Duchy of Brittany against Jean de Monfort. It was a very strong castle, one of the most celebrated in Brittany, and the account of its final capture by the Bretons and English is one of the best of all Froissart s stories. Poor Charles of Blois! if ever a man was misplaced in this world it was surely he. He would have made a splendid monk, or even a bishop. After his defeat and subsequent imprisonment in England, his first thought on getting back to Brittany was to make a pilgrimage from the scene of his capture at La Roche Derrien to Tréguier, barefoot, in winter, when the snow was on the ground, and, if we may trust the painter of a very beautiful picture in the new chapel of Saint Yves at the Pointe de Primel, wearing nothing but his shirt. Even the peasants who had suffered so much on his behalf were moved at the piteous spectacle, and spread their clothes before him. But he would have none of them, we are told, and chose the roughest parts of the road, so that the soles of his feet were so injured that for fifteen weeks afterwards he was unable to walk. What can be expected of a general who behaves in such a fashion?

La Roche is still a picturesque town, though every vestige of the castle has long since disappeared. In the days before the railway came to this part of Brittany,

the omnibus that brought the traveller from Plouec used to stop here for half an hour, and on winter evenings, when the old nodding gables were bowed beneath a heavy covering of snow, it was easy to picture the shouting, fighting mob, surging up and down the narrow winding streets, and thronging the castle enclosure.

But to-day Roche Derrien has its railway-station, and as we left the town lying in the sunshine, Charles and his melancholy history faded quickly away into the mists of the past.

At some distance from La Roche, just after passing Mantalot with its very curious church, lies the old Manor of Coadélan, the scene of the short married life of Baron Fontenelle. I suppose every one knows the story of La Fontenelle, the outlaw, who ran away with the little heiress of Coadélan, and after putting her in a convent till she was grown up, married her, and lived in the great dark rooms of this manor house. An avenue of oak trees leads to the great entrance gate, to the north of which, on the edge of a pool, rises an immense solitary menhir. The gate passed, we enter what was once the court of the château, now a farmyard, at the further end of which lies the forbidding-looking stone castle, more resembling a fortress than a dwelling-house.

The farmer who now owns it came to greet us, accompanied by his two little girls, and took us into the great kitchen, where his wife was making soup in the iron pot that hung from the chimney chain. They were delighted to see our friend, whom they evidently knew well, and as he sat on the old settle beside the hearth talking to them in Breton the whole made a picture impossible to forget. The vast dark kitchen with its floor of beaten earth, the yawning black chimney, and raised hearth-stone, the cupboard beds

THE MANOR OF COADÉLAN

THE GREAT KITCHEN

lining the wall in two tiers, each with its red curtain showing through the open carving of the shutters, and in the sunlight that streamed in from the window behind the tall wooden screen that guarded from the door, the group of white-capped women and children, laughing as they listened to the pleasant gossip of Anatole le Braz.

From the other side of the entrance hall opened huge rooms and galleries one within the other, furnished scantily with old polished cupboards, chests, and spare beds. Upstairs it was the same, save that here part of the largest room that must have been the great hall of the castle has been walled off and made into a veritable fortress, defended by a stout timber partition, in which are loop-holes commanding the whole of the outer portion of the room. The door leading to the chamber so formed is fitted on the inner side with enormous locks and bolts, and heavily barred gratings, to enable the occupant to investigate any one seeking admission. Within we saw an old bedstead and other antique furniture, but who had ever occupied the place, or the reason of its construction, I never discovered. I sometimes fancy it may have been made by the outlaw Fontenelle himself, as a retreat in case of sudden mutiny in his long-suffering household. But it is useless to speculate, Coadélan is full of mysteries of the kind. For instance, on the extreme south-east corner of the château is a turret. It is a tiny cell of a place, built of solid stone, hanging to the angle of the château like a swallow's nest. Stone is the pointed roof, stone the walls, and the floor is of one great round thin slab. Beneath this floor is a furnace opening into the outer room from which the turret chamber is approached. As I stood within it wondering what purpose the strange little place could possibly have served, an awful idea came into my mind.

"What do you call this turret?" I asked the farmer who was showing us round.

He laughed apologetically.

"It has a rather curious name," he said, "it is called the *Oven for Men!*"

After that we quitted the horrible turret rather suddenly, for with a rush I remembered some of the dreadful stories that are still told of Guy Eder, Baron de Fontenelle, whose cruelties during the Wars of the League made him notorious all over Brittany, and the Oven for Men became too warm a spot to linger in. It was pleasanter to come below into the great rooms on the ground floor, and fancy him with his young wife and baby, for whom, in spite of his ferocious character, he appears to have had a real tenderness.

It was doubtless while sitting in one of these chambers that he received the letter summoning him to Paris to appear before the king to answer the charges that had been brought against him. Here, too, his wife implored him not to go, saying that she would pay a special messenger to take his place—happy touch of the old writer, showing how the little heiress kept a hold over her fortune. No doubt it was in the great room opening off the entrance that he solemnly charged his companions to watch over his infant son during his absence.

As we stood at the outer door of the château, I pictured the little sixteen-year-old wife with her baby, "Beautiful as the day, resembling his father Fontenelle," watching her husband as he rode away down the avenue. How she must have longed and waited for his return, sitting beside one of the great open hearths where the logs still blaze in winter. She probably knew better than any one why the king had sent for him, and was not altogether unprepared for the

news brought by the page. For as the poor girl sat watching one day, she saw her husband's favourite attendant riding in at the archway which still gives entrance to the courtyard. Here is the legend itself.

"The little page said on arriving at Coadélan: 'Good day, good day to you, my lady. I wish you a better day than our poor lord is having. He has sent me for a shirt to put on, and a white sheet in which he may be shrouded. He asks, moreover, for a gilded plate for his head when it shall be exposed to view.'"

Then we can picture the lady in her "floating green dress" calling for her carriage to take her to Paris, . . . and she, too, disappears down the oak avenue, and we turn round to find the good farmer and his wife asking us to come and drink cider in the best room. As I sat at the round table and marked the empty chimney the concluding words of the old ballad came to my mind.

"Whoever goes now to Coadélan will feel his heart broken within him, will feel his heart broken with sorrow, seeing the fire dead upon the hearth, seeing the nettles spring up beside the door sill, and the poor will weep as they go by, will weep, alas! for sorrow, saying: 'Behold she is dead, the mother of the poor.'"

"Is the house haunted?" I asked the farmer, as we sat together and talked of the old story.

"No!" said he.

"You forget," corrected his wife, "you forget Monsieur Rouge."

"Ah, yes, to be sure," he assented with a laugh, "there is certainly Monsieur Rouge."

"He rolls cannon-balls up and down the great hall overhead," said the wife. "Sometimes he makes so much noise that no one can sleep."

But she could not tell us who Monsieur Rouge was, and I do not know to this day.

All I do know is, that the Manor of Coadélan is haunted by the phantoms of a handsome cavalier broken upon the wheel, and beheaded for his many crimes, and of his white-faced little lady of sixteen, who died of grief less than a year afterwards.

There is a very curious oak tree close to the house. Its trunk seems to have divided into three in order to clasp to its heart a large Druidical stone. Very little sign of life remains in the tree save at the ends of the short and stumpy branches, and what its age may be it is impossible to guess. But it is curiously suggestive to find the sacred stone and the sacred tree so closely associated. Indeed, the whole neighbourhood of Coadélan teems with problems of all sorts.

The road from Coadélan to Port Blanc took us again through La Roche, and here we changed the Charrette Anglaise for a butcher's cart, the owner of which undertook, "as a favour," to convey us to our destination. After seeing us safely into our new carriage, M. le Braz mounted his bicycle and rode on ahead to announce our coming.

It was an exciting drive. Though Port Blanc is certainly not more than eight miles from La Roche, the butcher had no idea of the way, and took with him a boy who clung on behind and shouted out directions at every cross road. As he invariably turned out to be wrong, I cannot help suspecting that he joined the butcher for the sake of the drive. How many times we took the wrong turning and had to retrace our steps I cannot say, but when at last we began descending the long steep slope that leads down to the little bay, it was already quite dark, and as we drew up at the gate of the long low cottage where Anatole le Braz

spends his summer, we found the entire family anxiously on the watch, beginning to think that we must have met with some catastrophe.

What a merry party it was that gathered round the supper table that evening! I don't know how many there were of us; after the long drive through the silent darkness, the lamplight and the cheerful voices confused me. But I remember how good it seemed to be there, making one of the circle of smiling faces. The large low room was full of warmth and colour, and the pleasant scent of steaming soup filled the air with appetizing fragrance. And all the time through the open door I could watch the moonlight lying cold and white on the shimmering glancing waves, and the black outline of Ile Saint Gildas shutting in the horizon to the north.

All the rooms at Port Blanc open on to a little raised terrace garden filled with marigolds, and beyond this, immediately across the road, is a green meadow, and beyond the meadow the ever-changing waters of the bay. The house being small, we were most kindly accommodated in the beautiful home of another friend. He and his wife joined us at supper that first night, and when it grew late, accompanied by all the family, we made our way up the moonlit road to the gate of our new friend's house.

Often during the night I woke and saw the moonlight glancing in at the window, and heard the soughing of wind among the pine trees, and the soft breaking of autumn waves. They seemed to be whispering together of the storms they would raise in winter, and chuckling with delight at the thought of the sailors they would toss and beat to death. Ah, those waves of Northern Brittany, they have plenty of crimes to plot during the calm nights of summer.

But in the morning what a radiant vision greeted us. A sea of sapphire, stained with emerald green, granite rocks whose soft shell pink was half shrouded with golden-brown and orange seaweed, and over all the turquoise sky of September. In this enchanted world of light and colour we wandered all day, scrambling over rocks in search of shells, climbing the hill to the curious old chapel whose roof seems sinking into the ground with the weight of its centuries of age, loitering about the village and deep country lanes, and visiting some of the old peasant women from whom Anatole le Braz has gleaned his harvest of myth and legend.

The country between Port Blanc and Tréguier lies high, forming a kind of table-land, rolling and somewhat bare. The trees are gnarled and bent with the wind, and for miles and miles the eye wanders over breezy bare country, with neither wood nor plantation to break the monotony. Nevertheless there is a charm and freshness about this district that invigorates the mind just as it strengthens the body. The road lies so high that one seems to overlook the district as from the roof of a stage coach, and long before reaching Tréguier the tall lace-like spire of its cathedral can be seen on the horizon.

As we crossed the bridge that spans the river Guindy, the old city of Saint Yves towered above us, still purple with the sunset. But before we had climbed the steep road that leads to the upper town the light faded, and the market square as we entered it was grey and mournful.

I have always loved Tréguier since a certain December day, now several years ago, when we went there in search of photographs to illustrate the legend of Saint Yves of Kermartin. I remember arriving in the old omnibus which in those days brought one from the station twelve miles

AT PORT BLANC. (ANATOLE LE BRAZ COLLECTING FOLK LORE)

away. We had written to say we were coming, but when we entered the low archway of the Lion d'Or,* all seemed dark and forbidding. Suddenly in a far corner a light shone out, and a rough voice shouted cheerily, "Henriette, les Anglais!"

After that, no more cold or darkness, for she led us upstairs, did Henriette, to a huge old bedroom, where a great fire was blazing on the hearth, and she warmed us with soup, and fed us with rum omelette and every sort of dainty, till our hearts revived again. During the days that followed we grew to know the town as few foreigners know it. All day we wandered about with our camera, stealing a view now and then during a pause in the tempest of wind and rain that was generally raging.

Sometimes we would make our way to Minihy, the little village where Yves, the lawyer saint and patron of Brittany, was born. And there, beside the hearth, where he so often entertained the poor and homeless, we would sit and watch the woman of the house make soup in the great pot that hung over the fire. Beside the hearth is the bed on which the saint died, and in the chapel his will is painted on the wall, that will by which he gave all he had to the poor of the district. Or we would start off for Trédarzec and Porz Bihan, where formerly the little chapel of that strange savage parody of the gentle lawyer, Yves le Véridique, was worshipped. The shrine has disappeared, but a woman who lives in the cottage hard by told me that on the very morning I was there no less than four pilgrims had been seen praying in the mud and rain to the impersonation of vengeance, who is worshipped at Porz Bihan under the name of Saint Yves.

* The good Henriette is now to be found on the quay at the Grand Hôtel Lalauze, which has replaced the old Lion d'Or.

Then again there is the valley of the Guindy, but that was prettiest in spring, when the apple trees were in blossom, and the village rose up from among billows of snow flushed here and there with rosy pink.

But the place we liked best that winter was the town itself, the quaint street scenes, the old Gothic cloisters, the ancient hospital which Yves of Kermartin used to visit every day, the house where the great Renan was born, his statue which the old country women are beginning to worship—strange example of the commencement and growth of a cult!—and last, but not least, the vast cathedral of Saint Tugdual, where we sat on wet evenings with the women who gathered to hear a priest read the lives of the saints. There, in the great empty church, where only four glimmering candles roused a faint twilight through the nave, we would cluster round the pulpit and dream of the gentle saint, whose marble face shone faintly out from his new tomb by the Duke's Chapel. The light fell on the huge central columns, which like sheaves of giant rushes rose higher and higher, bowing their heads together in the darkness above; and we would listen to the priest's monotonous chanting voice, and gaze into the black void of the chancel, till the whole building seemed to become a mighty symbol of the Church itself, with its mystery, its silence, and impenetrable shadows, the few faint lights beckoning onward to where in the deep gloom of the Holy of Holies the figure of the Christ gleamed faintly upon the altar.

Since those days we have often visited Tréguier, and have grown well acquainted with the surrounding country; but no time ever quite equalled that first winter fortnight, when after tramping about in the mud all day, we would return wet and hungry to our snug lamplit room, and sit drying our boots, and reading by the fire till we were

summoned to dinner. And what fun those dinners were! There was the veterinary surgeon, a handsome young man of ancient Breton family, whom we often met in his gig racing about the lanes; and the schoolmaster, with his unquenchable thirst for information; the photographer and his wife from Lannion; two or three commercial travellers; and our curly haired lame friend the notary, who lent me books about Druids and other Celtic mysteries. When the dinner was good our tongues wagged merrily as we compared notes of our day's doings, and pledged each other in vin ordinaire; and on those occasional "jours maigres" which seem sometimes to find a place in almost every household, we would sympathize with one another as much as we dared, and make up for our frugal repast by finishing the biscuits and cider.

Ah, well, no times are like the old times, and not even the Pardon in May, when the country is drowned in a mist of apple blossom, and the spire of the cathedral is illuminated with green fire, can dim the memory of those first December days.

Certainly the spectacle of the narrow granite streets filled with their living stream, out of whose snowy-capped depths rose all the gorgeous banners and reliquaries of the Côtes-du-Nord, while chanting voices and chiming bells sound forth the canticle of Saint Yves, is a sight never to be forgotten. But it is a sight all the world may see if only it goes to Tréguier on the 18th of May, and watches the great procession of the saint make its way to Minihy.

But in winter, when all the tourists have departed, Tréguier once more assumes its aspect of the old city of Saint Yves and Saint Tugdual.

For we must not allow ourselves to be so far captivated by the gentle charms of the great popular saint, whose

memory even to-day lingers round every stone of Tréguier, as to make us forget that far older hero, Saint Tugdual, who founded the monastery and first church of the town. The story of his doing so is told by Père Albert, the Monk of Morlaix, in his "Lives of the Breton Saints." He was a pupil of the great Saint Iltud, and of very noble birth. Landing in the west of Brittany, he made his way eastwards, and while travelling through Domnonée it seems that the holy man and the monk who accompanied him came to the valley of the Jaudy. Finding the place to their taste, with all the advantages of being on the coast yet sheltered from the rough sea blasts, Tugdual determined to found a monastery on the point of land that jutted out between the Guindy and the tidal Jaudy. Deroc, king of the district, with whom he was in high favour, helped him, and the saint having had the good fortune to slay a dragon which had long been a great pest to the neighbourhood, became very popular with the surrounding people, and soon accomplished the erection of the first church of Tréguier. Later, he was chosen Bishop of Lexobie, now Cozyaudet, and when that town was destroyed by the Danes, the seat of the bishopric was moved to Tréguier.

In these later days he has been somewhat eclipsed by the exquisite humanity and strong personal charm of the later saint, but he is by no means forgotten by the peasants of Trégor, and not only does his banner and that of his mother, Copaja, figure in the procession of Saint Yves, but a local Breton saying declares that he was so great a person that—

> "Notre grand saint Tûdual est roi du peuple élu ;
> S'il n'est pas Dieu le Père, il ne la pas volu !" *

* Our great Saint Tûdual is the king of the elect; if he is not God the Father, it is because he did not wish to be.

Early next morning an automobile came tooting down the street in which lies the Hôtel Lion d'Or, and after breakfast, bidding a hearty farewell to our good friends the landlord and his wife, off we started towards Lannion, *en route* for the west.

CHAPTER IV

The automobile—Lannion—Reminiscence of a Lannion dance—Ker-dluel—Nôtre Dame de la Clarté—Ploumanac'h—Trégastel—Isle of Avalon—Legend of the disappearance of King Arthur—Tonquédec—The Ankou of Ploumilliau.

AN automobile, you say, is not an ideal way of seeing Brittany? That may be so; I grant you that the pace is somewhat too rapid for such an old-fashioned and interesting country. But after all that very much depends on the chauffeur. If one starts with the understanding that the motor is simply to be at one's beck and call to go hither and thither as fancy dictates, to stop and wait as often and as long as may be necessary, or even to stand in the garage all day if one gets tired of the noise and dust, and wishes for a restful drive in a country cart, an automobile, provided with a good-tempered, intelligent Breton driver, is not half so objectionable a thing as it sounds.

For my own part, as I remembered the long hours spent in the jolting, stuffy omnibus on the last occasion when I travelled from Tréguier to Lannion, I blessed my stars for the happy inspiration which had caused me to engage the Georges Richard to come and meet us that morning. For as we spun along the road, the air flew by with that touch of freshness which brings health to the skin and warmth to the blood. It was good to be alive on such a morning,

good to be out in the breeze and the sunshine, good to feel the untiring energy of the motor bearing one onward, and to know that we were free to go where we chose like a pair of gipsies, for forty miles or so extra made little or no difference to the day's work.

Lannion had scarcely woke up to the full life of the day when we ran down the hill into the town, but then what a sleepy old place it always is! True, Brélévenez, with its Roman church up on the rocky summit to the north, was watching over the lower town as usual, but as we ran through the market-place scarcely a soul was to be seen, and the pointed slate gables of the houses looked particularly frowzy and dilapidated in the keen bright sunshine.

Lannion itself is not an interesting place. The only time I ever remember thinking it even picturesque was one evening in July when there was a large dance.

We went to see it under the guidance of a very pretty girl who waited on us at the hotel. To our surprise she led us, not to the market-place as we had expected, but to a "carrefour," where three cross-roads met at the upper end of the town. There we found quite an assembly of people, with whom our little maid seemed on very friendly terms. For some time we stood waiting while the women admired each other's caps, and put on their cotton gloves. Then suddenly two men mounted a stand set up on one side of the road, and began to play dance tunes on a clarionette and a cornet. Instantly the crowd, which until then had been standing stolidly enough, broke up and became one whirl of movement. Presently a handsome young fellow, who had been looking about eagerly on the outskirts of the crowd, came up, and bowing low to our pretty companion, asked my permission to be allowed to dance with her, and off they went together. When the dust had become so

thick that everybody was coughing, and it was no longer possible to see the musicians, the music stopped, and the whole party went trooping down the road that led back to the town.

"Where are they going?" I asked the girl, who had found her way to our side again.

"The rest of the dance is in the Place," she answered. "It would be too dusty here. We never dance more than the first dance up at the carrefour."

"But why do you nót dance altogether in the market-place?" I inquired, as we set off on our long descent to the town.

"Oh, because the first dance has always been held up here," said the girl. "It is the custom, you see." Which we found afterwards to be a sufficient reason for many strange and unaccountable observances in Brittany.

Arrived in the market-place, the musicians took up their stand on a square platform that had been raised for them in the centre. Some of the houses had been illuminated with flaring torches that shed a wild shifting glare over the white coifs and ruddy faces of the women. The square soon became perfectly full, so that it seemed impossible for another person to find standing space. Then the music began again, and the solid crowd melted from the centre outwards into a moving, dancing throng. It was like watching the breaking up of an icefield, or the melting of a jelly. One moment we were standing expectant, motionless; then in the midst a movement began, and gradually spread and spread. . . . From it little runnels of dancers began streaming outwards in all directions, till the crowd was riddled through and through, broke up, and the whole market-place was full of an excited, prancing, leaping, gesticulating sea of men and women. Never have I seen

such dancing, or heard such maddening, frenzied music. It made one think of those pipes and flutes that led the Bacchanalian revels on Mount Parnassus. As the clock struck eleven, the dancing ceased, not gradually, but in a moment, and as if by magic, the square emptied, the torches went out, and as we reached our hotel five minutes later, the last band of roysterers passed us with a civil good night, and Lannion settled down once more to its habitual slumber.

No words can adequately describe the strange atmosphere of the revel. There was no fun, no laughter, no refreshments, no lingering farewells. It gave the impression of a pagan rite rather than a festive gathering. And there was something savage about it too, savage and brutal. The shrieking, nasal instruments, the flashing torches, the serious faces of the dancers as they rushed and leapt about, all belonged to some bygone age, some festival that took its rise in a forgotten cult.

But all this was long ago, and as we passed through the square in our automobile last September, the town was as sleepy as Lewis Carrol's dormouse, or the fat boy in Pickwick.

All the district north of Lannion teems with legends of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. It will be remembered that this king was reigning in Cornwall about the time that the great emigration of British to Armorica, or Brittany, took place. His nephew, Hoel, was King of Domnonée, and, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, the two monarchs were great friends. So it need not surprise us to hear that Arthur had a country seat among the forests that lay along the north coast of the peninsula. If we may trust tradition, his hunting lodge occupied the site of the modern château of Ker-dluel, that lies a few miles from Ploemeur. It is a lovely place, well wooded, well

watered, and in spite of the very modern and prosaic-looking house, it is not so difficult as might be imagined to picture Guinèvere and Launcelot wandering hand in hand beneath the trees, or sitting beside the broad and placid lake.

A few miles to the north-east of Ker-dluel is the picturesque little port of Perros Guirec, with its charming plage and curious Roman church, of which the carvings on the south porch deserve special consideration. They belong to the twelfth century, and the sculpture on the capital of the west pillar represents Saint Efflam coming to the assistance of King Arthur, who is fighting a dragon.

Going still further north we arrive at the chapel of Nôtre Dame de la Clarté. The chapel is old and very handsome, especially the south porch, but it is not that which impresses one most at La Clarté. No, it is a certain altar set up against a pillar to the north-west of the chancel, a mysterious and extremely ancient altar, which attracts one's attention immediately. Before it, on a stand, one or two candles are always burning, but with this exception it is neglected and apparently disused. On the other altars there are embroideries, laces, flowers, statues, all the paraphernalia of a Breton chapel. Here there is nothing. No covering has it save the melted wax left by countless generations of candles, no reredos but a burnt and blackened stone. Yet it is undoubtedly the Holy of Holies of La Clarté, the altar dedicated from time immemorial to OUR LADY OF LIGHT!

As to Our Lady of Light herself, I have read somewhere that she is the elder cousin of Nôtre Dame of Port Blanc, and that when she goes to visit the latter on the day of her pardon, it is very important that La Clarté should take precedence of her younger relative, otherwise there will be trouble with the weather. I suppose that the meaning of

THE CHAPEL OF NOTRE DAME DE PORT BLANC

the story is that the cult of the one chapel is older than that of the other; but it may also refer to the greater importance of the worship prevailing at La Clarté before the introduction of Christianity.

For who was Our Lady of Light? We all know Isis, Our Lady of Flame, whose worship was adopted by the Romans, and spread by them through their colonies. Was she by any chance the predecessor of Nôtre Dame de La Clarté?

It is but a few miles from La Clarté to the curious and very ancient village of Ploumanac'h, which lies in a deep and intricate bay on the extreme north coast, opposite the Seven Islands. The village itself consists of a handful of fishers' huts, huddled beneath the great rocks that jut up everywhere on this northern seaboard. The granite cottages nestling among the granite cliffs are in the distance almost indistinguishable, and to this day I have a very confused idea of the village of Ploumanac'h. What, however, every one will remember quite clearly is the chapel on the knoll, with its ancient wooden figure of Saint Kirec, full of the pin-holes made by the girls of the neighbourhood in their anxiety that the saint should not forget to send them husbands, and the shrine of the saint that rises from a rock in the bay below.

How old this shrine is no one can say. Fréminville, judging from the goats' heads carved upon one of the pillars, thinks that it may date back almost to the sixth century, the period when Saint Kirec arrived in Brittany and built his little hermitage. The stone on which rests the figure of the saint (a modern granite statue, alas! no longer sensitive to pin-pricks) is said to be that on which the holy hermit crossed the sea from England in the year 547. It is not at all an uncommon legend, most of the Celtic saints are

reported to have made their journey across the Channel on some great stone or other, which was afterwards closely associated with their special cult; and it seems probable that the explanation may be that the stone was one of those ancient sacred stones which used to be worshipped in pagan times, and that the saint, finding it impossible to overthrow the worship of which it was the object, found a place for it in the new religion he had come to preach.

On the western side of the rocky promontory on which Perros and Ploumanac'h are situated is Trégastel, a mere wilderness of rocks, but with an old church, and a still older calvary. The church has a fine ossuary, and in the church-yard is an altar tomb with the inscription: "To the bones of our Fathers," reminding one rather forcibly how much of ancestor worship still lingers in some parts of Christendom. At Trégastel, too, there is a very fine rocking stone, one of those curious natural objects consulted as an oracle by the early races which inhabited Brittany.

Opposite Trégastel, at a short distance from the coast, is the little island of Avalon, claimed by all Bretons to be the burial place of King Arthur.

We were looking across the water at it, when an old sailor joined us, and began talking.

"Is that Avalon?" I inquired.

"Aye," said he, "that's Avalon."

"Where you Bretons say that King Arthur lies buried?"

He took his pipe from his mouth and stood looking critically at the island which lay wrapped in a delicate grey mist.

"Some people say that," said he, at last, "but not we folk round here. The fact is King Arthur wasn't buried at all. He never died."

CHAPEL OF NOTRE DAME DE LA CLARTÉ

"Never died?"

"No. I'll tell you how it happened. Do you know Ker-dluel?"

"Yes; I've just been there."

"Well, I've heard it said that King Arthur and his Knights lived there, and had a gay time hunting and so forth. On that island over yonder dwelt a fairy called Morgane, the sister of Merlin the wizard. She fell so in love with Arthur that she got jealous of every one that looked at him, and one day when he was riding down here by the sea, she wrapped him round in a cloud, horse and all, and took him over to Avalon; and there they've lived ever since. She never lets him be seen by any one but herself, and if he wants to go out of the underground palace where she keeps him she turns him into a raven."

"Have you ever seen him?" I asked curiously.

The old fellow looked at me with a twinkle in his eye.

"I've seen a raven sitting on a rock," said he. "May be so've you."

The road from Trégastel back to Lannion is quickly run over in an automobile. It is a pretty road, and would be delightful travelling were it not for the poor hobbled sheep and goats which feed along the grass on either side. They were so terrified at the noise we made that they tried to escape into the fields, but were unable to move because of the cruel way in which their legs were fastened. Their poor agonized faces remain in my memory to this day: it spoilt all the pleasure of the ride. Passing through Lannion again, we ran straight on to Tonquédec, one of the finest, if not actually the finest, feudal ruins in Brittany. It lies most picturesquely, dominating the lovely valley of the river Guer, and the sight of this mighty fortress in the

midst of the wild woodland scenery forms a wonderful and romantic picture.

The Viscounts of Tonquédec were extremely powerful during the Middle Ages, and trusting to the extraordinary strength of their castle gave a great deal of trouble to the reigning Dukes of Brittany. Duke John the Fourth dismantled the fortress in 1395, but it was soon repaired, and during the reign of Henry of Navarre was reckoned one of the strongest places in France. Finally, in Louis the Thirteenth's time it was destroyed, as far as any one could destroy it, by Richelieu.

In the middle of the nineteenth century the family of Tonquédec was still in existence, but their ancestral home knows them no more. When we entered the outer court-yard, we found it deserted, save for a few pigs and chickens belonging to a peasant, who had taken up his abode in the gate-house. He took us through bastion after bastion till we reached the very heart of the fortress, where stands the keep itself, still mighty and formidable from without, though overgrown with ivy and little more than a shell. These old ruins are melancholy places, however beautiful. As one looks at the deep stone window seats, one cannot help wondering what lovers have sat in them planning that future which is now but a forgotten past. Strange, too, that the hearths remain. There they are at Tonquédec, deep and cavernous. Round them no doubt, on stormy nights, still gather the spirits of the ancient viscounts and their families, who once bore rule in this part of Brittany. Poor old ghosts, how astonished they must have been ten minutes later to see the Georges Richard begin to snort and tremble, and finally go smoothly skimming up the steep hill that leads out of their hidden valley to the high-road.

A mile or two further on we turned to the west, and soon reached the old, out-of-the-way town of Ploumilliau.

Now, I had often wished to go to this place, for I had heard that there was somewhere in the church a statue of Death, called by the Bretons l'Ankou.

In his "Legende de la Mort," Anatole le Braz has gathered together the superstitions that hang around l'Ankou, and has presented us with a complete picture of the ancient Cult of Death still practised in many parts of Brittany. Everything to do with death seems to have a fascination for the Breton. The cemetery lies in the very heart of the village, and if some cottages can be built whose back windows look out over the crowded enclosure, so much the better. It is the playground of the children, the meeting-place of lovers, the favourite spot where the old women gossip and their men-folk smoke the evening pipe. As one of them said to me once, "We live with our dead!" Yet they fear l'Ankou, as who does not, only they love to have their dead in their midst where they can watch their graves from their windows, and pass by them every time they go to church. "If we bury them away from the village," they will tell you, "they will hear neither the singing nor the services." And so they continue to keep them with them, to dig them up at the end of a few years to make room for others, to store their bones in charnel houses, and to draw water from the fountain which as often as not comes flowing out of the churchyard wall.

It was formerly the custom on every altar of the dead to have a statue of the King of Terrors, usually, as with us, represented by a skeleton armed with a scythe. Persons requiring his services, either in punishing an enemy, or sparing a friend, knew where to find him, and would go on pilgrimage to his shrine with prayers and offerings.

Gradually, however, these figures have disappeared, for one can understand that it is scarcely a cult to be encouraged by the authorities, and I believe that the Ankou of Ploumilliau is now the only one in existence. True, there are the granite representations of Death on the chapels of Bulat, Roche Maurice, and elsewhere; but they are not at all the same thing as the little God of Death who once held sway at the church of Ploumilliau. I say, "who once held sway," for he no longer does so, but has been banished to the chamber over the south porch, where he is kept under lock and key.

The story of his removal has been related in the book I have mentioned above, and is interesting as showing how very superstitious the peasants still are. It runs as follows.

At the time when l'Ankou used still to hold audiences in Ploumilliau church, there was in the neighbourhood a certain person who made himself notorious by his contempt for the ancient beliefs regarding the Death Cult. It brought him into conflict with many of the peasants, and especially with an old woman, who took his conduct so much to heart that she resolved to rouse l'Ankou to avenge himself. Kneeling before the little wooden skeleton, she explained the matter at length, dwelling on the blasphemous conduct of the accused, and finally calling down destruction upon him in the proper orthodox manner. Then she went home and awaited events. But to her surprise nothing happened. The days, the weeks passed, and the sinner continued to flourish as a green bay-tree.

What could be the reason?

L'Ankou must have heard her; she had even shaken him by the arm, as was usual in urgent cases, crying aloud, "Let him wither away on his feet even as a plant injured

in its root; let him die before the time appointed, and may there be none to help!"

In her perplexity she went again to the church and gazed long at the little god. Certainly he was very, very old, quite grey with age, his paint all lost under thick layers of dust. No doubt that was the cause of his silence. If he could be rejuvenated he would surely feel more able to act in the matter. No sooner said than done. A pot of red paint * was procured, and one afternoon, when the church was empty, l'Ankou was transformed from a grey to a smart red Ankou, and his worshipper left him, sure this time of his ability to help the good cause.

Sunday came; High Mass was in progress. Monsieur the Rector mounted the pulpit and was beginning his sermon, when he noticed a great turning of heads in the direction where stood old Death. He looked round, and could scarcely believe his eyes. There, red and staring, stood the little figure, and in the pulpit, no doubt equally red and staring, stood the good priest, very angry that any one had dared to take such a liberty in his church. And because of this, and no doubt because he also knew of the practices that were in vogue with regard to this same figure, he banished it to the chamber over the porch, and allowed no one to visit it, till gradually the remembrance of it seems to have died away.

The church of Ploumilliau is well worth a visit for its own sake. When we entered two or three old women were praying, and we had to wait some time before we could try the door leading to the room over the porch. There was, however, plenty to interest us. The low carved and painted screen before the altar, on which are depicted the various scenes of the Passion, is one of the finest

* Red not chosen by chance, but because the colour of blood.

pieces of oak carving I have seen in Brittany. Presently the last woman rose and clattered out. We were alone. Eagerly we made our way to the door. Locked!

"We shall have to ask the sacristan after all," said I, "and he will probably say he knows nothing about the figure." Which was exactly what did happen. The sacristan's wife was at the wash-tub when we knocked at her door, and in answer to our request to be allowed to see the statue of Death in the room over the porch, declared that there was no such thing there, never had been so far as she knew. Here was a disappointment.

"But," said I, "Monsieur Anatole le Braz told me. . . ."

The woman stopped her angry rubbing. "Who did you say?" she inquired, looking up.

"Monsieur le Braz," I answered innocently. "He told me that the figure was there, said that he had seen it, in fact."

"Lommic," cried the sacristan's wife, hastily drying her hands on her apron. "Come and take care of the baby. I'm going to show this lady and gentleman the church." Then as we made our way back to the porch she added, "I do believe there may be an old statue up in that room; I'd forgotten it for the moment."

The church seemed doubly dim and mysterious as we re-entered it, and it was with something of a feeling of dread that we climbed the ancient spiral staircase and found ourselves before a heavy oak door which groaned dismally as it turned on its disused hinges. Across a floor velvety with dust, into the light of a tiny loophole, and we stand in the presence of the Ankou, the great and terrible Ankou, and find the sightless orbits gazing up at us in mute appeal. It was a strange sensation to find one's self lifting the little figure out of its dark corner and placing it in the light which streamed in through the unglazed window. It seemed to

THE STATUE OF DEATH, OR L'ANKOU, AT PLOUMILLIAU

look out over the churchyard that had for so many hundred years been its undisputed realm, with such a wistful gaze, it was so long since it had looked at its own, so long since it had been shut up there in the dark.

The sacristan's wife was watching us in scared silence.

"It seems strange to be photographing l'Ankou, does it not?" I said as cheerfully as I could; as a matter of fact, I felt a little uncomfortable about it, and should have been glad of some encouragement.

"Mon Dieu, oui!" she muttered, crossing herself; and turning her back on the unholy work, she moved to the furthest corner of the room.

Presently, however, seeing that nothing untoward happened, she thawed a little, and told us how in her mother's time l'Ankou had stood in the church, and that no one thought of visiting Ploumilliau without paying his devotions to the mysterious Ervoanik Plouillo, as it is called.

"Madame knows that it is Death?" she continued, crossing herself again. And I remembered how in old time the ancestors of these same Bretons, of whom Cæsar has left a record, boasted of their descent from a great God of Death, *Thus*, or as the Romans called him, Dis-Pater, and in the strange figure before me I fancied I recognized one of those survivals of which I have already spoken.

As I focussed the terrible little god before whose coarsely carved feet so many generations had knelt and trembled, before whose glance, whether by witchcraft or by more direct means, men had quailed and withered away, I seemed to feel his gaze upon me, and the photograph once taken, I hurriedly closed the camera and left l'Ankou alone once more in his solitude.

CHAPTER V

Lieue de Grève—Saint Efflam and the Slaying of the Dragon—Plestin—Lanmeur—The Crypt—Saint Mélar—Saint Jean du Doigt—Arrival at Morlaix.

A MILE of upland country purple with heather, and we come in sight of the English Channel, lying broad, placid and blue as far as eye can reach—a hill so steep that we seem to be plunging right down into the bay, a fresh breath of the sea mingling with the strong sweet scent of heather, a strange little church dedicated to Saint Michel, set up on the very edge of a low cliff among a tangle of slate-roofed cottages, . . . and miles upon miles of rippled, level sand stretching away to the west in a vast unbroken bay. Along the top of the beach runs the road, carried here and there over bridges spanning small water-courses which spread out as they reach the sand in wide silvery fans of moisture, where one may find shells delicately beautiful, pink as the inside of a mermaid's ear. Above the road rise low cliffs, still crowned with the remains of the dense forest that once lay all over the peninsula. About the middle of the bay rises a great black rock called by the Bretons Hyrglas, and it was close to this that the great dragon which haunted the neighbourhood in the fifth century had his lair.

There is little to interest one at the village Loc-Mikel, save that in the church there is a rather suggestive modern

window representing the saint destroying a very dark and human-looking devil, who might almost have been one of the primitive inhabitants of these parts.

This northern coast of Brittany has always been a great haunt of dragons, and many are the chapels set up to Saint Michel, that prince of dragon-slayers. No doubt he owed his reputation in the first place to his having turned the father of dragons out of heaven. But in old Breton churches he is represented as vanquishing all kinds of monsters, and is venerated generally as the great deliverer.

There are many curious points of resemblance between the Breton Michel and the Roman Mercury, so many indeed that one is sometimes tempted to think that with the first advent of Christianity in late Roman times, the worship of the god continued under the invocation of the archangel. But be this as it may, Michel was the first to begin to clear the land of monsters, possibly because it was to him that the earliest Christian chapels were dedicated, chapels that were the outposts of the fight against paganism.

But after Brittany had been ravaged by the Saxons, she probably lost much of what Christianity she had ever possessed, and when in the fifth and sixth centuries the Celtic saints arrived from Wales and Ireland, they found the dragons of paganism once more rampant, especially toward the north and west, to which little enough of the first message of the gospel had ever penetrated. In almost every spot where one of these heroes settled we hear of him having to slay his monster. Saint Pol found his at Faou; Tugdual, as I have said, killed a terrible dragon at Tréguier; but here in Domnonée no saint had yet arrived, and there was no sign of the new faith unless, as seems probable, there existed some trace of the cult of Saint Michel at the eastern end of the Lieue de Grève, an offshoot of that very

ancient centre of Christianity, Coz Yaudet. The people have always had the reputation of being the roughest and most uncivilized in the peninsula. Cambray found them so a hundred years ago, and they still bear a doubtful character. It was therefore but natural that the district should have abounded with monstrous superstitions and heathen customs, symbolized by the fearful dragons which are said to have infested the land. Almost every cleft in the hillside or coombe running up from the coast seems to have had its particular species of monster. There were dragons resembling crocodiles, that must certainly have come from some country like Egypt, brought possibly by the same persons who introduced the worship of Isis; we find their ugly heads to-day, holding in their mouths the ends of the tie-beams of many of the older churches. Then there were the hippopotamus dragons, dragons like fallen angels, winged dragons, and one or two I have seen represented just like the uncivilized heathen men whom the saints found when they crossed the sea to Breton Armorica. Each undoubtedly represented some heathen cult, prevalent in the particular district where we find it. Now about the year 450 A.D. our great King Arthur seems to have made a journey to Brittany on a grand dragon-slaying expedition. In our days, when a great soldier has nothing else to do he usually goes and kills big game in India or Africa. But in the fifth century, these hunting grounds being almost unknown, it was the fashion to go to the forests of Brittany and kill dragons, whatever they may have been. The old monk of Morlaix, Albert le Grand, has told the story, and I shall give it very much in his words.

"About that time, there was in Armorica, at the court of Hoël the First, the generous Arthur, King of Great Britain, who, having set his own land in order with regard

to monsters, was, like a brave and valiant prince, engaged in hunting the dragons and great beasts with which this country abounded."

He had already delivered Mont-Saint-Michel, near Pontorson, from a murderous giant. The story of his prowess there has been told by Geoffrey of Monmouth, and later by Mallory. Now he had come to the Lieu de Grève, and for several days he and his knights had been tracking the great dragon which long had devastated the country side. He was a singularly astute beast, according to the legend, not like some, who allowed themselves to be tied round the neck and led away by any bishop courageous enough to face them. Of this creature we read—

"His cavern was nine cubits deep, with an entrance twelve cubits in circumference, and for fear that by means of his footmarks he might be traced to his den and there besieged, he had the cunning to retire into it backwards, so that if any saw the marks of his claws, they should imagine he had gone out of the place, when in reality he had just entered it."

One day when Arthur and his knights were patrolling the beach, waiting for the return of the dragon, which all the time from the dusky depths of his lair was no doubt laughing in his scaly sleeve at seeing the renowned huntsman so hoodwinked, a ship came sailing over the blue waters. As soon as Arthur caught sight of it, he reined in his horse, which was curvetting about on the sand, and watched with ever-increasing interest as the vessel neared the shore. It was no fishing-craft this, but such a boat as he used himself when he went a-sailing, a large coracle made of wicker work and covered with hides. The tide was low, but the ship was flat-bottomed. Presently it grounded opposite the rock Hyrglas, and the crew, in their

rough goat-skins, clambered over the sides and waded on shore. At their head was a very handsome young man, tall and fair, with the dreamy blue eyes of the mystic, and the manners of a prince. Seeing Arthur, surrounded by his knights, he made his way toward him, saluting him pleasantly, and as an equal.

"I am Efflam," said he, "only son of the King of Ireland. Can you tell me, good sir, where I am?"

Then Arthur leapt from his horse, flinging the reins to a page, and embraced the new-comer affectionately, for they were cousins.

They walked about the sands together for some time, and Efflam told the king about the reason of his coming. There is an old, old song, that the pilgrims sing every year, when they come to the pardon of Saint Efflam, and as it tells the story much better than I can do, I will quote a verse or two. It runs something like this—

"There lived a king in England who had a daughter to marry,
One, fair, only daughter, beautiful as an angel, and her name was Enora;
Beautiful as an angel, and many had asked her in marriage,
But she would give her hand to none save the Prince Efflam, son of a stranger king.

"Now Efflam long was desiring to make his penitence lone
In the depths of some dismal wood, in a hermitage far from the world;
So in the midst of the night, of his wedding night, when all were asleep,
He rose from beside his wife, and went away softly, softly, with never a sound.

"And no one was waking to see as he passed through the palace gate,
No one was waking to see, save his faithful dog whom he loved;
They came to the wild sea beach, and sailed away, and away,
Away to our Breton shore, and the yellow reaches of sand."

Presently said Arthur to Efflam, "I marvel, cousin, at your boldness in adventuring yourself on this wild coast, all unarmed as you are, and unused to fighting. Know you not that it is the haunt of great dragons? I am here even now to meet a monster so dreadful that the very sight of him kills most men with terror."

"The servants of God," replied Efflam, "fear nothing, being under the protection and in the safe keeping of a so good and mighty Saviour."

Then said Arthur, "If that be so, I pray you, cousin, wait and be a spectator of my combat, for it cannot be long till the dragon returns to his lair."

"He is there even now," answered Efflam, "I saw him as I approached the shore. He came from the forest as you were gazing at my ship, and retreated to his cave;" and with that he turned and led the way to the den. Then Arthur, clothed in his coat of mail, "suitable for the grandeur of so potent a king," as Dubricius, his bishop and chronicler, relates, "fitted on his golden helmet, on which was engraved the figure of a dragon, and on his shoulders he buckled his shield Priwén, upon which the picture of the Blessed Mary, Mother of God, put him frequently in mind of her. Then girding on his Calibrus, which was an excellent sword made in the Isle of Avalon, he graced his right hand with his lance named Ron, which was hard and broad, and fit for the slaughter."

And now the dragon, finding himself discovered, came forth, roaring terribly, and the fight began in good earnest. The old song, to which I have before made allusion, thus describes it—

"Facing the king stood a savage beast, with one red eye in the midst of his forehead,

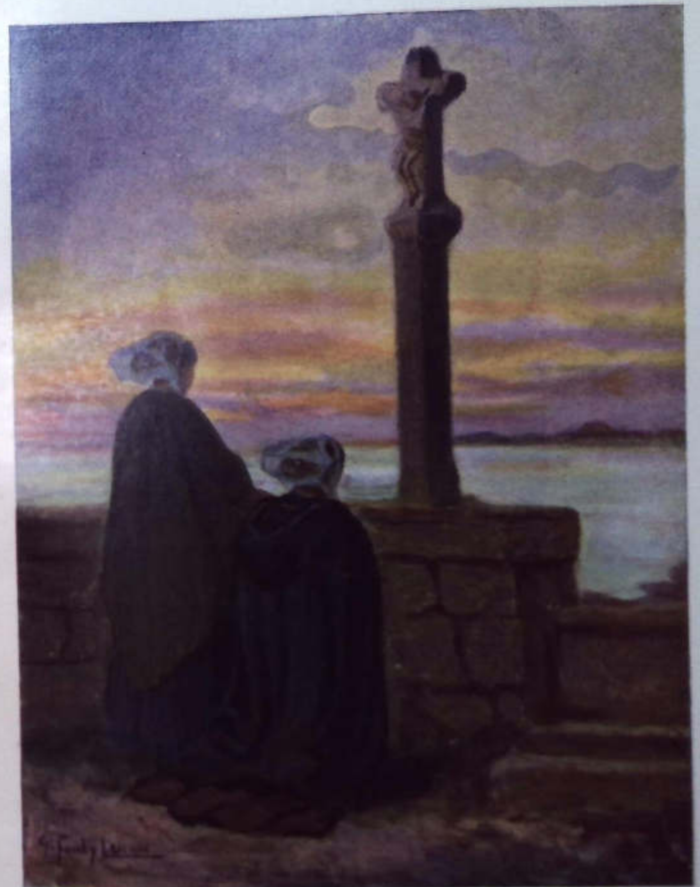
One red eye, and green scales wrapped his shoulders, and his
form was as that of a bull of two years old.
His twisted tail was like a great screw of iron; his mouth stretched
from ear to ear,
And all its length was lined with great white tusks, sharp as those
of a wild boar."

For three days they fought, neither being able to vanquish other. At the end of that time, the dragon having retired for awhile to his den, Arthur, completely exhausted, came and flung himself down beside his cousin.

"A little water," he gasped, "a drop of fresh water." But his men looked one on another, for that was just what there was not to be found in that place. They were sitting at the western end of the Grève, and the tide was rippling up over the reaches of level sand that changed from pink to purple, beneath the long rays of the setting sun. Opposite, far off, they could see in a golden mist the Pointe de Séhar, stretching out into the sea; and Arthur knew that somewhere behind it lurked that mysterious Isle of Avalon, from whence had come his sword, Calibrus, and to which some day, according to the prophecy of Merlin, he should be carried to be healed of his grievous wound. Efflam had fallen upon his knees, and was praying earnestly. At length he rose, and making the sign of the cross, struck three times on the green rock with his staff. "With the aid of the Lord, our Blessed God, I will find you water, cousin," said he; and as he spoke, from the top of the stone a fountain began to flow, fresh and pure, called to-day Toul-Efflam. Arthur was the first to experience its healing virtues, and ever since those who with devotion in their hearts drink from it are cured of their infirmities.

"And now," said Efflam, "I pray you leave this affair in my hands, good cousin, and see what prayer will do."

All night long he and his companions fasted and



SUNSET (CÔTES-DU-NORD)

humbled themselves, and as soon as morning had arisen Efflam walked with a firm step to the mouth of the den, commanding the dragon, in the name of the Lord, to come forth. And the beast obeyed, rolling his dreadful eye, uttering such an awful hissing noise, that the shore resounded for miles. Vomiting blood as he went, he mounted the black rock, Hyrglas, and with a last terrible roar, flung himself into the sea, where he perished miserably in the waters.

I have told the legend at some length, because, fanciful as it is, it so well symbolizes the fight which the first Celtic missionary to the Lieu-de-Grève waged with the horrors and cruelties he found there, evils which others had been vainly endeavouring to combat by force. Incidentally it gives a picture of the great lonely bay, almost as solitary in this twentieth century as it was in the days of Saint Efflam.

We stopped at the fountain at the western end, and as we were looking at the old green stones, a peasant came up and asked if we would like to see the chapel. A flight of worn and mossy steps led up to it, but the building itself is painfully new and uninteresting. Yet it marks the site of the little cell where the young prince passed the remainder of his short life. The custodian told us the story. "Sit here," said he, leading the way once more to the top of the old flight of steps, and lighting a cigarette from my husband's case.

"I've told you how Saint Efflam conquered the dragon with his prayers, when King Arthur and all his knights could do nothing. Well, after he'd said good-bye to the king, the saint and his friends climbed the hill here, and found a little ruined chapel. It had a pretty view, as you can see for yourself, and the fountain was close at hand. So they built up the walls and mended the roof, and then

each of them made himself a hut of branches, such as you may see this day at any of the pardons, and settled down to begin their life as hermits.

"Every day they went to Mass in the chapel, and on Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays an angel brought them their dinners all hot and comfortable to the cell of Saint Efflam; the other days they fasted. So there they were, settled with a monastery, chapel, refectory and kitchen without any trouble of theirs, and all they had to do was to pray and heal the sick who came to them.

"Now, after a time, the Princess Enora, who had been looking for her husband everywhere, poor thing, came to Brittany in search of him. There's a song we sing that tells about it:—

"'The angels carried her, sleeping in their arms, and bearing her over the great sea, laid her on the doorsill of her husband's hermitage.
When she awoke and found herself there, she knocked three times at the door, "I am your sweetheart and your wife, whom God has brought hither."
And he knew her voice and went quickly out, and with many godly words took her hand in his.
Then he built her a little hut close to his own, there to the left of the fountain, shaded by green bushes it was, and sheltered by a green rock.
And there they lived a long time till the news of their miracles spread through the land, and every day some one came to visit them.
One night some sailors on the sea saw the sky open, and heard a burst of heavenly music.
Next day a poor woman carrying her sick child went to find Enora.
But though she called through the door Enora did not come to open it, and when she looked in through a hole she saw the lady lying dead upon the ground.
There she lay, beautiful as the sun, and all the hut was lighted

THE STATUE OF SAINT EFFLAM IN PLESTIN CHURCH

with her radiance, while near her a little boy in white was kneeling.

So the woman ran to tell the Blessed Efflam, but the door of his hermitage was wide open, and he like his wife was lying dead upon the ground.'

"They buried him in his cell just where he died, and built a chapel over him. But after awhile the place was lost, and no one remembered where his tomb was. One day the man who used to sweep the floor, like I and my wife do now, noticed that there were some drops of blood on the pavement, and as the same thing happened every week, he told the Bishop of Tréguier, and they dug down and found the body of Efflam, with all the papers explaining who he was, and a lot of the history I've just been telling you. So they took him to Plestin and buried him in the church there. You'll see his tomb if you're going that way."

We were going that way, and after thanking the custodian, who gave us a very pressing invitation to come to the Pardon in the beginning of June (and a pretty pardon it must be, winding its way with banners and reliquaries down that ancient staircase to visit the fountain and the Grève), we left Toul-Efflam lying in the rose-pink glow of the sunset.

The church of Plestin is exceedingly handsome, and has been so often enlarged that it is now actually broader than it is long, and possesses a nave and no fewer than four broad aisles. The tower was built in the thirteenth century, and the south porch is also ancient and very richly ornamented.

The church is said to have been founded in honour of Saint Gestin, the saint who built the little chapel of which Efflam and his monks took possession when they first landed. Gestin was no doubt a Gallo-Roman Christian,

of that curious mythical type we find in central and southern Brittany. But whatever he was, he was extremely polite, for returning from a pilgrimage and finding Efflam and his party settled, he would not hear of their turning out, but went further back into the great forest, and built a new hermitage on the spot which is now called Plestin Plou-Gestin, the place of Gestin. But vainly did we look for any sign of the good old Armorican saint in the church which is his by right. He seems to have been supplanted here, as he was at Toul-Efflam, by the popular and handsome Celt, whose granite tomb lies conspicuously in the north aisle. With his title of prince, his courtly manners, and his knowledge of the healing art, it was not difficult for Efflam to win his way into the affections of the people, and finally he has ousted poor old Gestin altogether from his place as patron of Plestin.

At the antiquated and picturesque Hôtel de la Grande Maison we spent the night, sleeping in an enormous upper chamber with great black beams running across the open ceiling. All night long I lay on my high catafalque of a bed dreaming of the young saint, and his poor neglected, saint-in-spite-of-herself Saxon wife. For when the glamour and embroidery of the legend is removed, a very prosaic, yet rather pathetic story remains, a story that must have occurred more than once in that unruly fifth century.

Efflam, only son of a king of Ireland, was betrothed to a Saxon princess for political reasons. Such a marriage is seldom a success, and between Celt and Saxon was bound to prove disastrous. The lady was willing enough; these young Irish Celts are exceedingly attractive! But look at it from the bridegroom's point of view! You know little of the fiery poetic nature of the Celt if you think that he could attach himself, on compulsion, to a practical, fair-haired,

undemonstrative, German girl. No, rather than that he would run away and become a hermit. There were points about such a life that appealed to him. The freedom from all restraint, the outdoor life beneath the mighty forest trees, on the shores of the blue ocean. The silence, the poetry, the mystery of it all. Why, it appeals to the soul of every Celt to this very day. As I sat listening to his story, which I already knew, as probably my readers do, from the pages of Arthur de la Borderie and Albert le Grand, I fancied the sigh of delight that must have escaped from the prince as he thought of the long, long silent hours he would spend here communing with that nature upon whose worship Christianity had lately set its sanctifying seal.

Poor Efflam! When after a week or two of this ecstatic enjoyment he awoke one morning to find that his Saxon spouse had tracked him down, it must have needed all his saintly philosophy to prevent some naughty Celtic words escaping from his lips. One legend, indeed, tells us that he sent her off to the south of Brittany to found a convent for nuns; and even the account in which her husband is represented as building her a hut near his own, declares that he made her wear a veil over her face, and never spoke to her except through the door! So much for a Celto-Saxon marriage.

On our way to Morlaix we passed through the old town of Lanmeur, the church of which, lately rebuilt, has an ancient crypt with a healing fountain dedicated to Saint Mélar, a murdered prince of the sixth century.

Knowing that this crypt—which is one of the greatest architectural curiosities in Brittany, and is besides regarded with peculiar veneration by the inhabitants of the district—is not easily accessible, we stopped at the inn and asked the girl to get the key for us.

Presently she returned with an ugly old witch calling herself the custodian, who with much muttering and grumbling took us into the new and perfectly uninteresting building that replaces the ancient church of Lanmeur. It is a thing to be much deplored, this craze for rebuilding that possesses the Breton clergy. Every year one finds some splendid old landmark of history and legend gone, and unless the French Government takes matters into its own hands and puts an end to the barbarous practice, soon there will be nothing left worth seeing in the peninsula.

After we had glanced at the pulpit, on which the story of Mélar has been sculptured, we asked to see the crypt. But here the old woman's true character came out. Nothing would induce her to open the door. First she said she had not the key, which the girl told us was untrue.

"I have come from England to see this crypt of yours," said I.

The old woman replied that couldn't be helped! and muttered in Breton that she didn't care if we'd come from the moon, she wasn't going to show the tomb of the Blessed Mélar to a couple of heretic English. A franc proved unavailing, and we were about to try another when a thought struck me.

"Wait a moment," said I, "I'll go and find the priest."

A pleasant white house standing in a neat garden of flowers.

"Can I see the crypt of the church?" I asked the old man-servant who answered my ring.

"Certainly, madame," he replied pleasantly; and taking down a key led the way back to the church. "Monsieur the rector is out," he remarked, "or he would have liked to show you the crypt himself, he always does so to strangers."

The old crone gave me a venomous look that would have poisoned me had I believed in sorcery, and hobbled off muttering curses which belonged rather to the primitive worship whose traces we found below than to the Christian patron of Lanmeur.

How old the crypt beneath Lanmeur church may be it seems difficult to determine. Canon Abgrall of Quimper attributes it to the period immediately succeeding the death of Prince Mélar, that is to say about 550 A.D., but to many writers it seems that parts of it are older. The true history of the shrine must have begun with the fountain that bubbles up through the floor at its western end. From earliest times these waters have had a reputation for their healing properties, and the spring was known and revered long before the introduction of Christianity. Indeed, it seems possible that some portions of the building itself may date back to Gallo-Roman times, and that in particular the two squat pillars that carry the central vault belong to an age when the fountain was sacred not to the Christian Saint Mélar, but to some deity correspondlng to Æsculapius, the Roman god of healing. How otherwise are we to account for the many-headed, writhing serpents carved in relief around the granite drums?

The little saint himself, who probably was buried between these curious-looking pillars, was the son of Miliau, a popular king of northern Brittany, who, after reigning for seven years, was murdered by his brother Rivod. As the heir to the crown was but seven years old, his uncle, the murderer, was appointed regent. Not content with this, however, he began plotting against the life of his nephew, and would certainly have succeeded in killing him at once had it not been for the child's sweet disposition, which made him beloved by all who knew him. First Rivod tried

poison, but Mélar had been taught to make the sign of the cross on his food before eating, just as you see all devout Bretons do to-day, and the poison became harmless before the sacred symbol.

Next, the wicked uncle conceived the idea of sending some assassins to make away with the little boy. He was living with his mother at the time, and when the ruffians found him, and told him their errand, instead of showing any fear he begged to be allowed to retire to his room to say his prayers. While he was gone his poor mother, hearing what was happening, came in, fell on her knees, and begged for her son's life; upon which the men agreed to spare him, on condition that they cut off his right hand and left foot, knowing that thus mutilated and unable to grasp a sword or mount a horse he could never reign. This horrible act accomplished, they went and told Rivod, who for a time seemed content, and the boy was left in peace at Quimper, where he had taken refuge with the bishop. But presently the hand of silver and the foot of brass which had replaced those cut off became useful, nay, even grew and moved like natural limbs. As La Borderie suggests, the men had probably only pretended to mutilate the child. So Rivod determined that this time there should be no mistake. Calling one Kerialtan, who had been appointed to teach the boy riding and manly exercises of all kinds, he bribed him to murder his pupil. But again the scheme failed through the intervention of Kerialtan's wife, and the young prince escaped with her to his aunt's husband, who lived near Lanmeur, and who not only made him welcome, but promised to protect him. But it was not to be. Shortly afterwards Kerialtan arrived with his son Justin, demanding an audience with his former pupil. Mélar delighted to see his master, sprang into his arms, and finally

insisted on sleeping between him and his son, which was in those days the highest proof of friendship and confidence.

No sooner was the castle quiet than the murderers arose, and while the son held the head of the innocent boy, the father with a hatchet struck it off. Then leaving his body on the bed, they put the head in a sack, and escaped out of the window. Justin the son was killed in descending the wall, but Kerialtan reached Rivod and gave him the head. The murder brought them the bad luck they so richly deserved, and they both perished miserably. As for Mélar's body, it was, as I have said, probably buried between the two serpent pillars in the crypt at Lanmeur, and has ever since been visited by pilgrims, who profess to derive great benefit from the fountain of the saint.

There are several versions of the story, as there are of most of the legends of the Breton saints, but the one I have given above is that told at Lanmeur, and seems fairly reasonable. The prince is still remembered at Quimper, and in the north aisle of the cathedral there is a beautiful window to his memory.

It is but a short distance from Lanmeur to Saint Jean du Doigt, the scene on midsummer day of the great Fire Pardon. The road winds in and out, bounded by high hedges, till at last it reaches a bare stretch of elevated country, on the northern verge of which a church spire stands up against the sky line—Plougaznou! But just as we seem on the point of reaching it, we find a calvary with a hand pointing down a road to the right. Suddenly the ground seems to melt from beneath us and down we go, past ancient fountains overgrown with duck-weed, past little houses and granite crosses, till on turning a corner we see the valley lying beneath us. For in a deep green velvet lap, watched over by soft swelling hills, and

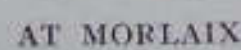
clasped by encircling arms of purple cliffs, lies the ancient church of Saint Jean, which no doubt replaces a still more ancient worshipping place dedicated to the sun.

At the little inn, overgrown by creepers, a crowd of children gather to watch our arrival, and the lame landlady, Madame Vouaux, hastens out to welcome us, for this is by no means our first visit to Saint Jean. As we enter, we turn for a moment, and look up at the rich archway that leads into the cemetery where the fountain stands. How beautiful it is! Grey church, quiet graveyard, golden sunshine lighting the slate roofs of the white cottages; and beyond, far away through a dip between the headlands, a glimpse of something intensely blue and living that can be nothing but the sea.

After lunch, while Le Velly, the chauffeur, is making ready to start, we saunter across to the graveyard where bees are humming among the old-fashioned stocks and petunias. The quaint mortuary chapel lies in the shade, its oval window above the altar reminding one of that in the Temple of Lanleff. Adjoining the churchyard, too, is an old building erected by the Duchess Anne for the accommodation of poor pilgrims. For it was by means of the miraculous finger of Saint Jean that her eyes were cured, and she showed herself royally grateful to the shrine, lavishing upon it many costly gifts, which may yet be seen in the sacristry, together with the finger itself in its crystal reliquary. And now the car stood ready, and as the sun began to show signs of sinking in the west, we bade good-bye to madame and her son the cook.

"Adieu!" they cried cheerily. "We shall see you again soon, *au revoir*."

"Come and stay for a week in the early spring as you did before, madame," adds the old lady. "You shall have



AT MORLAIX

the little salon as a study, and my son shall cook you all his best dishes."

The good souls! We smiled and waved our hands to them as we climbed our way out of the deep valley, and if we can go back in spring there will be such a welcome waiting for us as only a Breton landlady knows how to give.

Half an hour afterwards the sun was still shining when we ran down the steep hill into Morlaix. At the Hôtel de l'Europe every one was "ravished" to see us. They had guessed that we were coming, as there were letters from England, and our room was ready, the room we always have when we go to Morlaix, the big red corner room on the first floor.

"But, madame," exclaimed the landlady, when we had read our letters and were lounging in the hall, "why are you so late this year? why have you not been before?"

We replied that we had been to Greece.

Her face clouded. "To Greece! Ah, then you have grown tired of Brittany; you prefer the far-off Greece, no doubt?"

By no means, madame naturally preferred Brittany. The hotels in Greece were not to be compared with those of France. The inns in the country were not even clean.

"*Quelle horreur!*" and she threw up her hands and eyes. "And the food?"

The food likewise was indifferent, especially in the smaller places. In travelling, too, it was difficult to make one's self understood, as no one spoke anything but Greek.

By this time her face was discreetly radiant. "Nowhere to sleep by night, nothing to eat by day, no one to speak to all the time! Mon Dieu, what a country!"

And she turned and repeated it all to the clerk in the office, evidently rejoicing at our discomfort.

"Now I come to think of it," she continued, looking at me critically, "madame is thinner than when she was here last year. Ah, there is no country like Brittany for cooking, eh?" and I suspect that the more than usually delicious dinner that we presently enjoyed was arranged to emphasize the superiority of the Breton cuisine.

All English and American people know Morlaix, with its wonderful old houses creeping up the verdant sides of the ravine in which it lies, with its vistas of overhanging roofs and carved gable ends, its picturesque confusion of market, shipping, beggars, all dominated and dwarfed by the great viaduct that crosses the deep valley from side to side. The old streets always have a charm, dark and winding as they are, and there are strange corners and picturesque interiors teeming with memories of the gentle Duchess Anne, who stopped here when she went to have her eyes cured at Saint Jean. But the days were getting short, and we had done no more than glance at one or two of our favourite studies, when darkness fell over the city, and we went home to the comforts of that best of all hotels.

CHAPTER VI

Landivisiau—Church—Saint Tivisiau—The Fountain—Lampaul—Guimilliau—La Roche Maurice—Landerneau—Le Folgoët—Legend of the Fool—Lesneven—The horse fair—Lambader—Screen—Journey to Le Faou—Legend of Saint Jaoua.

THE next morning broke sunny and clear, and the light gleaming gaily through the red curtains woke me early. Even before we were well ready for him Le Velly was at the door. He was in a merry mood; even chauffeurs are affected by the weather. As he handed in the cameras, he kept up a running fire of small talk. The automobile was splendid! She was *une bonne fille!* He had taken her all to pieces the night before, and now, Bon Dieu, she would fly like the wind.

"You had better take plenty of petrol," said I; "we have a long round to go."

"Tant Mieux!" he exclaimed, "tant Mieux! It is never too far for me, or for Mademoiselle l'Automobile," and his handsome eyes snapped with delight.

In. whichever direction one starts, it is a long, steep climb out of Morlaix. Up, up went the car, and still before us rose the road, and above the crest of the road, solemn and dark in the purple distance, the summits of the Mountains of Arrée.

Just before reaching Pleyber Christ, we turned off to the right, and before long drew up at the village of Saint

Thégonnec. The church itself, with the great two-storied mortuary chapel, forms so extensive and ornate a pile of buildings that the little graveyard, approached by an elaborate triumphal arch, seems like the paved entrance court to some gorgeous Italian monastery. Each stone marks a family grave, and in the centre rises a very beautiful and graceful calvary. The whole forms a striking example of Renaissance architecture out of all proportion to the tiny village of which it is the pride. This, however, is often the case in Léon, where the people are so religious that it has been said of them that "A family considers itself disgraced if it cannot reckon a priest among its members."

At Landivisiau one comes across traces of an early Bishop of Dol, the holy and artistic Tivisiau, whose story has been told by Albert le Grand in the "Lives of the Breton Saints." Of the early building, only the south porch remains to show how fine must have been the church to which it belonged. It is very lofty, and carved in the most delicate and elaborate manner. Within are ranged statues of the twelve apostles, six on either side, and round the mouldings of the inner arches are marvellous floral designs, so realistic that the leaves and flowers seem rather natural objects petrified than carved by the hand of man. Peeping out from among the branches are tiny figures of dwarfs, angels, demons, and the like. A woman was sweeping the porch as we entered, and stopped to point out some of the chief beauties of the sculpture.

"I suppose," said I, "that people have grown less religious now, for no one could be found to do such carving as this," and I slipped my finger behind a delicate spray of vine leaves that lay quite free and detached over the surface of the stone.

"I don't know," answered the woman, leaning on her broom and watching me critically; "I think we are just as religious, only we haven't time to spend on such things. We show our religion in a different way."

Which was certainly true of the boys of Landivisiau, who had a great desire to pose for us alongside of the apostles, climbing up on the lace-like pedestals, and slipping their arms familiarly round the saints' necks.

There is a pleasant old inn at Landivisiau. It is proudly termed the Hôtel du Commerce, though few would recognize it by the title of *hotel*, and I fear but little *commerce* can be effected there. The owner, beside being an excellent landlord, deals in old furniture, which, pending its sale, decorates the rooms, so that one sleeps on a sixteenth-century bedstead, and hangs one's clothes in cupboards that have held the costumes of the time of Duchess Anne.

It seems strange in this extreme west of the peninsula to find the old Bishop of Dol installed as patron saint. But Tivisiau, or as he is more correctly called Turiau, is still very popular in Brittany, and is honoured in more than one parish. He belongs to the earlier half of the seventh century, and is a true Breton-born saint. His father, Lelian, and his mother, Mageen, were graziers on the borders of the great romantic forest of Brocelianda, and employed their son to watch the flocks and herds. But, like many shepherds, from David downward, the young Tivisiau was a poet. As he sat among his sheep strange and beautiful thoughts came crowding into his mind, and broke from his lips in song, for, like the shepherd King of Israel, Tivisiau had an exquisite voice. Near his home was the monastery of Balon, and the boy would often leave his sheep in the wilderness, and steal away to hear

the music of the monks, and gain some instruction from them. He would even sometimes sing in the service, and when one day the Bishop of Dol, paying a visit to this distant outpost of his diocese, heard the boy's sweet voice soaring above the heavy chanting of the monks, he inquired who he was. Tivisiau was brought forward and asked to sing alone. Again he sang and again, till the bishop, who had lingered at the little out-of-the-way monastery to enjoy the lovely music, was obliged at last to take his departure, and feeling unable to part from the youth for whom he had conceived a great affection, asked permission to take him to Dol. There, in that centre of learning, Tivisiau was educated, and his voice carefully trained. The bishop made him his suffragan; abbot of Dol; and finally, laying down the burden of his episcopate, recommended his favourite as his successor. It is, as de la Borderie says, a curious example of the power exercised in the seventh century by a beautiful voice.

To return to Landivisiau. Down a side street close to the church are the lavoirs, and beside them the ancient and very picturesque fountain of Saint Tivisiau. The back of it is formed of a number of panels carved in relief, but they do not seem to have any special connection with the life of the saint, and were probably brought from the old church when it was demolished.

Landivisiau abounds in ecclesiastical bric-à-brac. At the Hôtel du Commerce we might have bought for a few francs a sufficient number of saints to furnish a Breton paradise. They stood leaning against one another in a disused stable, crowds of old wooden statues, their paint worn away, their gowns covered with dust, their worm-eaten faces looking as though they had all been suffering from an outbreak of small-pox. Poor old things! It was a grotesque yet

THE FOUNTAIN OF SAINT TIVISIAU

pathetic sight. Each had his name more or less visible at his feet. There were Corentins, Guennolés, Elois, Rochs, each with his special symbol, the totem he had replaced, just as one sees the Hellenic gods represented. And now to-day, in a miserable barn, stand these discarded relics of the past, typifying the manner in which their worship is being superseded by a vaguer, possibly purer cult.

The town forms a pleasant centre from which to visit some of the less frequented shrines of the west. There is Lampaul, curiously set on its high hill, the fine church and ancient buildings well worth seeing. Then there is Guimilliau with its superb calvary, inferior only to those of Plougastel and Pleyben. Here will be found the statue of the patron saint, Miliau, father of the little Saint Mélar, whose story we found at Lanmeur. Miliau was an early king of this part of Brittany, and two or three parishes are dedicated specially to him, which in itself seems curiously suggestive of ancestor worship!

Leaving Landivisiau, we made a quick run to La Roche Maurice, whose ancient and picturesque castle played so gallant a part in the War of Succession. The village which has grown up around the old fortress is indeed a quaint place, with its splendid church, and Chapel of the Dead. All the villagers were crazy to be photographed, and there were so many old doorways and curious outside staircases that we spent some time among them.

In the church is a very fine carved rood-loft, and the canopy of the pulpit has a particularly "Mercurial" looking figure of Saint Michel descending upon it, no doubt bringing the message of God to the preacher, just as his forerunner made known the commands of Jupiter to the priests of the older faith.

From La Roche the way lies through Landerneau to

Le Folgoët, one of the finest Gothic buildings in Brittany, abounding in that exquisite stone lacework in which the Breton sculptors of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries excelled. This church was founded by Jean IV., Duke of Brittany, as a thank-offering after his great victory at Auray, the battle at which his rival Charles of Blois was conquered and killed.

Here, as elsewhere, we find the germ of the worshipping place to have been a fountain. The legend tells how a certain idiot called Salaün took up his abode beside it, bathed in it, and in a tree which overhung it made for himself a sort of nest, where he lived. To-day the fountain rises from beneath the high altar of the magnificent church which has been raised to the memory of this same idiot, finding its way out by a channel to a square basin that lies just below the great east window. How surprised the poor boy would have been had he been told of the honours which were to be lavished upon him. But he might not have understood, for he was so entirely imbecile that as he sat all day long in his tree he knew but four words to sing: "*O! Itroun Guerhez Mari!*" "Oh, Lady Virgin Mary!" The people of the neighbourhood, like all Bretons, had a profound reverence for idiots, and, far from getting tired of his monotonous chant, held him in great respect. Gradually the fame of him spread far and wide, a band of soldiers heard him as they passed beneath his tree and took the report of him to Jean de Monfort. At last he died, and was buried. Then came the final proof of his sanctity. From his grave, from his very mouth, as some assert, sprang a lily, on the leaves of which in letters of gold appeared the words he had been used to sing. It was enough! A chapel was immediately raised over his grave, and quickly grew into a splendid church, and from that day to this the

THE FOUNTAIN OF LE FOLGOËT

shrine of Nôtre Dame du Folgoët, or Our Lady of the Fool's Wood, has been one of the greatest religious centres in Brittany, and on the eighth of September each year thousands of pilgrims flock to the Pardon of the holy idiot Salaün. There is a legend recorded of a poor girl falsely accused of murder, and about to be burned alive on the space before the church of Le Folgoët, being saved and justified by her father's appeal to Our Lady of the Fool's Wood. It forms one of the most dramatic poems in Villemarqué's "Barzaz-Breiz."

Before one enters the church one is struck by the strange carving over the tympanum. As is often the case, it represents the adoration of the Magi, but it is unusual to find the Virgin lying in an elaborately draped bed, and Joseph seated on the ground beside the pillow.

Within the portal all is dark and mysterious, a vision of soaring columns and dim arches. . . . Across the nave stretches a delicate screen, carved in green stone, which gives it the appearance of having been woven of sea-weed. Beneath it, on either side of the arched entrance, are altars, and beyond, each a marvel of sculpture, are five others! Truly the idiot Salaün has been honoured in divine fashion.

Yet even he has to bow before the miraculous statue of the Virgin and Child standing crowned above the southern altar.

The coronation of the Virgin of Le Folgoët took place in 1888. All the country round was thronged, a hundred thousand persons came to the imposing spectacle, and the statue of the Virgin was carried in procession, working innumerable cures on the way. It was a grand day for Le Folgoët, and ever since her glory, which had begun to wane a little, has shone brighter than ever.

From Le Folgoët to Lesneven is but a mile or two, and in the ordinary way would be passed over in a few minutes. But a great fair was in progress at Lesneven, and as we drew near the town the road became more and more crowded with animals. All the horses shied, pranced, kicked, and snorted at sight of the automobile. In vain did Le Velly whistle reassuringly, slow down, try to creep past unobserved. They reared, threw their masters, many of whom were, I regret to say, scarcely in a fit condition to manage them. Cows stood still in the middle of the road, or wanted to cross just as the motor was upon them; pigs tried to commit suicide, sheep flew wildly hither and thither, scattering into the meadows, driving the sheepdogs mad with anxiety. The young farmers bore it very well, evidently realizing that as motors had to be faced in the future, it was better to accustom their horses to the sight of them. But the older men and the women shook their fists at us, and shouted out Breton imprecations, which I hope for our sakes were not heard on high. Indeed, what with the neighing and kicking, the barking, bleating, and cursing, the dust and confusion, and above all the feeling that we were making ourselves disagreeable to these good Bretons, who were always kind and hospitable to us, it was a most unpleasant half-hour. At last, at the entrance to Lesneven, we abandoned the car, to make its way round to the other side of the town as best it could, and tried to force a path on foot through the throng. But it was simply unbearable.

I believe there are people who enjoy the picturesqueness of a Breton cattle market, and certainly the costumes and grouping are astonishing. But, to use a Breton expression, "The heart must be hard indeed that would not grieve" to see the way in which the poor calves are treated. For myself, I bore it as long as I could, and then took refuge in

the dark silent church, where I waited till the worst of the tumult had subsided, and the automobile could come and fetch me away.

I can never think calmly of that day, and I suspect that any prayers I uttered during my solitary watch were for justice on the brutal dealers who had no pity for their helpless, patient victims. It would be a satisfactory solution to the problem of all the suffering if it could be proved that a Breton farmer has to go through the purgatory of being one of his own calves.

The Bretons evidently have some suspicion that this may be so, as the following anecdote shows. A farmer had died, a farmer such as one sees too many of at the fair of Lesneven. One night, a few weeks afterwards, his son happening to pass the stable, heard the cows making a great noise, and went in to see what was amiss. In the dim moonlight which crept in through a window, he saw two of the beasts tossing violently with their horns. At first he could not understand what they were about, but as his eyes became accustomed to the faint light he saw that they were tormenting the unsubstantial, ghostly form of a man, which glimmered in the moonlight like a wraith of white cloud.

"Go on, good beasts!" exclaimed a thin, unearthly voice; "go on, toss harder, harder."

Horrified, the young man recognized the voice of his father, and venturing a little nearer, saw that it was the old man's phantom the cows were tossing. But as he was about to interfere, the voice cried warningly to him to leave the beasts alone.

"When I was in life," said the ghost, "I was not always so kind to the beasts as I should have been, and now it is their turn. Besides, they are really doing me a kindness.

By tormenting me in this manner they are saving me from ages of suffering in purgatory. Go on, good beasts, go on!"

We traversed the northern road on our way back to Morlaix, passing through Plouzévédé, near which in a hollow lies the tiny village, little more than a farm, of Lambader. It is a sweet place, well repaying a visit on account of the church, the carved screen of which is the finest of its kind in the province. On an altar in the south aisle is a very curious group of granite statues, representing the flight into Egypt. They probably once formed part of an elaborate calvary, for there are others in various parts of the church, all connected with the history of our Saviour. The most curious, however, are those already mentioned, which are grotesque and barbarous in the extreme.

It was darkening toward evening as we made our way over the country road that leads from Plouzévédé toward Morlaix. Once, as we passed a roadside cottage, a cat darted out under the very wheels of the motor. It must have lost several of its lives, but evidently escaped with at least one, for, as I looked anxiously back, I saw it chasing a dead leaf by the side of the road. I noticed that Le Velly gave a shudder and a sigh of relief when he found the cat was safe, and put him down for an exceptionally humane man.

"You are fond of cats?" I inquired sympathetically.

"It would have meant death to one of us had it been killed," he answered, crossing himself.

A more serious accident happened further on. An old woman driving home from market was making her way slowly down a lane toward the road along which we were running. Her horse must have taken fright at something, for, as we came toward the turning, he rushed out into the

GROUP OF OLD STATUES IN LAMBADER CHURCH

road just in front of us, and as we slowed down, there lay the poor old dame in the midst of all her purchases, the cart overturned, one of its shafts broken short off, and the horse careering away at its own sweet will.

The first thing was to discover whether any bones were broken, then, after reassuring the old lady on this point, to gather together her heterogeneous collection of parcels, while the chauffeur ran off to catch the horse. And all the time the poor old dear sat on the ground, feeling her arms and legs, and groaning in a high quavering voice—

"O, ma Doué, ma Doué!"

"How did it happen?" I asked.

But the old woman did not know. She had had a long day, and had possibly dropped asleep. She often did so, for Mogis was a quiet beast, never had she behaved like this before. All she remembered was that suddenly there was a crash, she found herself lying in the road, and the next thing she knew was that we were bending over her.

Presently Le Velly returned leading the mare, looking as quiet as a sheep, and evidently ashamed of the broken shaft still dangling at her side.

"O Mogis, Mogis," exclaimed her mistress, reproachfully, "how could you be such a bad beast! What will Monsieur the Rector say when he knows?"

It appearing from further questioning that she lived at a village some three miles distant, we suggested that the chauffeur should take the old woman home in our car, with her packages, while we waited with the horse and cart till some one was sent to fetch them. With this arrangement she fell in readily enough, till she caught sight of the automobile, when she instantly broke into a paroxysm of abuse.

That, then, was the cause of all her trouble. She might

have known as much, seeing that we were townsfolk! She had heard of these monsters, that turn quiet horses into mad devils. Mogis, by acting as she had done, had saved her mistress's life; instead of blaming the poor beast, she ought to look upon her as a preserver. Nothing would induce her to enter the car, the *machine diabolique;* it was only fit for *old Polik* and his crew to ride in, not for a baptized Christian, who went to Mass every Sunday.

Finding it quite hopeless to persuade her that our motor could have had nothing to do with her accident, as it did not arrive on the spot till afterwards, we left her, and ran round by her cottage to tell her son-in-law to go to her assistance; and so on to Morlaix.

The automobile was engaged elsewhere for the next two or three days, so, as we had decided to visit Le Faou and Rumengol, we arranged for it to rejoin us there, and made our way by rail to Quimerc'h, the nearest station to that part of the Rade of Brest. The little pottering train seemed very slow after the swift freedom of the automobile, and it was only after several hours' travelling that we reached the wayside station. We had been there the previous June, to assist at the Pardon of Rumengol, that great festival described by Anatole le Braz in his "Au Pays des Pardons." And now it was autumn! The gorse bushes that had lighted up the landscape had burned themselves out during the summer, and lay mere heaps of ashen green. The sweet honeysuckle flowers had ripened into crimson berries, and over the fresh green of the high banks a carpet of purple heather had been spread. The station, that had been so crowded at our previous visit, was quite deserted, and we thought we were going to have the ramshackle old omnibus all to ourselves, when, just as we were starting, a fat priest, who was on his way to visit the

Rector of Faou, got in with his thin, cadaverous-faced young curate. As the old gentleman hoisted himself up into the omnibus, he looked eagerly through the narrow door and inquired whether madame could "causer en Français." It appearing that madame could, the fat wrinkles deepened into a reassuring smile, and he dropped heavily into his seat, and we began to "causer." When I say *we*, I mean *he*, for no one else got the slightest chance. After apologizing for his stoutness, which was indeed phenomenal, and assuring us that he was a teetotaller and scarcely ever took anything to eat, he gave us an account of the health of all the other clergy of the neighbourhood, with particulars as to their diet and habits. Presently he began to speak about Le Faou, and became more interesting.

"Madame, has she been to Rumengol before?"

I replied that I had.

"To assist at the Pardon, for example?"

"On Trinity Sunday last June."

Up went his hands and eyes. "Ma foi! what a sight! What costumes, what weather!"

"I thought it was going to rain," said I, "and wondered what would become of all the fine dresses."

"Oh," replied the good man, a little shocked at my heretical want of faith, "madame need not have felt the slightest anxiety. The weather of the Blessed Virgin of Rumengol is proverbial. I have assisted for twenty years at the Pardon, and only once has it rained. It is indeed providential that it should be so, for with an assemblage of twenty thousand persons rain would be disastrous."

He went on to talk about the Pardon, asking whether I had noticed, as I had, the peculiarly devout nature of the festival, and the immense variety and gorgeous character of the costumes.

As we reached the top of the long rise that leads up from the station, the driver stopped to rest his horse, and I drew a deep breath of delight as I looked around me. We were on the crest of the hill, and the steep road led down between banks of flaming brambles and purple heather, to where far below, in the depths of a distant valley, shimmered the silvery waters of the *Inland Sea*. Away to the right the ground fell away in one of those softly rounded, sudden valleys, formed by the action of underground water, and beyond rose the hills, among which nestled Rumengol. All the landscape was bathed in an effulgent mist, it was as though we had stepped backward from the melancholy beauty of autumn to the glorious fulness of summer.

In the depths below lay Faou, with its pointed gables, and the kindly old priest told me the story of Saint Jaoua, and the trouble he had with the Seigneur du Faou. For Jaoua was the nephew of the celebrated bishop Saint Pol de Léon, and Faou was one of the most determined haunts of paganism. As usual, the false religion was typified by a monstrous dragon, and it was the story of this beast that the priest related to me as the old chestnut mare ambled down the steep slope into the valley of Faou.

It seems that the seigneur, who lived at the castle, was a bold, bad pagan, a worshipper of the goddess whose cult preceded that of the Blessed Virgin at Rumengol. What the nature of that cult may have been we cannot say, but if, as has been suggested, the word Rumengol means "All Heal," which is the name for the mistletoe, it seems probable that the sanctuary of Rumengol was at that time dedicated to some female divinity connected with the mystic plant. Even to-day this mighty Virgin is believed to cure from all ills of soul and body, and is represented in

the west window of Rumengol church seated upon the great red dolman which is said to have originally stood on the spot over which the Christian church was raised.

However that may be, the sanctuary of Rumengol has from time immemorial been a revered worshipping place, and in consequence the town of Faou was for long a stronghold of paganism, and symbolically the haunt of one of the most fearful of dragons. Poor Jaoua, sent by his valiant uncle to establish a Christian monastery there, was utterly unable to cope with the religion he found so firmly established, and was soon chased away to Braspartz, and his monks slain before the new altar. But when the mighty Bishop of Léon, Paul Aurelian, heard the news, he arose in his strength. Armed with his great pastoral staff, dressed in his most imposing vestments, he made his way to Faou, where he found the people scattered like sheep, going in fear of their lives, because of the great dragon which was devastating the neighbourhood. Not one whit dismayed, Pol, as he is called in Breton, summoned them together, and in true missionary fashion began with a sermon on the excellence of the Christian religion, concluding in these words—

"And in order to show you that what I have said is true, if you will repent of your sins, and give up your superstitions, I will, by the grace of God, and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver you from this pernicious beast."

Is it necessary to add that the people confessed their sins? immediately after which Saint Pol and his nephew celebrated Mass, and set forth toward the den of the dragon. Poor beast, he was cowed immediately at sight of the splendid bishop arrayed in all his pontifical magnificence. Crawling from his lair, he came fawning to the

feet of Saint Pol, who putting his stole around his neck led him away. They had, however, gone but a short distance to Lampaul near Landivisiau when some of the men of Faou came running after them, telling Pol that the pagan dragon had left behind it a young beast, which would soon be as great a scourge as its parent had been. Loosing the stole, Saint Pol ordered the old dragon to return and fetch its child, which it meekly did, and the two came back and accompanied the saint like a couple of dogs to the Ile de Batz where he had his monastery. Their fate was sad in the extreme. If you have been to Batz you will know that it is an arid waste of stone and sand. Fixing his staff in the ground, Saint Pol tied the poor dragons to it with his holy and mystic stole, which had already produced such an astounding effect upon them, and left them to die of hunger.

I asked the old priest what the story meant, but he only looked at me shrewdly, and shook his head. It is singular, said I, that the dragon was apparently a female monster with a young one. Is it possible that in her story is symbolized the triumph of the worship of the Blessed Virgin over some heathen goddess of old time?

But my old friend was not to be drawn. "Possibly, possibly," said he; "these legends are very mysterious, and little is known of what went on at Rumengol before the coming of the Blessed Saint Paul Aurelian."

CHAPTER VII

Landévennec—Saint Guennolé—King Gralon's tomb—A dance at Le Faou—Abbey of Daoulas—Calvary of Plougastel—Rumengol.

MADAME LE FLEMM, the stalwart landlady of the Hôtel de l'Europe, was expecting us. She had prepared the large, low-ceiled bedroom on the first floor for our reception, and after a hearty greeting left us, with the news that dinner would be ready in half an hour.

How strange Le Faou seemed, how quiet, how deserted! When last I stood at that window, I had looked down upon a sea of snowy coifs, and broad felt hats. The little town had seemed like a busy camp, with double rows of vehicles stacked on either side of the road, and horses feeding wherever they could find standing room. Among the throng, bands of pilgrims were threading their way, each carrying a green ash rod, its bark peeled off in a spiral, remnant of old pagan days, like everything else at Le Faou, that "Home of the Serpent." Many of these pilgrims had come from very far, travelling barefoot for days together. One man in particular there was. Ten steps he took, then knelt, kissed the ground three times, said a prayer, rose, walked ten steps more, and knelt again. When did he set out? His costume told that he had come from Plougastel, some fifteen miles distant! Yet no one even turned to glance at him, such sights are

common enough at Le Faou, during the Pardon of Rumengol.

But now the street was empty; one could almost hear the wash of the rising tide against the piers of the old stone bridge, so still and sleepy was the town. On the very spot where the pilgrim had knelt and kissed the earth chickens were pecking, and a black poodle was wallowing in the dust.

Dinner at Le Faou is always an amusing meal. The inn is a favourite resort of commercial travellers, and as they all know one another, there is never any lack of conversation. The food is good, it always is where *commercials* congregate.

When we entered the long, low room, six men were already seated at table. A black-haired, sallow-faced individual, beside whom my plate was laid, was engaged in a competition with his opposite neighbour as to which of them could devour the greater number of large, luscious, yellow snails. Each champion was armed with a knitting-pin, with which he extracted the fat monster, popping it into his mouth, and sucking the juice from the shell noisily. Gradually the huge pile of snails sank lower, as the heap of empty shells on each man's plate rose higher. When at last the dish was empty, my neighbour heaved a sigh of regret, and the counting of the shells began. I cannot remember the exact figures, but they ran into hundreds!

This part of Brittany is celebrated for shell beasts of all sorts. It is not unusual to have four or five courses served at a single meal, shrimps, oysters, snails, crabs, lobsters, or that big delicious crustacean called by the Bretons Langouste.

Rumengol has been so inimitably described in "Au Pays des Pardons," that I only propose to take a fleeting

glimpse at the little village, just before leaving Faou, for the benefit of those who, like myself, prefer to see these pilgrim shrines both in and out of season.

This morning we shall start, with two of the rough-looking boatmen who inhabit the Rade of Brest, and make our way to that remote promontory, whose fine silhouette can be seen lying purple on the silver sheen of the water.

Our men had been out fishing since early morning, and were at first somewhat morose and silent. But presently, finding that I was interested in the story of the place, one of them, a rough, black-bearded, handsome Celt, began talking. He was not easy to understand, for his French was limited, and several of his front teeth were missing, but he told me the legend of Gralon the King, in a rude, picturesque fashion of his own, and described the old man's flight from Landévennec to Rumengol, with convincing force.

"It was a long way for an old man to walk," said I, thinking of le Braz' beautiful story.

"*He* didn't walk!" said the man gruffly; "kings don't walk! It's only poor folk like us who have to do that."

"How did he go, then?" I asked, anxious to prolong the recital.

"Why, he rode on his horse, naturally, the horse on which he escaped from Is. Haven't you heard of the city of Is, that was swallowed up by the sea?"

I had, every one has, but of course I pretended that I had not, and the old legend, told there, within sight of Gralon's tomb, by that rough fisherman, was a fine example of unlettered eloquence.

He spoke of Gralon's wicked daughter, Ahè, and of her lover the Devil, who put it into her heart to steal the

golden key of the great dyke, which kept the sea from overwhelming her father's town. There had been a banquet, "Kings are always eating and drinking and wasting the people's money," said the narrator vindictively, and Gralon had drunk more wine than was good for him, so that he lay, sleeping, in his purple robes at the mercy of his child. But Guennolé knew all about it, Guennolé the monk, the founder of Landévennec, for they were great friends, he and the king, "these priests know which side their bread's buttered." Just as the sea rushed in, and the old king, still half tipsy, was gazing about, not knowing which way to fly, he found himself seized by the hand, placed on his horse, and carried swiftly away to the abbey that was even now looming close on our left hand.

"As for his daughter," added the man, "she died, was drowned, turned into a mermaid, so they say. But I haven't time to tell you about that, you'll hear it if you're going to the Bay, as you say you are."

For we had passed Tibidi, the little rocky island on which Guennolé and his eleven monks tried for three years to settle, and were nearing the smiling promontory, to which, at the end of that time, they removed. A tiny village has grown up around the ruined abbey, and there is an old, old church, and an ancient inn kept by two white-capped women, who served us an excellent lunch, in a clean, low-ceiled room, overlooking the quiet waveless waters.

Afterwards, we sauntered up the village street, and found a lame elderly woman to take us to the ruins of the abbey, where, hearing that we should be some time, she locked us up, promising to return for us as soon as she had finished "her ironing."

What a calm place it is, this Landévennec! Propitious for prayer and meditation, its founder thought, when, faint

and exhausted with his three years of privation on the barren isle of Tibidi, he came to this "earthly paradise." He found it uninhabited, covered with forest, but fertile and balmy as it is to-day. So he and his monks began cutting down the trees, and soon built a chapel and twelve little separate cells, in which they took up their abode, and began their pleasant life among the birds and flowers. It must have been an ideal existence! The stronger brethren cleared the forest, cultivated the land; the weaker tended sheep, milked the cows, made the bread and butter, and did that infinitesimal amount of washing and cleaning which Celtic monks of those times thought necessary.

Before the door of every round, thatched cell a garden lay, in which were bees and fragrant herbs, thyme and marjoram, and old-world flowers, roses, lilies, and hedges of lavender, of honey-suckle, for the monks of those days were artists and loved all things beautiful. As they sat at their doors reading their breviaries in the golden twilight, the bees hummed round them in drowsy content. And in the midst of the tiny settlement was the low-roofed chapel, where they met morning and evening to sing the praises of God with Guennolé their leader, till their voices grew so sweet in that solitude that the very birds stopped their flight to listen to the music.

This Guennolé was nephew to Conan Mériadec, the great chief, said to have led so many Britons over to Armorica when our own land was conquered by Saxons. Among the band of emigrants was Conan's brother Fracan, with his wife Guen, or The White, and two sons. Upon landing, the little family settled near what is now Saint Brieuc, at a place called ever since Ploufragan, the Place of Fracan, and it was here, some months later, that Guennolé was born. The boy grew up very handsome and talented,

so that his father wished to take him to court and make a soldier of him. But Guennolé wanted to be a monk, and he and his mother prayed constantly to God that He would further this praiseworthy design.

One day a fearful storm overtook Fracan when he was out in the country. The rain fell in such torrents that he and his servants were nearly drowned, and when thunder and lightning added to the tumult, it occurred to Fracan that all this commotion might be on account of his opposition to the pious wishes of his boy.

"Take him, Lord!" he cried. "Take him, and not only him, but his mother, my other sons, myself even!"

Thus was Guennolé given up to the service of God, and sent to be educated by Corentin, the old hermit of Ploumodiern, afterwards first Bishop of Quimper.

It would be very pleasant to follow Guennolé to that little hut in the forest of Nevét, at the foot of Ménez Hom. There he and his master lived their peaceful days together, eating of a miraculous fish which inhabited the neighbouring fountain. Every day, after cutting a steak from its side, they threw the creature back into the water, and in the morning found it whole again, ready to provide the next day's meal. It is a lovely peaceful spot, as far from the noise of the world to-day as when it was inhabited by those two great saints, whose histories are so closely associated with the early colonization of Breton Armorica.

Guennolé grew to be so noted a man that later, when he settled at Landévennec, his humble cell was visited by all the chiefs of the land, and among them, of course, Gralon.

After the death of the saint, a splendid abbey grew up, and Landévennec became a centre of learning. All kinds

of rare Celtic manuscripts collected there, and when the Revolution broke out, the abbey was a rich find for the spoiler. To-day, it is still an abbey, but an abbey of flowers, and the only cult one finds practised there is the old original cult of nature. The outer walls in part remain; the windows are of climbing roses; where the great pillars of the nave once stood, graceful palms tower upward, their interlacing leaves forming natural arches in place of the old stone vaulting. The central aisle is paved as of yore with great slabs of stone, but on either side, in place of white-robed monks, are rows of lilies, and tall white foxgloves. Honeysuckle and wistaria drape the stone altar, in place of the velvet embroideries of other days; and in the transepts, where tall delicate stems of New Zealand flax soar up toward the far blue roof of sky, the scents of thousands of blossoms mingle in a perfume sweeter than any incense. Beside the high altar is an ancient fountain, richly carved, showing from its position with what reverence it was regarded. In a little apse at the eastern extremity lies the tomb of Guennolé the founder, and close by is the statue of his friend and master Saint Corentin. But perhaps the most interesting spot of all is the tomb of King Gralon, built in the form of a little house, in the upper room of which watchers, to-day represented by wooden figures, kept a constant guard over the royal master who lay sleeping below.

We had just finished our tour of inspection, and were dreaming about the young monk, whose character is one of the most beautiful examples of Christian fortitude and purity which Celtic literature affords, when the key grated in the lock, and our old lame friend reappeared. She was the dearest thing, cheery and contented, though evidently extremely poor. When we came to her home, she begged

us to go up and see her mother, saying that as she was too old to go out it would give her such pleasure to see two English people.

The little attic they inhabited at the top of the house was as clean as soap and water could make it, but bare and poverty stricken. A table, at which the daughter had been ironing, a cupboard bed in a corner, and by the open window the merriest old woman in the world! She was stone deaf and quite blind, but her daughter told us that she was as happy as the day was long, and indeed she seemed so. She felt my tweed dress, my cuffs and tie, passed her hands over my face and head, and chuckled with delight at having "seen" an English lady. Her daughter laughed too, at seeing her old mother so happy, and a little bird that hung in the window over a box of mignonette broke out singing gaily. And yet I doubt if they ever knew where the next day's food was to come from, and the mother was ninety-five, and had not been outside her room for twenty years. Truly Landévennec still retains its reputation as a place suitable for peaceful content and meditation.

On the return the boatmen were very silent. About half way the dark man said something to his companion, and then asked whether I would like to see a chapel held sacred by the fishermen of those parts. As he had shown great indifference with regard to Landévennec and its saintly founder, and had spoken most contemptuously of the clergy, this seemed somewhat surprising. However, we assented to his proposal, and made our way to a little sheltered cove, overhung by trees, where was a dilapidated chapel, very dirty, and quite uninteresting. There was not, so far as I remember, even the statue of a saint, but it was evidently frequented, for

the path that led up from the water was well worn, and within were two or three chairs for the convenience of worshippers. To my surprise both the men followed us, took off their hats, and went down on their knees with the utmost reverence, and all the time we were looking round the chapel they continued to repeat prayers in Breton. As soon as we were once more afloat, I tried to gain some information about the saint to whom the chapel was dedicated. His name was ordinary enough, Nicholas, I think, but as far as I could judge his cult seemed to have nothing whatever to do with Christianity, and he was probably neither more nor less than some heathen divinity worshipped under a later name. All they knew of him was that he had a special liking for seafaring men, brought them good luck, and in return asked nothing of them save a visit whenever they happened to pass his shrine.

"Very different from Monsieur the Curé," continued the man, bitterly; "*he'll* excuse you your prayers if only he gets your money."

"But the clergy do not get much," said I; "they seem to be very poor."

"Poor!" cried the man; "Monsieur the Curé poor! Why, he gets at least twenty-four pounds a year, and has no one to spend it on but himself. Do you call that poor?"

"But he must have a great many calls on his purse," I suggested; "I expect every one comes to him when they are in trouble."

"Certainly," he answered; "who should they go to? He's always preaching about the Christ, why doesn't he try to copy Him? *He* didn't go about robbing hard working men of their earnings. He was like our Saint Nicholas; if you wanted Him you could go to Him, and if you didn't you could stop away!"

"And do all the men round about here think as you do?" I asked.

"Yes," replied he; "but some of them are afraid to say so. You see, the women don't like it."

"How do you manage with your wife?"

"Oh, poor soul, she's got ten children to think of, she doesn't find much time to worry her head about religion."

"And yet," said I, "you go and pray to Saint Nicholas."

"Ah," said the man, "that's different. I don't object to a religion like that, a prayer now and then as one goes to one's fishing, or a present of a mackerel to the poor man who sweeps out the chapel. Besides, we fishers have always worshipped Saint Nicholas, ever since there were fishers in these parts, and that I reckon was long enough before Guennolé and his monks came and founded Landévennec."

We reached Faou just as the tide was getting low, and the mud banks were beginning to show above the water like sea monsters. We found that a dance was to be held in the market hall, and after dinner made our way up the street to the festive scene. Long before we reached the building the shrill sound of the biniou, the Breton bagpipe, was penetrating every corner of the town.

Legend says that when the king Gralon passed through Le Faou on his way to Rumengol, where he found that rest he so much needed, a fête was being held in the town, and that he sat awhile in his rags watching the festivities, before he set out on his final climb up the steep road that leads to the Forest of Kranou.*

Watching the dance that evening it was not difficult to picture the weary old man. The costumes can have

* The Land of Pardons.

changed but little, and the music and dancing not at all, since the days when Guennolé the monk missed his royal charge from Landévennec and followed in search of him.

As I was looking on, a man came up and asked me to join the throng. I explained that I did not know the step, that I was watching the dance for the first time. All in vain! A partner was found for my husband, a stalwart girl who undertook to convey him round somehow, and the next moment I found myself whirled off my feet, jumping, rushing, twisting, turning, now flying through the air, expecting every moment to be my last, now caught safe and panting by my experienced partner. How my poor husband fared I had no opportunity of judging. He passed me once in the arms of his buxom companion, and I thought he looked as perturbed as I felt. . . . Then, just as my senses seemed leaving me, the biniou gave a squeak, ceased, and we found ourselves at the exit from the hall, bowing our thanks to our gratified partners.

Within a drive of Le Faou is the Abbey of Daoulas, and just beyond Daoulas, the little town of Plougastel, that lies on a height overlooking the Rade of Brest.

We had some difficulty in hiring a conveyance for the journey, for there was a fair in the neighbourhood, and every one was busy.

"There's a good horse and cart I could let you have," explained Madame le Flemm, "but no driver. Can monsieur drive himself, by chance?"

Certainly, monsieur would of all things prefer to drive himself; he asked nothing better. So the stout, handsome cob was harnessed and we climbed up into the cart.

"Il n'est pas mechant, mais il danse un peu," called madame warningly; and next moment we found ourselves lying backwards on the seat, almost in the road, the shafts

towering in the air, and the horse curvetting about on his hind legs. Later, however, he made up for it, and proved an excellent and well-intentioned beast, trotting the whole distance uphill and down without a single reminder from the whip, only every time we stopped he refused to start till he had gone through his waltz.

On the outward journey we passed through Daoulas, and went straight on to Plougastel, where we lunched.

Plougastel is noted for the quaint costumes worn by the women and children, and for the magnificent calvary that stands in the churchyard. It was built in the year 1598, at the time when a terrible outbreak of plague was ravaging Brittany. The architect was probably the same who built that at Guimilliau, but in the Plougastel calvary he has improved on his original design. The epidemic in memory of which it was erected was called the White Pest, and was so terrible that some towns lost almost all their inhabitants. There is a ballad given in "Barzaz-Breiz" which describes the outbreak at Elliant, and may be taken to represent the awful condition of most of these western towns.

> "The White Pest has left Elliant; and has carried away with her more than seven thousand victims.
> Cruel must be the heart that would not weep on visiting the town of Elliant, in seeing seven sons of one house taken to the grave in the same cart.
> The poor mother draws them along, the father follows whistling —he has lost his reason!"

And so forth.

The people of Plougastel, and of many other places, made vows at the time of the sickness to erect calvaries in the churchyards, if the plague were only stayed.

Every one has seen some example of the Breton

calvary. That of Plougastel is a massive erection, bearing on its platform an immense number of granite figures, representing scenes from the life of Christ. Some of them are very grotesque, and the costumes have evidently been copied from those worn by the people among whom the sculptor passed his life. For instance, the entry into Jerusalem represents our Lord on an ass, preceded by musicians playing on the bagpipes, clarionet, and tambourine, and clothed in the large kilted breeches still worn in some parts of Brittany. There is also on this calvary, as on several others, the representation of Catel-gollet being dragged into hell, because she went to balls, and gave herself up to all kinds of luxurious practices. If, as is probable, the sermon in former times was delivered from the platform of the calvary, the preacher no doubt used the sculptures to illustrate his discourse. It is well known that until quite lately the Breton priests were accustomed to make their sermons more dramatic by showing pictures of the subjects of which they were speaking. Thus, if he was treating of gluttony, the priest held up a pig; if of pride, a peacock; and if he wanted to warn his hearers against luxury, he showed them the form of this Catel-gollet. Indeed, we are told * that the Abbé Le Roux, who died in 1860, had a most effective method of preaching, for he used to pick up his cassock and imitate Catel dancing, till his hearers were in fits of laughter, when suddenly he would fall into a paroxysm of fear at the arrival of the devil. Still in the person of Catel, he would beg and pray for mercy in vain, and would imitate her screams as she fell into hell, so horribly, that the audience, frozen with terror, rushed away thinking the fiend was at their heels.

On our return journey we stopped at Daoulas, and

* Le Goffic: L'âme Bretonne.

visited the abbey, with its cloisters, fountain, and splendid church. The present abbey was founded early in the twelfth century, but before then there was a religious house of some kind at Daoulas, established, it is said, by that Lord of Faou who so cruelly persecuted Saint Jaoua. He built the abbey on his conversion to Christianity, in expiation of the murder of two of Jaoua's monks, and called it Daouglas, the two murders.

True, there are sceptics who say that the name is derived simply from Dowlais, a place in Wales, or Douglas in the Isle of Man, whence the abbey probably took its rise; but the story of the penitent pagan is so much more romantic, that it is better to try and believe it.

The grounds of the old place are still very beautiful, and as we wandered beneath the shadow of the cloisters, it did not require much imagination to picture them once more peopled by the Augustin monks who formerly lived at Daoulas. It was a lovely afternoon, and my memory of the place is full of sunshine, and the rosy gleam of apples, for an orchard lies among the ruins, and here and there the statue of some forgotten saint shelters beneath the drooping boughs.

When we reached Le Faou we found that the car had arrived, causing great excitement among the boys of the little town.

Although it was autumn, and there was no Pardon to be seen at Rumengol, we could not leave Le Faou without a peep at that holiest of shrines. So early next morning we started up the steep road that leads into the fold of the wooded hills where lies the little hamlet. How shall I describe this Rumengol!

In one of the most beautiful and mystical of his works, the "Pardon of the Singers," Anatole le Braz has given us a

OLD WELL, LOCRONAN

picture of the village at the time of the great annual festival in June. At other seasons, however, few persons visit Rumengol, for it is merely a tiny cluster of cottages, in no way remarkable, save for its ancient church, and the still more ancient memories that gather round it.

The church, as I have already said, was founded by Saint Guennolé on the spot where Gralon the first king of all Brittany is supposed to have died. As to the legend which claims Rumengol to have been always a specially sacred spot, where Druids and their predecessors practised the rites of their religion, that is doubtless true, and was probably the reason why Saint Guennolé chose it as a place on which to erect a Christian shrine. No one knows the nature of the old worship, but there is no doubt in my mind that it was in some way specially associated with song, in fact that Rumengol has always been a kind of Breton Eisteddfod. Like all Celts, the Breton peasant is extremely fond of music: I remember a curious example of this.

I was staying at a little farmhouse in the west of Brittany, where the people were rather a rough set, unaccustomed to strangers, and none too pleasant. One day as I was dressing I happened to sing to myself an old English ballad. When I came down to supper I noticed that my host and his wife had become much more attentive, and even the old grandmother nodded at me with a friendly smile.

"Madam sings?" said she, "she has the gift of music?"

I laughed. "Oh no," I answered, "I never had much voice; and in any case my singing days are over."

But at this there was a general shaking of heads, with smiles and friendly murmurs.

"But we heard you, madam," exclaimed the daughter.

"Your voice came floating down to us as we sat at the door."

"Madam sings, when she is happy, like a bird," remarked the grandmother, "and her songs are like the gwerz and soniou of our land."

"Ah," observed the morose landlord, solemnly, "it is a great gift, and ought not to be lightly esteemed."

From that day forth I had no reason to complain of my treatment, and every night before going to bed I sang "The Banks of Allan Water," or some other love-lorn ditty, as we sat before the great fire that blazed on the kitchen hearth. It was the first time that my poor voice had ever been appreciated, and I could not but feel flattered as I noticed how the old grandmother nodded her head and closed her eyes as though she had been in church, while her rough-looking son-in-law sat in his oak seat in the chimney, a child on each knee, smiling contentedly as the yellow flames went racing after one another up into the darkness.

At the Pardon on Trinity Sunday, the ragged bards assemble at Rumengol from far and near. I recall one of them, sitting with his wife behind a stall piled high with leaflet songs. The couple were singing with all their might to a group of young peasants who, having bought the words, were thus learning the tunes traditionally, as they had probably been handed down for many a generation. It mattered nothing to the pupils that the husband was singing in one key, the wife in quite another, and that their voices were raucous and harsh as the notes of their favourite *biniou*. The young folk wanted tunes, tunes to sing to those songs, with which the pockets of their sky-blue jackets were already bulging. But in September Rumengol is silent and deserted. The inn, where in June

we had scarcely found standing room, is empty as we enter it. Seated at the table in front of the window, we look round at the shining cupboards with their bright brass fittings, and wonder how the doctor manages when he has to attend a person in one of the enormously high beds. Perhaps he takes a step ladder round with him.

Chickens are pecking about the village street, children are playing beneath the ancient yew trees of the graveyard, and in the church itself all is mystery and silence, the silence of a cult that seems about to pass away even as the other cults that have preceded it at Rumengol.

CHAPTER VIII

Yeun-Elez—The story of Job Ann Dréz—Corn-cam—Braspartz—Pleyben—Cléden Poher—Chateauneuf du Faou—Spézet—Motreff—Arrival at Le Faouet.

HOW good it was to be back in the automobile, to feel its smooth unwearying pace, as it glided along up hill and down.

It is mostly up this morning, for we are going to visit the Yeun, the vast dismal peat-bog which lies among the summits of the Montagnes d'Arrée.

The Yeun, which for ages has been regarded by Bretons as a sort of entrance to the infernal regions, is the scene of some of the wildest legends and beliefs, dating back to days long before the coming of the Celts from Great Britain.

One of the most noticeable things in Brittany is the intimate relations that seem to exist between the people of this world and the phantoms who inhabit the Land of Shadows. These beliefs and the superstitions with which they have become associated have been gathered together in a book called "La Légende de la Mort," and no part of the work is more strange and weird than that relating to *Yeun-Elez*, the "Stygia palus of Basse Bretagne." It is thus that the Breton writer describes the terrible region—

"In summer, it resembles a boundless steppe, where the

colours gleam and change like those of the ocean. The carpet of grass, heather, and rushes with which it is covered is elastic to the tread. Advancing further, the earth becomes less and less solid, water creeps up the ankles, . . . the legs, . . . till in the very heart of the Yeun there is a flat green quagmire, treacherous of aspect dangerous to cross, and declared by the people of the neighbourhood to be unfathomable. It is the entrance to the Shadow of Death, the awful court of the unknown, the gaping pit into which the possessed are cast. The quagmire is called the *Youdic*, and sometimes you may see its waters begin to simmer and boil. Farewell to him who at that moment leans over them, he will find himself seized, dragged down, swallowed up by the unseen forces below. Sometimes the furious baying of hounds may be heard floating on the night wind. It is the lost souls who are at their mad revels! But from the top of his mountain hard by Saint Michel lowers his flaming sword over the Yeun, and the tumult ceases.

"'Sant Mikêl vraz a oar an tu
D'ampich ioual ar bleizi-du.'"

(The great Saint Michel knows the way to stop the black wolves' fearsome bay.)

As for stories of the place, they are endless, mostly relating to demons, which, having been exorcised from certain persons, have taken possession of the bodies of black dogs that are brought to the Yeun and thrown in by a properly qualified priest.

Here is an instance taken from the book to which I have referred above.

"As soon as the sun set, Job Ann Dréz heard the rector calling him, and immediately afterwards he appeared in his surplice and stole.

"'Come!' said he, 'and above all, take care that the beast does not get away. If it does we shall both be lost!'

"'Do not trouble yourself!' answered Job Ann Dréz, tying the cord tightly on to his wrist.

"And so they all three set out, the rector marching in front, then Job, and last of all the dog.

"They went to a great dark mountain, much higher and wilder than Ménez-Bré, and all around the earth was black, there was neither grass there, nor gorse, nor heather.

"At the foot of the mountain the rector stopped for a moment.

"'We are now entering Yeun-Elez,' said he to Jobic. 'Whatever you may hear, be sure not to turn your head, your life in this world and your happiness in the next depends on what I say. Have you got the animal safely?'

"'Yes, yes, Monsieur the Rector.'

"The place where they were now walking was gloomy, gloomy! It was a desolation of desolations! A soup of black earth steeped in black water.

"'This must certainly be the entrance hall to hell!' said Job Ann Dréz to himself.

"They had no sooner set foot among these bogs than the dog began to howl miserably, and to struggle furiously. But Jobic held him tight.

"The further they advanced, the more the dreadful beast fought, crying '*Iou! . . . Iou!*' It dragged so at the rope that Jobic's fists were covered with blood. But never mind! He held him safe as ever.

"At last they came to the middle of Yeun-Elez. 'Take care!' whispered the rector in Jobic's ear.

"He walked up to the dog, and just as it was preparing

to bite him, houp! with a marvellous dexterity he slipped his stole round its neck. The creature gave a cry of horrible pain and fright. . . .

"'Quick! down on your stomach, and your face against the earth!' cried the rector, setting Job the example.

"Scarcely was Job Ann Dréz down than he heard the sound of a body falling into the water. Then immediately there were hissings, explosions, a horrible uproar! You might have sworn that the morass was on fire.

"It lasted for half an hour, and then there was calm. . . ."

As the automobile turned the last corner and came within sight of this awful place, Le Velly stopped and we looked around. Before us lay the enormous peat-bog, flat, silent, and motionless as a lake, while around rose the tops of mountains, from the highest of which the Chapel of Saint Michel looked down. And over all the wide expanse brooded vast purple shadows, fading in the horizon into faint turquoise mist.

Face to face with the desolate void stood a solitary house, the inn of Corn-cam, a wretched place, with the dark interest of a terrible tragedy clinging to it.*

As we entered the sordid interior, an elderly man greeted us, and asked whether we were not English. On hearing that we were he seized my hand, exclaiming that the English were good, and he liked them. It is so unusual in these wild districts to find one's nation appreciated, that when he went on to say he should like to go to England I felt sufficient surprise to ask him why.

"Oh," said he, "the English are very rich, are they not?"

* For the story of Corn-cam see "Pâques d'Islande," by Anatole le Braz.

"Well," I said, smiling, "there are rich and there are poor, as in all countries, but the poor of England are more miserable than those of Brittany."

"Really," said he. "But why?"

"Because they are more improvident. They do not manage so well."

"How much does a labourer get in England?" asked the man, much interested.

"Oh, twenty francs a week, perhaps."

He gasped with astonishment and envy. "But it is enormous. I get only thirty sous a day. Oh, if madame wants a servant, I should like to come with her."

The proposition rather took away my breath, as you would readily understand had you seen him.

"But you do not know me," I said gently. "You would not be happy with me if you came. Sometimes I am very bad-tempered."

"No, no, madame," cried he, eagerly; "I see you as you are, I like you, you will never change. I will come and be your servant."

The same offer has been made to me many times in Brittany; I might have had servants by the score, had I needed them. Yet I never cease to wonder at the confidence these poor people feel in a stranger like myself.

This old fellow had been a soldier during the Franco-Prussian War, and was in Paris during the siege. Despite the years that had passed since then, he gave a very graphic description of the miseries he had undergone, how for months he had slept on the bare earth, and told of the starvation which was "awful! . . . awful!"

We left him at last, with real regret, for he was a delightful old fellow, and would have been quite an institution in my household, as far as stories went,

though his abilities as a butler might have proved less satisfactory.

On leaving the Yeun we made our way to Saint Rivoal, a pretty little village, with an old church and calvary, lying in a dip of the hills, on the other side of the mountains; and so down to Braspartz, where we were to lunch.

There is one of the quaintest of calvaries in the graveyard of Braspartz, and the church is old and curious. It no doubt stands on the site of the ancient chapel which Saint Jaoua, the saint whom we met at Le Faou, built in the fifth or sixth century. He had been appointed Rector of Braspartz by his uncle, Saint Pol, but apparently lived mostly at Le Faou. Ever since the poor young man had come to Brittany he had been in difficulties. He first settled in Léon, not far from the monastery of Saint Pol. Finding a pleasant fountain in the forest, he built himself a little cell of branches, thatching it neatly with grass and rushes, after the manner of the sabotiers and charcoal burners of to-day. In this peaceful retreat he prepared to settle down to his life of contemplation, but having gone to his uncle's chapel to return thanks on the completion of his work, he came back to find that a wild bull, which had long looked upon this spot as his lair, had torn the little hut to pieces. Being of a patient disposition, Jaoua rebuilt his dwelling in the same spot, and once more the bull destroyed it. This state of affairs continued for some time, for both Jaoua and the bull being Celts, neither had a mind to give place to the other. Finally, the great Saint Pol, who had had vast experience in taming beasts of all kinds, human and otherwise, was appealed to, and with the usual trick of passing his stole round the neck of the bull, reduced him to obedience. No sooner, however, had he done so, than he sent his long-suffering nephew to Le Faou, where he encountered

not only the fearful dragon we have already heard of, but the still more terrible Lord of Faou. It was to escape from this monster of paganism, that the poor Jaoua took refuge among the mountains at Braspartz. He could scarcely have chosen worse. Any one who has visited this wild and desolate region, even in these days, will readily understand that he found the people difficult to manage. It is thus that Albert le Grand describes the inhabitants of Braspartz at the time of Saint Jaoua's arrival :—

"His parishioners were ill instructed, and very slightly catechized, which made them difficult to rule. But Jaoua was so indefatigable in preaching to and exhorting them, reproved their vices with such ardour and zeal, that, little by little, he softened them, some by kindness, others by threats and reprimands. Many there were who still gave themselves up to the superstitions of the pagans, but Jaoua succeeded at last in reducing them to the true and straight way that leads to life."

As we reached the door of the church of Braspartz, a baby was being christened. The first part of the ceremony was performed in the south porch, the godmother holding the child, while a boy placed on its little bald head a queer paper cap that looked as though it had come out of a cracker.

As the priest read the service, a choir boy held a lighted candle, and the whole formed a most effective group in the shadow of the ancient porch. As I knelt at the foot of the calvary, a boy, seeing that I was a stranger, whispered somewhat officiously in my ear that "it was a baptism," which seemed to me obvious. I watched till the little party passed into the inner door, for the final ceremony at the font, and could almost imagine that I had been assisting at one of those early Christian functions, held in

the face of so much opposition, by the young Saint Jaoua.

The inn at Braspartz—the Hôtel des Voyageurs, tenu par Madame Souliou, to give it its full title as painted over the door—is a clean little place, where one could easily stay and visit this beautiful and almost undiscovered district of the Montagnes d'Arrée. The dear, fat old landlady waited on us herself, after having acted as cook ; and having learned, in answer to those questions which Breton landladies always put to one, that my husband was a doctor, she asked eagerly if he would have the goodness to look at her little grandson, who was ill and unable to use his legs. The child's mother, a delicate-looking young woman, brought him in, and held him while he was examined. She told us that there was another baby, younger by a year, but that he was tuberculous, and was put out to nurse in a warmer place than Braspartz. As my husband felt the little useless legs that would never walk, the two women watched his face eagerly, and as they saw how grave it became their eyes filled with tears. Nothing to be done, of course! They might rub . . . rub with salt water. It would give them something to do, poor souls, but the child would be a cripple all his days. As his mother put him back in his little wheel chair, and placed his toys before him, the old grandmother asked whether I had any children, and on my answering in the negative—

"Oh, madame," she exclaimed, "you are happy to have none. What sorrow to have children and to see them like that!"

The road beyond Braspartz is very beautiful, and on reaching Pleyben we found the church magnificent, an odd and effective mixture of Gothic and Renaissance architecture. Within is a group of Saint Yves judging

between the rich man and the poor, one of the finest I have seen. But it is for its calvary that Pleyben is chiefly noted. In my opinion, it is certainly the finest in Brittany, as large as that of Plougastel, and much more delicately proportioned. The figures are admirably sculptured, and not so crowded as is often the case.

On leaving Pleyben we came at a good pace to Châteauneuf du Faou, and passing through, found ourselves approaching the bank of the Brest-Nantes Canal. This part of the country is one of the most beautiful to be found in Brittany. For some ten miles we followed the windings of the valley, till we came on the ancient church of Cléden Poher, lying hidden away off the road, in the midst of the half-dozen cottages that form its village.

It was growing dusk as we entered the church, so dusk that we could barely make out the curious paintings of the roof and the strange old font. Several women were kneeling, telling their beads, and in one of the stalls sat the rector reading his breviary. The stillness was intense, something that might be felt, and as we came out into the September twilight, and saw the last rays of the sun lighting the figures of the granite calvary, I felt, as I had often done before in Brittany, how much more satisfying a thing is this primitive life of the country than that of the city, surrounded by the innumerable and intricate necessities and luxuries which have gathered around our advanced civilization. Here, in this quiet spot, one would have time to think, to hold converse with nature. No wonder that the Bretons are all poets at heart.

As we turned into the high-road to make our way back to Châteauneuf, where we were to spend the night, we came face to face with the great red sun, who kindly kept

THE CALVARY OF PLEYBEN

above the horizon long enough to show us pretty Landeleau, lying in its rich valley beside the water.

The inn at Châteauneuf is clean and good, but rather small, so that though we took our meals there we were obliged to sleep in a cottage on the other side of the road. After dinner we went for a stroll through the crooked streets of the town, and were much interested with the old market hall, which resembles that at Le Faouet. It was Saturday night, and as we peeped in at the cottage windows we saw many a pretty picture. Here, in a low-ceiled, black-panelled room, a mother was putting two little boys to bed, while the eldest girl washed up the soup-bowls, and the father sat smoking and reading the paper in the chimney.

There, in a bar parlour, some young men were drinking, listening to an old fellow, with long white locks and the great brown pleated breeches of former days, who was singing one of those endless ballads so popular among all the Celtic races.

One room I remember in particular. The dark walls, with their shining cupboards and carved bed fronts, were lighted by the shifting glow of a wood fire, that blazed on the open hearth. At a round table three women were seated, sewing by the light of a single candle. As they bent forward the flame shone on their keen, strong faces, deepening the apricot tints to ruddy red and gold. It was a picture for Rembrandt or Murillo! One of them was evidently relating some delicious piece of gossip, to which the others listened intently, as they bent their faces over their sewing. Now and again one would lift her head, so that the candle-light shone in her eyes, as they twinkled with a smart rejoinder. . . . As I watched them, I wondered whose character they were taking away, for women are

much the same everywhere, and it was evident to me that such intent interest could be excited by nothing less than a particularly spicy piece of scandal relating to some near neighbour.

Next morning, I gradually became conscious of much going and coming in the street below my window. People were talking in groups, I could hear the same voices for quite a long time. There was a shuffling of sabots, and many greetings, and "good days." At last waking fully, I climbed down from the high black bedstead on which I had been sleeping, and threw open the window. It was Sunday morning, and already every one was on the way to church. If I meant to be in time I must make haste.

Whatever Châteauneuf may have been in the past, and its name and position both suggest that it was probably a late centre of paganism, it is now apparently a very Christian place indeed. Every one was going to church. From far and near they came. The old disused horse market was full of empty carts, and horses were once more tied to the rings in the grey stone walls in spite of the notice—

"Le marché aux chevaux est transferé plus haut."

The little space in front of the church was crowded with young men in immaculate shirt fronts, and the gayest of double-breasted waistcoats. And they were all waiting for Mass!

The girls were there too, charming in their fresh-starched caps and coquettish collars. But they stood apart, gathered in little knots, or sat in friends' houses, hidden out of sight, awaiting the moment, the solemn moment, of going into church.

It is not beautiful, this church of Châteauneuf, but I

enjoyed the service greatly. Perhaps it was that for more than a year I had not attended a Breton Mass, and had somewhat forgotten the intensity of religious fervour that possesses the congregation. Sitting among the white-capped women and marking their earnest devotion, I felt my heart grow warm within me. It might have been a Welsh revival meeting, or one of those great gatherings of Covenanters of which one reads, so living was the faith which rose like incense from their simple hearts.

Beside me knelt a little girl, her hands holding her rosary, the straight folds of her heavy black cloth dress accentuating the slender childish angularity of her small body. She was so pretty and neat, this little Breton blossom, her small tilted muslin collar so daintily pinned, her chestnut hair so smoothly brushed beneath her modest round white cap, and her chin—how shall I describe her delicate rounded chin beneath which the muslin strings were tied? Her skin was transparent amber, warming into ruddy pink where the sun had kissed her cheeks; and her eyes, her dark-blue eyes, as she raised them heavenward! If I am not mistaken, in three years, or even less, those eyes will play havoc in the hearts of some of the handsome young men who are crowding the south aisle. I doubt whether then they will pay so much attention to the service as they are now doing.

"Your chair is broken, madam," comes in a discreet whisper from an apple-cheeked old charmer at my side. She is "la chaisère," and she kindly brings me another, for which later I pay a sou.

It may be an unworthy motive for going to church, but if my reader has no other, I suggest that if only to understand the feelings which actuate these Breton peasants, to realize the position their church occupies in their affections

and in their daily lives, one should as far as possible join in their worship. It is impossible to understand these people without in some degree participating in their strong religious instincts. Religion is to them a prime necessity, as it was to their ancestors before the coming of Christianity. Nowhere in the world will you find such evidences of prehistoric worship as I shall show presently at Carnac, and I venture to say that in no country to-day is life so governed by religion as in this little western peninsula of France.

A short time ago I received a letter from a friend in Switzerland to this effect—

"When you have finished with those Pagan Bretons come and visit us at Lucerne."

Now I have nothing whatever to say against Lucerne, but I felt inclined to reply that while my "Pagan Bretons" continued to be the kindest, most hospitable, and honest people on earth, I should respect their "paganism" quite as much as some people's free thought.

For there are few better men than a religious Breton (and they are all religious at heart, even if not in practice). He lives up to what he professes, and which of us can say more? Only he must have his faith to lean upon, and what will become of him if it is taken away it is difficult to foresee. But the priest has mounted the pulpit and is giving out the text, and the faces of the men grow eager as they listen, for it is the sermon which interests them, it is their *Sunday News*.

These sermons in Western Brittany are a great institution. Most of the Breton priests are fine preachers and know how to hold their audiences spellbound for a good three-quarters of an hour. They deal in politics as well as in morals, and are fearless and outspoken. The

AFTER MASS AT CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-FAOU

priest of Châteauneuf, a thin, tall, intense-looking man, spoke in Breton, and grew very excited as he implored his hearers to support the Church in this hour of its peril.

At the Elevation, all the caps bend low, like a field of white lilies levelled by the wind, and the delicate spirals and tendrils with which they are adorned quiver and thrill with the emotion that stirs beneath the velvet braided bodices. After service, the little girls gather together in groups, talking gravely in whispers, while their substantial-looking mothers gossip, and the men stand watching them.

Then carts are brought round, horses harnessed, there are good-byes, kisses, with many "Allez! Allez!" addressed to the fat horses, and presently Châteauneuf goes indoors to enjoy its Sunday dinner.

In the afternoon we started for Le Faouet by the road leading through Spézet, a road which was, as Le Velly expressed it, "Une jolie route, mais vilaine pour l'automobile!"

Poor Mademoiselle l'Automobile! I fear she had many a *vilaine route* e'er she reached her home at Saint Brieuc.

"But what will you!" as I replied to our chauffeur; "it is that she may show us the country that we brought her!"

Even on that glorious sunny afternoon Spézet looked dark and sinister. No one ever thinks of going there save those who, like myself, are on the look out for old customs which have died away in other parts. Here in this wild mountain village is still celebrated on the Eve of All Souls that weird supper of the dead once held in every Celtic household. And this is the manner of it.

The family having finished their own evening meal, the table is cleared, a clean cloth spread, crêpes, milk, cider

set forth, and chairs placed round about. Then the hearth is swept, a great log, called the Log of the Dead, is laid on the fire, the head of the family repeats the evening prayers, and every one retires to bed, leaving the door wide open. Presently down the street comes a melancholy sound of singing. It is the Singers of the Dead, come in the name of the anaon or souls, to implore the prayers of the living. They sing a lugubrious dirge called the Soul's Lament.

> "My poor friends, be not astonished
> That we come to the door-sill of your dwelling,
> It is the Saviour who has sent us
> To wake you if you be asleep.
>
> * * * * * * *
>
> "You are in your beds lying at your ease,
> While we poor souls are in misery;
> You are stretched softly in your beds,
> While the poor dead are in distress.
>
> "A white sheet and five boards,
> A bundle of straw beneath the head,
> Five feet of earth above,
> Is all we have in the world where we are. . . ."

It is said that these singers often feel upon their necks the cold breath of the dead, who are pressing up behind them, eager to spend the vigil of their fête, warming and refreshing themselves in the homes from which they have been taken. Next morning the chairs will be found to have been moved, and the plates shifted, and when the family starts off for church to pray on each grave for the souls of those who lie slumbering below, we may be sure that the dead go with them.*

Even when bathed in autumn sunlight Spézet seems a fitting frame in which to find the strange Celtic superstition lingering; but what must it be like in November, when

* "Legende de la Mort," by A. le Braz, ii. p. 121.

the grey mists of winter are gathering round the desolate hamlet, and the rain is falling. In the churchyard are bones . . . bones, some broken, others whole. There are no flowers, no plants, all is grey, deathly, and bare, and gradually the idea arises that the whole place is built up of human remains, that, in fact, *that* is why the church stands so high above the village, the village above the road. No doubt through the centuries it has been growing higher with every succeeding burial, like some gigantic coral reef. The ossuary standing beneath the dark and spreading yew tree is horrible to contemplate, with its rows of little skull-boxes, each with the name of its occupant painted in white, and sightless orbits gazing from the hole in front. Nevertheless there are many picturesque corners in Spézet, only it is so fearfully suggestive of the way in which the living prey upon the dead. The people are very primitive, and our automobile excited great wonderment and interest, the little boys following us for quite a distance, till coming to a descent they dropped behind, shouting and panting with excitement.

Another halt we made that afternoon at Motreff. It lies on a hill overlooking a wide stretch of country, and as the road mounted higher I turned and saw the near horizon bristling with church spires, dotted with villages, behind which a fairyland of turquoise blue lay stretching away till it lost itself in the golden grey of the September sky. It was a study in grey, blue and lavender, shot through with gold and purple; a Breton landscape, always spring or autumn, never lusty summer. And still up, up we went, till, as Le Velly said, "Surely we must be going to heaven."

And indeed it is an exquisite little village which clusters round the old grey church on the lofty peak that dominates the valley.

Motreff was feeling dull! There had not been a wedding for some time, and even baptisms were rare! The great Fire of Saint Jean, which is so strange a feature of the little place, was of course long past. So our advent was hailed with especial delight, and the whole village turned out to do us homage.

But when the camera appeared their enthusiasm knew no bounds. An automobile and a camera on the same afternoon! It was too much—better than a funeral! One little girl in freckles, and a velvet embroidered hood, positively gasped with astonishment at beholding it.

"She has never seen one before," said a good-looking young farmer, whose name I found to be Jean Marie Vitré. "No one ever comes to Motreff: why should they?"

"I have come to photograph your church and graveyard," said I, "and the place where you build the great bonfire of Saint Jean."

"Ah," he replied, "that's just where you are standing, at the three cross-roads. It has always been built there; you can see it for miles. The people come from ever so far away to buy the ashes."

"Why, whatever do they want the ashes for?"

"They're good for many things," said Jean Marie; "they cause the corn to grow, and make good poultices for the chest, and if you carry them, you will never be struck by lightning."

While he was talking the children were running about like hens, unable to make up their minds whether the automobile or the camera fascinated them most. But Philomène, the freckled child, never wavered in her allegiance. She had fallen a captive to the brass and mahogany charms of the latter, and remaining faithful to the last was rewarded by being photographed on a

AT MOTREFF. (PHILOMÈNE IN THE FOREGROUND, AND JEAN MARIE VITRÉ SITTING ON THE WALL)

tombstone together with a little beauty in white sleeves, who had been coquetting with the automobile.

She was an ugly child was Philomène, and I really didn't want to include her in the picture. But her eyes pleaded so hard, and she looked at me so reproachfully when I placed *White Sleeves* in the motor and took her portrait, that I knew I should not sleep if I disappointed her. Poor little thing, her delight and pride are very pleasant to look back upon. I wonder what she thought of her ugly little self when she saw the picture a month afterwards!

Well, at last we are off! We have slipped easily down the hill up which we toiled so painfully, and are making our way down the valley toward Le Faouet.

It was a charming ride, and we were almost sorry when the more formal arrangement of trees and hedges told us that we were nearing the little town. Dusk was falling as we crossed the market-place, and already the windows of the Clef d'Or were gleaming with a cheerful lustre.

"There is a letter for madame; it has been here three days."

"Hotel Julia.

"I have been thinking that you will be sure to pass through Le Faouet on your way to Vannes. If so why do you not come and pick me up at Pont Aven? There are so many nice people staying here, and the hotel, as you know, is delightful. You will love Pont Aven, it is fairyland, and when I have shown you all my favourite haunts, we will go on to Vannes for the wedding."

The wedding! I declare that for nearly a week the ultimate end of this journey of ours had scarcely crossed

my mind. If I had remembered it at all it was as something too far away to dwell upon, while the present claimed every moment of my attention, with its new and fascinating details.

"The wedding!" I exclaimed; "why, which day is the wedding?"

My husband laughed. "Time enough to get there if we don't go by Pont Aven," he remarked, for he knows Pont Aven, and not being a painter, doesn't like it. Moreover, he was unwilling to change the route he had mapped out; men are so unaccommodating.

"But," said I, hesitating, "it is surely further to go round by Mur and the Blavet. After all, perhaps we ought to go by Pont Aven."

"And miss seeing Castel Finans, the Venus of Quinipily, and everything that really matters?" queried he.

I trembled; he had intentionally touched me in a tender place. If there was one thing above another I wanted to see it was the Venus of Quinipily.

"Perhaps—perhaps," I answered, "the roads would not be so good round about Pont Aven." It was a lame excuse and I knew it, for the roads are particularly well kept, much better than those round about the Blavet.

"And besides, she's sure to have a trunk; no American ever travels without a trunk—unless it's a 'grip,' which is almost as bad."

"And then she might catch cold on the journey, and be laid up at Vannes."

"That decides it," said my husband, firmly. "I never thought about her catching cold. She would be almost certain to catch a chill in the automobile. Why, she might even have bronchitis."

As my husband is a doctor, I was bound to pay heed to what he said on this matter.

"We can't undertake such a responsibility, I'm afraid?" said I.

So we determined to adhere to our original plan, and to write to our dear old friend when we reached Mur.

CHAPTER IX

Le Faouet—King Morvan—Le Faouet during the War of Succession—Chapel of Saint Barbe—Story of foundation of chapel—Pardon of Saint Barbe—Legend of Saint Barbe—A rope walk—Rostrenen—Story of Saint Yves at Rostrenen—Gouarec—the Chauffeur's Story—the grave of Saint Tryphina—Laniscat—Mur.

BEFORE it was discovered by the English and Americans, Le Faouet was certainly one of the most lovely and interesting places in Brittany. Lovely it is still, and interesting from a historical point of view; but its picturesqueness is fast disappearing, and the charming simplicity and *naïveté* that once characterized its inhabitants is already a thing of the past. In fact, Le Faouet, like so many other charming villages, has learned to *pose*.

The pretty peasant girls who group themselves so charmingly round the entrance to the old market hall are only a degree less sophisticated and self-conscious than the professional models of Pont Aven, and the hall, with its broad grey eaves, has the air of saying that it only remains as a picturesque object for artists to paint. Indeed, the very slates with which it is roofed seem to have been washed, and the orange-coloured lichens to have been newly painted for the season, so bright they are, so effective. And then it has all arrived so quickly!

Four years ago the Clef d'Or was a dear little old-fashioned inn, where one sat before the great hearth in the

evening, warming one's self, listening to the stories of the peasants who came in for a gossip with the handsome landlady. What merry evenings we spent in that old place! There were three young English artists who had been passing the winter there. One of them had hired a piano from Quimperlé, and endeavoured to keep it in tune with his bicycle spanner! Brahms and Schumann played after dinner on that piano had a very weird effect. They all wore sabots, these young artists, sabots stuffed with straw in the regulation Breton fashion. They professed to find them much more comfortable than shoes, saying that they kept the feet dry and warm when painting in the wet grass. Not that we saw much of their painting. Every morning each young man would disappear with his paints, a large canvas, and a pretty model, and nothing more would be seen of him till evening, when he returned, very bright, full of talk about his day's doings, and with a fine appetite for the good dinner he found ready for him. They were always cheerful, always gay, always full of great plans for the future, always on the most familiar terms with the handful of townsfolk and commercial travellers who frequented the Clef d'Or, and even now when I listen I can hear their jokes and merry voices, mingled with the twanging discords of the old piano, while above the din rises the jolly laugh of the stalwart landlady as she looks down upon us from the snowy depths of her white Morbinaise cap, for she came from Auray.

But the inn of Le Faouet is no more! Where stood the low quaint building, now rises a modern hotel. In place of the cavernous hearth is a closed-in kitchen range. The dining-room is large, well-appointed and mournful. Instead of the cracked tones of the old piano, there is the constant click of billiard balls, and if madame ever looks

to see if her guests are . . . shall we say *enjoying* themselves? . . . she does so discreetly through a glass door! It is the inevitable fate of a beautiful and accessible place like Le Faouet, but it is sad nevertheless to find it so changed in four short years.

From early times the neighbourhood of Faouet has had an exciting history. One of the first and most determined revolts against the dominion of the Franks had its origin and centre in the country to the north of the town.

The rising began on the death of the great Emperor Charlemagne, and was headed by the Breton king Morvan, who had made himself a strong encampment in the valley of the Ellé. It was a vast place, capable of holding an army, and as it was bounded on one side by the river, on another by forest, and protected from the south by impassable swamps, the Bretons seemed safe enough, so long as they held together, and kept within it. Naturally the first thing to be done was to refuse to pay their tribute to the new Frankish chief, Louis le Debonnaire. This called down upon them his anger, and when he sent to inquire of the Prefect of the Marches, who was more or less responsible for their good conduct, he heard a very bad character of them. According to this individual, they were a "lying, arrogant, rebellious, perfidious race, Christian only in name, possessing neither churches nor worship." He added that they hid their dwellings in the woods, and that their king, if indeed he could be called a king who was utterly unable to govern them, was named Morvan.*

In a very old poem written by a monk of that time there is an account of the interview between this Morvan and the envoy named Witcar, whom Louis sent to treat with the Bretons. According to this story, all might

* De la Borderie, "Histoire de Bretagne."

have gone as the emperor desired but for the interference of Morvan's wife. Witcar, who was no stranger to the Breton chief, was well received by him in the handsome wooden house he had built for himself inside the stockade. While the emperor's claims were being set forth, Morvan listened and sat tapping the ground with his foot, seeming inclined to hear reason. But suddenly in rushed his wife, a beautiful creature, who with many tears and caresses implored him not to give way, rousing him to defend his rights, and calling upon the Breton lords who were present to rally round him. But this is just what the Celts have never been able to do, and when, having returned a defiant answer to the Franks, Morvan found himself surrounded by the emperor's forces, only a few of his friends remained faithful to the poor king. Finally he was killed, the land ravaged and burned, and now nothing is left to mark the place but two ancient mottes or mounds of earth, on one of which his dwelling probably stood.

If we pass over some four or five hundred years we shall find Le Faouet figuring once more in history.

At the time when the War of Succession was ravaging Brittany, and Edward the Third was sending over soldiers to assist Lord Jean de Monfort, just as the French king was encouraging all the flower of the French nobility in their support of Lord Charles de Blois, two brothers were living at Le Faouet. One of them, René de Maulin, was captain of the little fortress that afterwards grew into the Castle of Faouet, and the other, Giraud, commanded the castle of La Roche Périou hard by. They were both supporters of Lord Charles, who had just been defeated at the battle of Quimperlé by the renowned English knight Sir Walter Manny, who was fighting on behalf of the little Duke Jean and his mother, Jeanne le Flamme. Now as

Sir Walter was ravaging the country, after the horrible fashion of those days, he came to the castle of Périou.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I should much like to attack this strong castle and see if we could not conquer it."

"Go on, sir," replied the other knights; "we will follow you to the death!"

And the attack began. But the castle was stronger than Sir Walter had imagined, and many were severely wounded, among whom were two brave knights, Sir John Boteler and Sir Matthew Trelawney, who were carried off and laid in a field with the other wounded.

Now René de Maulin, hearing of the fight, had come up to assist his brother, and finding the knights lying wounded, drove them to Le Faouet, and though Sir Walter pursued him, he could not come up with him, and the two English gentlemen were shut up in the dungeons of Faouet. We may be very sure that Sir Walter did not give them up without a struggle, but he had to leave them at last, for Giraud, finding his enemy's attention diverted, obtained help from the neighbouring town of Guéméné, and the English and Bretons were driven off. But it was not the custom of Sir Walter Manny to forget his friends. Some time later, the Lord Lewis of Spain, having with his French allies besieged the town of Hennebont, came one day into the tent of Lord Charles of Blois, and asked that those two prisoners who were lying in the dungeons of Le Faouet should be given up to him.

"Yes," said Lord Charles, "I give them to you. But what do you want with them?"

"Sir," said Lord Lewis, "I intend to cut off their heads in the sight of their friends who are in Hennebont, that so I may be revenged on them for killing my nephew at the battle of Quimperlé."

Lord Charles was greatly troubled, for he was a good man, but he saw no way out of the difficulty as he had given his word. So he sent for the knights and they were put in his tent. But when Sir Walter Manny, who was then in Hennebont, heard the news, he said to Sir Amauri de Clisson and the other knights who were with him—

"Gentlemen, it would do us great honour if we could rescue these two knights; King Edward would hold himself much obliged to us, and all wise men who will hear of it will thank us and say that we have done our duty."

He then unfolded to them his plan, which was that they should form themselves into two divisions, the first and larger, headed by Sir Amauri de Clisson, to make a sortie by the great gate of Hennebont, and engage the enemy, while he with a few trusty men should steal out by a side door, creep to the rear of the French where stood the tent of Lord Charles, and set their two friends free.

"I can assure you," said Sir Walter, "that I and my companions will do everything in our power to bring back in safety these two knights, if it please God."

The account of what followed is one of Froissart's best stories, and I shall not spoil it by attempting to repeat it. In spite of the greatest difficulties and dangers, Sir Amauri de Clisson contrived to hold the French engaged, and to divert their attention, till Sir Walter had found his friends and brought them safely into Hennebont, where the countess came to welcome them and received them with great joy. It is a glorious episode, and lends a wealth of interest to both Le Faouet and the old town of Hennebont, which we hope presently to visit.

About two miles to the north of Le Faouet is the chapel of Saint Barbe. It lies on a tiny ledge of rock overlooking the valley of the Ellé, and is approached by

an ancient paved footpath, so steep that occasionally it is little more than a rough stairway. The ledge on which the chapel stands would be inaccessible save for the flight of steps that connects it with the end of the footpath, and which form one of the most remarkable features of the group of buildings.

The legend of the foundation of this curious chapel is interesting.

A Lord of Toulboudou, a place near Guéméné, while hunting one day in the valley of the Ellé, was overtaken by a thunderstorm. In the wild forest land which in those days covered this district, such an experience was by no means pleasant. Unable to find even a charcoal burner's hut in which to shelter, the poor gentleman and his servants gazed at the purple clouds which were lowering over Le Faouet and trembled. Till then the tempest had contented itself with growling in the distance, but suddenly, as the huntsmen looked, it began rushing down upon them. First came an icy blast that left the pine trees shuddering as it fled away into the depths of the valley; then a pause of intense stillness, when even the rain stopped to listen, and lo, the storm fiend was upon them, lightning, thunder, hail, rain, in one dread deafening chorus.

> "Sainte Barbe et Sainte Claire
> Preservez moi de la tonnerre,
> Si la tonnerre tombe,
> Qu'il ne tombe pas sur moi!"

We may be sure that the terrified Lord of Toulboudou and his followers repeated the old Breton charm very fervently as they crouched beneath the steep rock to which they had instinctively rushed for shelter. But the nobleman did more than pray. He vowed that if, by the intercession of Saint Barbe, he was preserved from death,

THE CHAPEL OF SAINT BARBE

he would raise a chapel to her honour on that narrow shelf of rock above. Scarcely had he spoken than the storm subsided. The lightning ceased playing around the rock, the thunder growled away into the forest. The rain, it is true, continued to fall in torrents over the valley, but above the spot where the huntsmen stood the purple clouds were breaking, and a long shaft of light fell straight upon a little fountain that bubbled beside the site of the future chapel.

In the old archives of Le Faouet we find that on the 6th of July, 1489, Jean de Toulboudou bought of Jean de Boutteville, Lord of Faouet, a piece of ground on the flank of the Rohan-Marche-Bran, of the length of twenty-five feet, and the breadth of sixteen feet, on which to build a chapel to the honour of Saint Barbe. There it stands to this day, crowning the steep rock like some exquisite fairy palace, and beside it, on a still sharper and loftier summit, is a tiny sanctuary to Saint Michel, Lord of Heights.

Once a year, on the last Sunday of June, prilgrims come to hold the festival of Saint Barbe. Each, as he passes the belfry that stands beside the path, pulls the bell-rope, sounding a note over the valley, and the young men make the tour of the chapel of Saint Michel by clinging on to the iron rings that are fixed in the rock. Then all drink of the fountain, and buy amulets that are supposed to be a sure preservative against sudden death. These amulets are called Couronnes de Sainte Barbe, and are mentioned in some of the old legends.

Saint Barbe is a very popular saint in Brittany, where she is regarded as the special patroness of firemen. At their annual dinner held on her day, her statue, surrounded by flowers, presides at the head of the table. She is also, as I have said, the saint who preserves from sudden death,

and especially from being struck by lightning. Lately, I am told, she has also consented to act as the protectress of those who travel by automobile.

Saint Barbe is said to have been the daughter of a pagan father who, on account of her beauty, shut her up in a high tower, and allowed no one to come near her. She found means, however, to communicate with the outside world, and sent a letter to Origen of Alexandria asking him to teach her Christianity, as she had ceased to believe in the gods of her father. Origen sent her one of his monks, who instructed her, and she became a Christian. But great difficulties awaited her. She was taken before the proconsul, and, as she refused to sacrifice to the gods, was burned with torches, struck on the head with mallets, and sentenced to be beaten as she walked naked through the streets. Then the Saint of Thunderstorms raised her eyes to heaven, and, as might have been expected, a cloud came down and hid her so that she was not exposed to the gaze of the impious mortals who were watching. The whole legend of Saint Barbe teems with strange inconsequent details, which are only reasonable if we regard the saint as a survival of some elemental goddess connected with fire and electricity. She is spirited away to the top of a mountain, where she strikes the shepherd who betrays her into a statue of marble. Her father, who beheads her with his own hand, is destroyed by lightning as he descends from the height where he has committed the crime, and consumed so that not a vestige of him remains. The lives of those who call upon her in danger are preserved long enough to enable their owners to make their peace with the Church. . . . Altogether Saint Barbe is one of the strangest and most pagan of all the saints of the Christian calendar. At the beginning of the pilgrim way leading to the

chapel a rope-maker has established himself. As he passes up and down his walk beneath the beech trees which border the road, he looks like some gigantic human spider, spinning his web from the bundle of hemp that hangs in front of him. Up and down he goes, up and down, and beside him walks his little daughter knitting, while a tiny black and tan puppy plays around their feet. They are happier than the old rope-makers of Brittany. For at one time this trade, as well as those of the butcher and the carpenter, was only practised by the proscribed race called cahots, probably lepers, corresponding with the cagots of the Basque provinces. Very wretched were they, outcasts from society, obliged to go barefoot, and wearing a special coloured garment to distinguish them. They were not even allowed to sit among the other people at church, but had special chapels provided for them, and when they died they were laid to rest in a melancholy corner of the graveyard specially reserved for them.

There is another lovely chapel near Le Faouet, Saint Fiacre, where is an exquisite screen and rood loft. It is said that angels brought the tools with which to build it, which no doubt accounts for its delicacy and beauty.

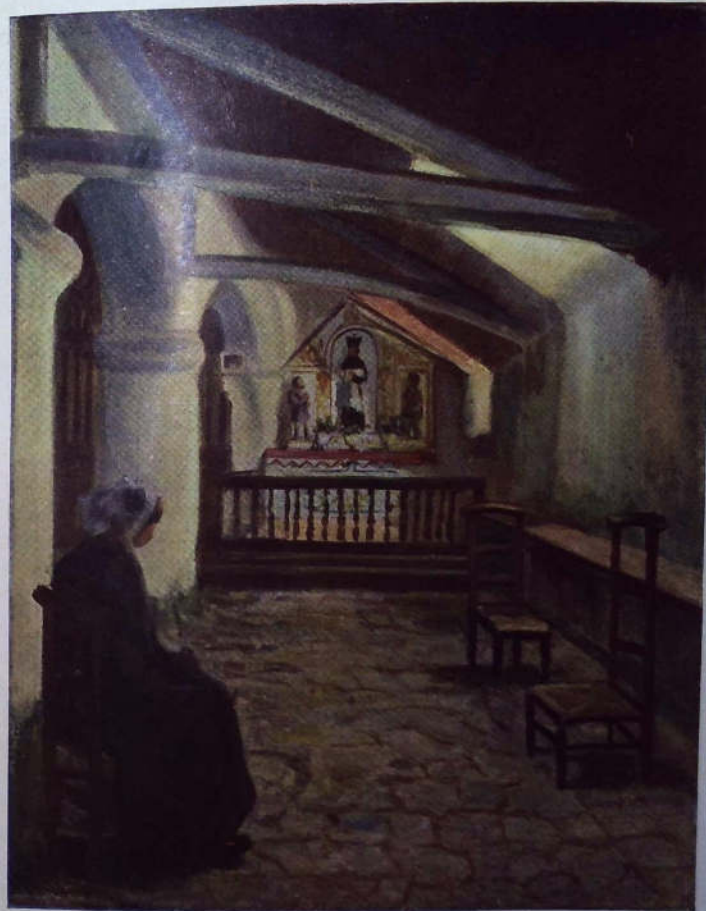
In passing from Le Faouet to Rostrenen we traversed the country of King Morvan, but unfortunately a light mist was falling and blotted out the view.

Rostrenen is a dull little town, and the only interesting thing I ever heard concerning it is a legend to the effect that the forest near by furnished the wood for the roof of Tréguier cathedral. The story goes that when Saint Yves of Kermartin set about rebuilding the great church, he went round among the nobles and gentry of Brittany asking for contributions, just as the clergy of to-day are accustomed to do under similar circumstances. One gave

him one thing, another another, the Lord of Rostrenen promising as many trees from his forest as were necessary. It was a splendid gift, and Yves took an early opportunity of going with his workmen to the estate, where they cut down and marked a number of the largest trees. But the courtiers of this same Lord of Rostrenen, being envious and ill-disposed persons, came to their chief and assured him that he had been imposed upon, that the wily lawyer priest, under pretence that he needed the timber for his church, intended to sell it and put the money into his own pocket. So when poor Yves came in his gracious way to return thanks for the gift, he was very rudely received. However, he soon found out what was the matter, and going to the nobleman told him that he had only taken the wood on behalf of a Lord who was quite rich and powerful enough to pay for it; and that, moreover, He was one who never failed to recompense those who helped build His temples. Next morning after Mass the saint led all the company out into the forest to view the trees which had been cut down; when they found, oh, wondrous sight! that from every stump had grown during the night *three* trees more beautiful by far than those the saint had taken!

It was nearly dark when we reached Gouarec, and we were glad to put up at the clean little inn. We supped in company with our good chauffeur, who for some reason or other was in an expansive mood, and confided to us the story of his life. A sad life it had been, with much work and little pleasure; and sitting in the lamplight listening to him, I thought how curious it was that we should have travelled so many miles together, and yet have remained strangers to one another.

He told of his early days in Brest, and the inevitable love affair that ruined his life.



STATUE OF SAINT YVES (CHAPEL OF PORT-BLANC)

"She was charming!" said he, his beautiful dark eyes gazing far away into the past, as though he still saw her. "I met her at the wedding of one of my friends, and fell in love with her at first sight. Mon Dieu! she looked as beautiful and innocent as an angel! No one could have suspected! She was dancing, and as she passed me our eyes met. After that it was all over. I got introduced to her, and she danced with no one else for the rest of that evening. Ah yes, I could dance then, no one better! I would have danced with Mademoiselle l'Automobile herself!

"Maman did not like her, neither did my brother Edouard. They said she had the *Beauté du Diable*, that she was a coquette, not fitted for a good man's wife! It made a little coldness between myself and them, and as they were the only relations I had in the world, it troubled me. But not much, for I passed the time that I used to spend with them in her company, and when maman and Edouard went away to Morlaix I married her!

"I was often away from home, it is the fate of the chauffeur, so we lived with her mother, who did her best to make us happy. For a time all went well. We had two little girls, beautiful, like their mother, and sweet, sweet! See, madame, here they are!"

He put his hand in his pocket as he spoke, and took from a case a faded photograph of two children in white.

"My little ones, my dear little ones!" he exclaimed, looking at the photograph and kissing it. "See, madame, are they not charming, my babies?"

After the children had been admired—and they were really very pretty and sweet—he continued more hurriedly—

"It was a Saturday night, I had been with a party of Americans to the Pardon of Guingamp, and on our way back we stopped at Morlaix. After depositing my people

at the Hôtel de l'Europe, I thought I would go to see maman and Edouard, from whom I had not heard since my youngest child was born. Ah, madame, how shall I tell you? I found my brother, my brother with whom I had played as a little boy, and whom I loved more than any one else in the world, yes, more even than I loved her—I found him dying, dying of a broken heart. He told me all about it as I sat holding his hand, his poor hand, wasted with the fever that was consuming him. Ah, my Edouard, you were right about her! I might have known that it was a devil's beauty that could make me forget for so long those whom I had loved since childhood. I learned that others were encouraged to admire that beauty which I had believed all my own. That while I was away working, slaving for her, she was squandering my money, grudging my children the very bread they ate, in order to deck herself out for the admiration of other men. My poor brother had known it almost from the first, and it was this knowledge which was killing him. Even the baby, the little one. . . . But no, I will not believe that! There is enough without that!

"It is a good run from Morlaix to Brest, and I had been driving since morning, but the good mademoiselle knew my heart and flew like the wind through the dark night. Ah, but my thoughts flew faster! What should I find in the little home that had been my heaven? What should I say? What should I do?

"Well, I reached it at last. . . . Too late! She had gone, gone the evening before, with her latest lover, and with her she had taken . . . my baby!

"I think I must have been mad during the next six months. I remember nothing but rushing and noise, rushing and noise. Once it stopped while I went to a funeral,

Edouard's, and there was quiet for an hour or two, the sound of earth falling on something hollow, and a noise of an old woman weeping: and then the tumult began again. It was the good mademoiselle who saved me. She had an illness, something wrong in her interior requiring all my care at night that she might run well during the day. Then maman needed me, finding herself alone, and so I came to live at Morlaix with my remaining child. One day a letter arrived from America, from the French consul at New York. It appeared that a little child had been discovered begging in the streets, a tiny child, starving and in rags. She was only four years old, but she knew her name, and that she came from Brest; and so, said the consul, they were sending her home, for her mother had abandoned her, and there was nowhere for her to go but the workhouse.

"When I met her at La Havre her face was still thin and pinched, she looked like a little old woman, and I should never have believed it was my pretty flower whom I had always known so dainty and sweet. But she knew me, bless her! Before the ship touched the quay I saw her stretching out her little arms to me, and crying, 'Papa, papa!' Ah, it is no use to tell me. She is my own baby. See, madame, has she not my eyes?"

We sat long talking of the children's future, and when we went up to our rooms I heard the chauffeur sighing to himself in the darkness on the other side of the thin wooden partition.

It was early next morning when we started off from the little inn, with many injunctions from the careful landlord as to not losing our way. For we were leaving the high-road, and travelling the better part of the way to Mur by a loop of little country lanes that passes through several

places we were desirous of visiting. We were going into the very heart of Breton Saint-land, where every village is haunted by the shades of Saint Tryphina, Saint Gildas, Saint Bieuzi.

After about eight or ten miles of twisting and turning, we came to the little ghostly village of Saint Tryphine, where, in the graveyard, are the tombs of Tryphina of Vannes and her son, Saint Trémeur, always represented in the uncomfortable attitude of carrying his head in his hands. Their legends will be found later when we reach Mur, the scene of the mother's short married life.

The church at Saint Tryphine is ancient, but not so ancient as the curious lec'hs which stand at the foot of each grave. Both graves are open and empty, so that the stone coffins of the saints can be seen lying below. It has doubtless been the custom for pilgrims to spend the night in these coffins, and the four round-topped projecting stones which are built into the floor at the corners of the grave of Saint Trémeur were intended to support the stone slab that covered the grave in such a manner as to supply the pilgrim with air during his temporary burial.

This cult of spending the night in the coffin of a saint was very common at one time, and was supposed to lead to most beneficial results, both temporal and spiritual. We are told that Saint Yves, on one of his missionary journeys, finding himself at Landeleau, took the opportunity of passing the night in the sarcophagus of the holy sixth-century saint, Téliau, which stood then, as now, in the graveyard.

Probably most of the saints' coffins, which form so common an object in ancient churches and temples, have been used in this way, the pilgrim expecting to derive special benefits from this close connection with the wonder-working dead. Even to-day such beliefs exist in Brittany.

Earth taken from the grave of Saint Gonéri at Plougrescant in the Côtes du Nord is said to be a certain cure for all fevers if worn round the neck in a little bag. The grave lies in the porch of the church, and beside it the stone coffin of the saint, in which once, no doubt, it was customary to spend the night by way of completing the cure. The same custom is observed at Saint Maudez in the diocese of Quimper, and in other places too numerous to mention. Even at that most Christian of Festivals, the Pardon of Saint Yves, it is customary for all pilgrims to pass through the so-called tomb at Minihy, and the light on their faces as they rise from the grave shows that they are at all events the happier for having been *buried with the saint.*

After leaving Saint Tryphine, the road passes through a village called Laniscat, where are many traces of Saint Gildas. In the church is a very extraordinary painting of one of the saint's many miracles. A child has fallen into a well, and his mother, unable to rescue him, has cast herself on her knees imploring the assistance of the patron saint of Laniscat, Saint Gildas. The painter has chosen the moment when the good saint appears among clouds of glory, and the child, just risen from the water, stands ready to be taken out.

Over the west door is a fine and very ancient screen, and there are wonders of sculpture in the south porch.

But the strangest of all the strange things at Laniscat is a veritable *wheel of fortune* hanging high up over the pulpit. Formerly in many Breton churches there were these contrivances for prognosticating future events. Now there are, so far as I know, only three, one at Pont Croix, near Audierne, one in the Côtes du Nord, and this at Laniscat. It is a large wheel with spokes, and on the

outer rim are fixed bells which ring when the wheel is turned. I am not aware that the wheel of Laniscat is used at the present time, but it remains an interesting relic of the worship of the goddess Fortuna. The ossuary in the graveyard is particularly fine, and worth notice if only for the number of bones it contains.

Beyond Laniscat the road traverses quite a mountain gorge, formed by the river Daoulas, and after winding in and out among great boulders and rocks for some time, descends to the river bed, and passes out through a rocky gateway to join the high-road to Mur, the ancient road which the Romans made from Rennes to Carhaix. To the right, in a verdant valley among hills, lies the beautiful ivy-clad ruin of the Abbey of Bon Repos, founded in 1184 by Alain III., Vicomte de Rohan, and Constance de Bretagne his wife. It was formerly intended for eight monks, taken from the Abbey of Boquen in the diocese of Saint Brieuc, and an abbot, the first of whom was named Gautier. It is an interesting old ruin, and one can with very little imagination picture the life the community led in the isolated valley beside the Blavet. Many a good dinner has been served through the hatch that still leads from the kitchen to the refectory, and there can have been no stint of wood to supply those huge hearths with fuel.

But let us hasten on our way, for on a height to the left of the road is one of those strange examples of continuity in religion which render Brittany one of the most interesting of countries. We must leave the car and make a goodly climb to reach it, but it is well worth the trouble. At some remote age a chief was buried on this hilltop, his dolmen still exists, and above it, on an enormous flat-sided pyramid, a calvary has been raised. Below, in an archway that runs through from side to side of the

pyramid, can still be seen the ancient tomb. Thither pilgrims have undoubtedly been in the habit of coming ever since that prehistoric chief was laid to rest, just as they still come to visit the graves of Saint Yves or Saint Ronan, and Christianity has wisely sanctified the custom it could not prevent by erecting over the holy place the symbol of the later faith.

After passing this strange monument the road soon reaches Mur, a little old-world town lying on a sunny slope overlooking the valley of the Blavet. The first inn at which we stopped professed to be full, which, judging from the glimpse we caught of the unsavoury interior and disagreeable-looking landlady, was perhaps a blessing. So we ran on down the hill and put up at the clean and comfortable little Hôtel de France.

It is the pleasant custom at these country inns for the landlady to spend a good deal of time talking to her guests, and the gentle, charming soul who presided over this hotel was no exception to the rule. She told us about the chapel of Saint Suzanne at the top of the town, and sent her little boy to show us the old place. A painted figure of the saint stands in a niche over the west door, stretching out a pair of enormous wooden hands toward those who enter. I have often noticed that very old statues have these large hands, and have wondered whether they were intended to indicate the powers the saint was supposed to wield. Within the chapel is an old carved screen, now fixed to the wall, and representing the various scenes of Our Lord's Passion. It is curious to note that the soldiers who are placing the crown of thorns on His head are wedging it on with large flat sticks so as not to hurt their hands. I have only once before seen this quaint idea represented, and that was

at the Passion Play at Oberammergau in 1900. Saint Suzanne does not possess an organ, but the music is conducted in a gallery, behind a screen painted to represent one.

But it is not only the chapel of Saint Suzanne that interests one at Mur, it is the people themselves with their old-fashioned ways. Lying as it does, far away in the very centre of Brittany, this district was, until the railway arrived a few years ago, extremely inaccessible, and old customs and legends that have died out elsewhere still flourish vigorously in the neighbourhood. Every one at Mur is a teller of stories, or a singer of songs. I had the good fortune to stumble on one of these *raconteurs* that very evening.

I had gone to help my husband find a barber. It was dusk when we entered the one room of the tiny cottage, and work was over for the day. The last customer sat smoking in a corner, gossiping with the barber's wife, while the man of razors himself was idly glancing over last week's newspaper. It was too dark to see the details of the room, but I managed to find an oak chest in front of a bed, and sat down to watch proceedings. It was a curious sight. In the middle of the room sat my Englishman in his light tweed suit, a towel round his neck, his face covered with a ghostly, gleaming lather. In front of him stood the barber's wife, a lighted candle in her hand to guide her husband in his work. Finally, his thin cadaverous face almost touching that of his victim, the barber himself, his left hand holding my husband now by the nose, now by the chin. . . . And all the while the last customer looked on critically from his corner, making suggestions now and then, and presently continuing his conversation with the woman.

Suddenly, behind me I heard a movement, felt a warm little hand on the back of my neck. There was a smothered laugh, and I turned to see three pairs of eyes twinkling at me from the black depths of the cupboard bed against which I was sitting.

"Taisez-vous, donc!" growled the barber, mildly, still intent on his work. But the laugh had broken the charm. From every corner came rustlings, giggles, little voices, and the shining of merry eyes. And everywhere there were beds—beds full of boys and girls.

"Why, however many children have you?" I asked, as soon as the bewilderment of finding myself surrounded by this crowd of onlookers allowed me to speak.

"Fourteen, madame," replied the woman.

"The house is so small, that we console ourselves by the size of our family," remarked the barber, jocosely; at which there was much merriment in the cupboard beds.

"I wonder if there is a boy here who can show me the way to Castel Finans to-morrow?" I inquired, looking round. "There is a franc in monsieur's pocket for such a boy."

"Lommic, you know the way to Comorre's Castle," said the mother, "and you can take Tryphina to keep her out of the way while I'm baking."

"It's a good step," observed the last customer. "I don't think Tryphina can walk as far as that."

"Yes I can," said a little piping voice from over my shoulder.

"Tryphina went to the Pardon last May," cried another child near the hearth.

"Yes, but I had to carry her all the way back," said the barber. "So madam wishes to see the Castle of Comorre?" he continued, wiping his razor, while my

husband rinsed his face in the crock of water that stood ready in the corner.

"There isn't much left of it, I suppose?" I inquired.

"Quite enough!" he answered, nodding his head sagely. "From all I can hear it wasn't comfortable to have such a man as the count in the neighbourhood. There wasn't a girl safe for miles around. And when he'd had his wicked will with them he murdered them."

"Madam knows the legend?" asked the wife, timidly.

"Ah!" said the barber, "no one knows the story of Comorre as Jobic knows it—eh, Jobic?"

Apparently Jobic was the name of the last customer, for thus apostrophized he moved his pipe further into the corner of his mouth, and cleared his throat meditatively.

"If madam will allow me," he said, with dignified politeness, evidently conscious of the honour he was doing a foreigner—"if madam will allow me I shall myself show her the Castle of Comorre to-morrow. It is too far for Tryphina, and Lommic has his cow to mind. For myself, I have business with the lock-keeper, and from there it is but a pipe's distance to the castle."

No one ventured to question this arrangement save poor Lommic, who gave a sigh after his vanishing franc, but was comforted in due course by my husband, and we parted after promising to meet Jobic outside our door at nine o'clock next morning.

JOBIC

CHAPTER X

Castel Finans—The Legend of Comorre and Saint Tryphina—Lunch at Saint Aignan.

"THERE is some one inquiring for madam!"

A last mouthful of coffee, one look to see that there were plenty of plates in the camera-case, and we were outside the inn to find Jobic waiting in the sunshine. We had intended to run down as far as the canal in the car, but the spectacle of a couple of fat pigs grunting in the dust round Jobic's sabots put an end to this project, and we set out on foot.

I think we went by a short cut, but it took all our attention to get the pigs along, and I have little remembrance of the way, but it was lumpy and hot. Jobic had no time to talk to any one save his charges, with whom he kept up a running fire of small talk as he switched them alternately with a branch of ash.

"Tiou! Tiou!" he cried, "allons, salles bêtes! . . . Va! . . . où vas-tu," with a sudden rush toward the ditch, into which the fattest pig had wandered. "'Cré salaud. Attends que je te ramène!"

Presently, however, we reached the lock, and having delivered his pigs up to the stout, red-faced man in charge of the gates, and refreshed himself with a glass of brandy, our companion became more communicative. As we

crossed the narrow bridge that spans the river, he pointed upward to where, on the summit of a wooded crag, a tiny chapel stood out against the skyline, and observed shortly, "The Chapel of Saint Tryphina."

Just at this spot the Blavet broadens, making a sudden turn, so as half to encircle the lofty wooded peak on which the Castle of Comorre once stood. Shut in by the lock below, and sheltered by the surrounding heights, the water is still as that of a lake, and the sky and green woods are reflected clearly as in an immense silver mirror.

Jobic had stopped, and was looking at the view with that pleasure which the Breton peasant often exhibits at the sight of anything very beautiful. His small black pipe was wrong side up in one corner of his mouth, his broad felt hat, with its long velvet ends, pushed far back on his head, and he was singing to himself in a low, monotonous voice a ballad with a curious drooping rhyme at the end of each line.

Suddenly he turned to me and smiled apologetically. "But I forgot," said he, "madam is waiting for the story of Comorre;" and leading the way onward, he began to tell of the meeting of that count, "Si rusé, si despote et cruel," with little Tryphina, the only daughter of the Count of Vannes.

We had crossed the bridge by this time, and were mounting a rocky zigzag path up which we stumbled among twisted trunks of oak trees and soaring purple columns of pines. The sunlight only penetrated in long golden shafts, through which peacock dragon-flies sparkled and flashed. Otherwise it was a study in shadows, this Forest of Quénécan, shadows green and purple, shadows golden and brown, with flickering lights and dancing gnats, and crimson toadstools rising here and there from the red-brown

carpet of leaves. Sometimes from out the dimmest, deepest vistas would come a rustling, a mysterious unrest, a suggestion of unseen teeming life, and for a moment we were conscious of being surrounded by that strange forest world, of which the dweller in towns suspects nothing.

The path was so steep and the forest so silent that Jobic had relapsed for the moment into silence, and as our footsteps made no sound by reason of the pine-needles with which the path was strewn, we advanced quite silently, ourselves like shadows through this forest of enchantment. Thus it was that presently we surprised a picture, for on a sudden the trees ceased, and the path entered a little valley, a rock-strewn dimple of a place, which some spring must have hollowed in the mountain side. Cows were feeding among the granite boulders, and in the midst an ancient fountain bubbled, presided over by a pretty statue of Tryphina and her little son. The sudden change from the twilight of the woods to the full glory of the valley was so intense that I closed my eyes for a moment, and when I opened them, there beside the low wall that surrounded the fountain was a girl who might have been my little sixth-century saint herself, baby and all! The surprise was so great at finding any one at all in that lonely spot that I stood and stared at the figures. The young woman smiled at me, showing the whitest of white teeth, and the baby smiled, showing no teeth at all. Suddenly her eyes caught sight of the camera, and with an impulsive movement she held out the baby, and began saying something in her curious French.

"She wants you to photograph the baby!" said Jobic, with a laugh, seating himself on a rock and refilling his pipe; and as I arranged my little group, he took the opportunity to continue his interrupted story.

It was at Vannes, it seemed, that the count first saw Tryphina, and fell so terribly in love with her that he resolved to marry her, cost what it might.

"But he was a wicked man, madam," added Jobic; "there were plenty such before the Revolution came and cleaned our land. Those who know have assured me that he had already murdered four wives, besides many other persons; and moreover he was a giant, and much older than she who had but just made her fifth communion.

"So when one day messengers came to the Count of Vannes, asking for the hand of Tryphina on behalf of their master, her father would not listen to them, but refused the present of pigs and honey which they brought, and bade them begone as courteously as possible, saying that his daughter was too young and delicate to think of marriage. But the servants were not to be put off like that.

"'Our master told us,' replied they, 'that in case you refused him the princess, we were to declare war upon you, Lord of Vannes;' and lighting a bundle of straw, they flung it to the winds, declaring that the anger of Comorre should pass over the country of the white corn in like manner."

The photograph had been taken, and I had written down the name and address of the young woman, who had departed with the baby and the cows, leaving us alone with Jobic and the ancient fountain. He went on to tell of poor Tryphina's distress, how she spent the days and nights weeping and praying, not knowing what to do, for the Lord Comorre, who had begun life as one of the least of Breton nobles, had by favour of Childebert, King of the Franks, won his way upward, till he was now much more powerful than her father. The poor girl could get no

comfort from the Count of Vannes or any of her four brothers, who were busy drilling troops and making ready for war. Mother she had none, and in her loneliness and trouble she sent for the great Welsh saint, for whom her father had built a monastery on the peninsula of Rhuys. To this man, this Gildas, Tryphina told her trouble, and begged for his advice as to what she ought to do.

"My daughter," said Gildas, his grey eyes shining with fervour—"my daughter, God has given you a great opportunity for showing your love to Him and to your people of Vannes. By becoming the wife of this Lord Comorre you may gain much influence over him, and make him a blessing instead of a curse to the land of the black corn. You will besides save your own people from all the horrors of war, and by doing that which is displeasing to yourself, you will offer a sacrifice to God, which will be sweet incense in His nostrils."

"And alas! then," cried the poor young girl, "it is the sacrifice of all my joy and happiness that God is demanding! Oh, why was I not born a beggar? I might then at least have married another beggar of my choosing. Ah, if it is the will of our Lord in heaven that I marry this giant who terrifies me, say over me the service for the dead, O holy Gildas, for I shall die even as his other wives have died."

"No," said Gildas, "you shall not die. I will bring you back one day to your father safe and sound."

"And so, madam," continued Jobic, taking out his pipe that he might lay more emphasis on his words—"and so the people of Brittany were saved from war, and many women had cause to bless the Lady Tryphina for giving them back their husbands and sons that day."

We had risen and turned once more into the ghostly

forest to climb our way upward. The path grew steeper and very slippery. Now we were crossing the loose ruin of the outer castle wall. No mortar had there ever been between these great rough stones, but now and again we fancied that we came upon one which had been shaped and fitted to hold some corner in place, and then the whole took once more its former proportions, and we seemed to see the frowning wooden fortress standing in its stockade on the narrow rectangular top of the mountain in all its forbidding loneliness.

Poor little Tryphina, to be brought all the way from her sunny, level, treeless home of Morbihan, by her fierce, giant Lord Comorre, whose very caresses must have terrified her, and whose frown sent her mad with fear. As we looked from where the castle windows must once have been over trees, trees, nothing but trees, and the silver glint of the Blavet far down in the south, it was very easy to picture the little lonely countess in her turret room, longing for the *wings of a dove* to bear her home to her father.

For it was here in Castel Finans that Comorre left his young wife, while he went to attend a meeting of the States at Rennes. Travelling in Brittany was even slower in those days than now, for the whole centre of the peninsula was covered by trackless forest, and it was months before he could hope to return.

At first Tryphina was amused by her new duties, and employed herself by making the acquaintance of her servants and other dependants. She spent long hours in the chapel too, praying on the tombs of Comorre's former wives. And presently she took up her needlework again, and began stitching away at dainty little garments and jewelled velvet baby caps. Then the days passed more pleasantly for Tryphina, and she smiled and sang over her

THE SITE OF THE CASTLE OF COMORRE. (SHEWING THE LOOSE RUIN OF THE OUTER WALL)

work—sang happy songs about the future that was coming to her, though always in that minor key that is habitual to the Celt.

One day as she sat in her chamber she heard the noise of horses entering the courtyard, at the back of the castle. There was a shout, "Comorre! Comorre!" and as she raised her face with a smile of welcome her great lord burst into the room. He was radiant as he stretched out his arms towards her, when suddenly something caught his attention, and a murderous light came into his eyes—a light that Tryphina had always seen in them glowing through the mist of love.

At this point Jobic's story became quite astounding, completely overgrown by the lichens of fable. It told of a visit paid at midnight to the chapel; of four pale, phantom women, each holding the weapon which caused her death—the poison, the rope, the fire, the stick,—all in turn eagerly offered to Tryphina to assist in her flight from their common husband, for that she must fly away to her father, and at once, they told her plainly.

"Oh," cried Tryphina, flinging herself upon the ground in her agony of fear, "but how fly? The great dog of Comorre will tear me limb from limb."

"Here is poison," answered the first wife; "it killed me, it will do the same for the dog."

"And how am I to cross the wall?" asked the poor girl.

"Take this cord which was used to strangle me," whispered the second ghost; "that will help you across."

"But the way is so long, so long, and I am so weak and trembling!"

"The stick with which he struck me shall help you on your road!"

"And who is to guide me through the darkness, through the frightful darkness of the forest—who will do that?" asked Tryphina, shuddering with fear.

"The light with which he kindled the fire to burn me," suggested the fourth shadow; "see, I give it you to light you through the forest."

And then they told her of the reason of Comorre's cruelty, how the explanation was to be found in an ancient prophecy to the effect that he should die at the hands of his son, for which cause he killed his wives as soon as there was a prospect of their becoming mothers. And then again they urged her to fly—to fly at once if she would escape the fate which had overtaken them. And we heard of weeping, of hesitation and terror, and finally of a midnight flight through the awful forest of Quénécan. As we crossed the little upland valley on our homeward way, we glanced toward the fountain, but it was grey and desolate, for a cloud had arisen blotting out the sun, and the life of the place seemed over.

How did the countess find her way in the dark down that rocky precipitous path? *Our* feet slipped often in spite of our thick nailed shoes, and *hers* must have been all unused to such rough usage. How often did she fall in her haste, bruising her tender body and cutting her soft white hands against the stones? When at last she reached the foot of the mountain a new impediment barred her way—the river Blavet, swollen with rain, was running deep and strong, and there was no bridge in those days by which to cross. Falling upon her knees, she prayed aloud in her despair, and then ran hither and thither along the bank, flashing her light out over the black swirling water.

At last, down below what is now the weir, she found

some stepping-stones, and with the aid of her stick, sometimes knee-deep in the water, sometimes almost swept away by the strength of the current, but always struggling, always hastening, she managed to cross to the other side. The river has been changed since then, and is not nearly so broad, for half goes through the lock gates and becomes a straight, serviceable, prosaic canal. But the rest has been left, as in Tryphina's days, to ripple and wind its way in a charming, useless fashion of its own, past Saint Aignan, past Saint Gildas' hermitage, past Castenec, the home of the mysterious Er Groach Houard, or as she is now generally called, the Venus of Quinipily, down to Hennebont, whither we will presently follow it. Somewhere between the weir and Saint Aignan we came upon some ancient stepping-stones, which I tried to persuade myself were those once hallowed by the little white feet of the countess, and I thought I would like to cross myself; but the water was too deep and the stones too slippery for any but one driven by such terror as Tryphina's.

In those days, as I have said before, the great Roman road from Rennes to Carhaix ran through the towns of Mur and Gouarec. Tryphina had probably travelled by it when she came to Castel Finans at the time of her marriage. At all events, she made her way straight toward it through the forest that grew thicker than ever upon the other side of the river.

"Once upon the great road," thought she, "there will be bridges by which to cross the rivers; I shall be able to travel more quickly and surely than on this rough path; and above all, I shall be guided through this frightful world of trees."

At dawn she found a woodman's hut, where she lay concealed till dusk, praying and bewailing herself aloud,

crying, "Tryphina! ah, poor little Tryphina!" Then at sunset she roused herself from the sleep into which she had fallen, and started off once more, walking on, on, during the night, along the great, white, glistening road which led in a straight ever-narrowing line, up hill and down, away to the west.

Her feet were very sore by now, and she longed to lie down even among the trees of which she was so frightened, but the greater fear drove her onward, till suddenly she stopped to listen, her eyes wild with terror. Was it the sound of hoofs that she heard, the regular thud, thud of galloping hoofs? She laid her ear to the ground, and when she rose her face was set, and turning off swiftly from the road, she disappeared into the thicket which bounded it to the north.

There was a pause, a cloud of dust that grew nearer, and Comorre came thundering by, his face black with passion, and a couple of great bloodhounds at his side. The legend (according to Souvestre) says that he had sought for Tryphina far and wide, and would probably not have found her but for an old magpie which, hanging before the door of the hut where she had rested, had caught her name as she wept and wailed. Proud of its new acquirement, the bird had called to the count as he passed: "Tryphina! ah, poor little Tryphina!" and so betrayed the direction in which she had gone.

Well, he found her, found her lying under a hawthorn bush, too weary to move, or even to care what became of her. He found her and left her for dead, on the spot where is now her grave in the little cemetery of Saint Tryphine, near Gouarec.

Jobic's story, and the interest of hearing it on the very spot where it had taken place, had delayed us so long,

that by the time we reached the river it was past the luncheon hour. As Jobic himself was getting restless we told him to go home and take word to our chauffeur, to bring the car along to Saint Aignan, thinking that we would get something to eat there.

"But there's nowhere to eat!" said Jobic, looking very serious.

"What," said I, "isn't there an inn?"

Jobic shook his head.

"They dressed one of my pigs last week," said he. "It's a pity you weren't here then; it was a fine pig. Madam would have liked a cut off the loin."

There was not much comfort in this for a hungry pilgrim.

"To-morrow," observed Jobic, after another interval of reflection—"to-morrow they'll be killing another, and there'll be chitterlings."

"But to-day," I asked impatiently, "it's to-day we want it. We shall be at Hennebont to-morrow and get something better than chitterlings."

"You can't," replied Jobic, with decision; "leastways *my* chitterlings they're the best in Morbihan."

"Ah, yes," said I, soothingly; "but you see we can't get them, there isn't time; we want something now. We're starving!"

"There's the shop."

"Of course," I cried; "I never thought of the shop."

The shop proved quite an institution. It was presided over by a cheerful young woman and a fat baby, and while I relieved the woman of the latter she managed to collect from her stock-in-trade quite a delicious meal. For some reason or other she served us in the shop instead of in the comfortable kitchen opening out of it, and we

lunched surrounded by every conceivable object required by the Breton peasant during life. Hung from the roof, or stored on the shelves that covered the walls, were bunches of spades, rakes, coffee-mills, bundles of knitting-wool, boxes of sardines. There were sabots, hats both of straw and felt, butter, blue blouses, sieves, pocket-handkerchiefs, rosaries, mouse and rat traps. . . . Indeed, what was there not stowed away in that tiny shop!

But the lunch itself was a perfect wonder. As Jobic had foreseen, there was no meat; but what of that! The cabbage-soup was a dream, and while we ate it we heard the hens announcing the laying of the eggs that were to follow it. The lettuces with which the woman made the salad were growing in the front garden, and there were sardines, and wine, and butter, and a great golden disc of new-baked bread.

Heavily handicapped as she was by the fat baby, the young woman served us with such an adorable grace, made us so welcome, brought us such a delicious cup of black coffee, that if the car had not appeared at that moment I think we should have been tempted to linger there till dinner-time. As far as I remember, we paid about eight-pence each for that repast!

As we sat sipping our coffee by the hearth in the kitchen while the young woman dressed the baby ready to be photographed, we asked her what she thought about the murder of Saint Tryphina.

Like Jobic, she held the theory that Comorre really killed his wife, and that she was actually raised from the dead by the prayers of Saint Gildas. But, considering all things, I think we must take it that the good saint, who was at that time living with his friend Saint Bieuzi in the hermitage at La Roche-sur-Blavet, a little further down

the river, heard of the crime, and hastened off to Gouarec to find out the truth. There, possibly in the cottage of some peasant, lay Tryphina looking like a corpse, a dreadful wound in her head, and her face as white as death.

It was not for nothing that Gildas had studied medicine under that greatest of the Welsh Druids, Saint Iltud. He knew of herbs which, gathered by moonlight, distilled in a certain manner, with incantations and fastings and words of power, would sometimes bring the dead to life; and Tryphina, he saw, was not yet dead!

I like to think that he bore her away with him to his cell at La Roche-sur-Blavet, and there nursed and tended her, till one day, as the sun was setting, he fixed his wonderful grey eyes upon her, and taking her by the hand, said—

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Tryphina, I command thee to rise and walk." *

And the murdered wife of Comorre, whom all Brittany was thinking dead, arose: Tryphina arose, walked, and followed her deliverer to her father, who was bewailing her in the Château de la Motte, in the country of Vannes.

And there her baby was born—her baby who was later to become Saint Gildas' pupil, and most ardent disciple. And there one day Tryphina was wedded a second time—wedded to the Lord of Heaven, to whom she had vowed to devote the remainder of her earthly life. She became the abbess of a convent of holy virgins which existed in the neighbourhood of Vannes till quite recent years, and she was buried at Saint Tryphine, near Gouarec, at the place where she was found lying for dead under the hawthorn tree.

What became of Comorre it is more difficult to say.

* *See* De la Borderie.

The young woman, following the usual legend told at Mur, assured us that he did actually fall by the hand of his new-born son, who, casting a handful of dust against the castle, caused it to crumble and fall, and that Comorre was buried beneath the ruins. But I am afraid we know better than that in these days!

History tells us that Comorre, continuing in his wicked courses, and being publicly denounced and excommunicated by Saint Hervé and all the bishops of Brittany, gathered for that purpose on the top of Ménez Bré, was soon after killed in battle.

But however he died, he died, and went to his place, and the tale of his wickedness has lived in the memories of the people of Cornouailles for nearly fourteen centuries, as such stories will live, told to the children on winter evenings beside the blazing brushwood fires. And Tryphina lives, too, in their hearts, her child by her side, a perpetual vision of motherhood, pure, eternal.

Once a year, on the last Sunday in May, from every distant village and orchard-sheltered farm, peasants come trooping, dressed *en Dimanche*—men in wonderful embroideries, and women with brocaded aprons and snowy caps. Singing the legend of Tryphina, they follow the rocky path to the upland valley and the fountain. Here they sit and drink the waters, and presently start off again toward the chapel on the sky-line, where the Pardon is to be held.

Then vestments glisten and shine, and banners wave in the sunlight, and Mass is celebrated on the site of the old fortress of Comorre, while Tryphina is Queen of the day. And when all is done they come streaming down through the woods, mothers holding their little sons by the hands, fathers carrying their baby-girls proudly on

their shoulders, old men and women who have come to the Pardon for the last time, groups of merry girls and bashful boys, and lovers linked together by their little fingers. And the evening is full of the sound of laughter and singing, with a blowing of toy trumpets and penny squeakers, and every one is cracking almond nuts, while the boys' breasts are covered with glittering tinsel rosettes, and from every girl's hand hangs a new glass rosary.

Who is thinking of Tryphina now, or her midnight flight through the forest?

Ah, well, it all happened long, long ago—so long that it seems wonderful that any memory of it lingers. Yet if any of my readers happen to find themselves at the little town of Mur, and will take the trouble to go to Castel Finans, and sit on the height overlooking the river, while some Jobic tells them the ancient story, I am sure that they, like myself, will have no difficulty in believing the legend of Tryphina. Here, in England, the Breton saints are mere shadowy phantoms, and we laugh at their stories as at the impossibilities of a dream. But seated in the sunshine, on the site of Tryphina's tower, we are living in a world of dreams, spending our days walking and talking with saints and angels.

There are some places that seem specially made to be the scenes of great tragedies, and ever afterward the very atmosphere is charged with the drama which has been enacted there. Castel Finans is such a spot; and however we may doubt the story as we walk in the world below, if we will but climb the height, we shall find Tryphina's white spirit waiting for us upon the summit, and scoff no longer.

CHAPTER XI

Guémené-sur-Scorff—Castenec—La Roche-sur-Blavet—Legend of Saint Gildas and Saint Bieuzi—Saint Nicodème and its Pardon.

WHAT a beautiful old town! What is its name? Guémené? . . . I never heard or read of it, . . . even in Froissart!

Yet the old writer has much to say of this picturesque place, only he calls it by another name, Dinant, or Dignant, which means The Castle in the Valley.

We have all read of the attacks on this Dinant by Lord Lewis of Spain, and later by Edward III. of England. It was only fortified by a wooden palisade, and "the archers in the boats on the river shot so well," says Froissart, "that no one dared scarcely show himself at the windows of the town."

Through the broad valley in which the town lies flows the River Scorff, and Guémené, lying upon it, must always have been an easy prey to any would-be enemy. And poor Brittany had plenty of enemies in the fourteenth century.

The rival claimants for the Duchy, Jean de Montfort and Charles de Blois, were supported respectively by the kings of England and France, so that the quarrel resolved itself into a part of the great war that was then raging between the two countries. At first Charles, supported as he was by all the French nobility, was successful, and his

GUÉMENÉ-SUR-SCORFF

rival, Jean de Montfort, died in prison. But Jean left a widow and a young son, and it is the struggles and adventures of this gallant woman on behalf of her child which form the history of Brittany for many years.

To-day, as we pass through the little peaceful towns, marking the quiet, prosperous life of the inhabitants, it is difficult to imagine the horrors that prevailed in them five hundred years ago.

Guémené, for instance—upon what scenes has not the old castle looked down! There was that day when the inhabitants, finding themselves surrounded by the French, under Lord Lewis of Spain, determined to surrender, in spite of their brave governor, Sir Reginald de Guingamp, who chose rather to die at the hands of the mob than betray the trust he had received from his lady, the Countess of Montfort, or, as she was generally called, Jeanne la Flamme.

Standing beneath the nodding gables, one can picture the brave knight dragged through the castle gate by the howling, terrified citizens, his clothes torn and blood-stained, his face cut and bruised. Now they have reached the market-place, and once more he is asked whether he is willing to surrender to the French. But in those days death was less feared than cowardice, and again the governor scornfully refuses. It is his last word. There is a shout, a yell; and when the French enter the town a little later, they find his bleeding body lying in the centre of the square.

After this, Guémené was left in peace for awhile, under the guardianship of Sir Giraud de Maulin and Lord Peter Porteboeuf. But the quiet did not last long. One day the town of Guémené found itself besieged by no less an enemy than Edward III. of England, who had come over in person to the support of his protegée, the Countess of

Montfort. Finding the town had changed sides, and was holding out for the Blois party, he sat down before it and commenced an attack. After four days, with the aid of the noted English archers, the soldiers made such a breach in the palisade which defended the town on the river side that they were able to pass in. Ah, how the people of Guémené must have repented of their unfaithfulness to their former governor! Sir Peter Porteboeuf was brought from the castle a prisoner, and all the inhabitants were massacred in the merciless fashion of those days—men, women, and children—till the market-place ran with blood, and the shade of Sir Reginald de Guingamp was appeased.

"The town was rich," says Froissart, "full of merchandise, and the English took much booty, after which they departed for Vannes, leaving Guémené empty and deserted."

To-day, the castle is an utter ruin, and the town an unimportant place, visited by no one save commercial travellers and those students who happen to remember its history. But it is a quiet place in which to dream over the stirring events that marked the fourteenth century, for the old streets seem to have changed but little, and the castle walls are so hidden by curtains of ivy that the rents made by war and time are scarcely observable.

In walking round the picturesque old "place," we shall not fail to notice an inscription on one of the houses. It is to the effect that one, Bisson, was born there in such-and-such a year. I am ashamed to say that at the time I did not know who this same Bisson was, nor why it should have been thought necessary to put up a tablet in his honour. But I have learned since then; and as his gallant deed is, I think, not generally known to those who visit Guémené, I shall tell it in the fine, rough words of Anatole le Braz.

"The *Panayoti*, on board which he was lieutenant, was

surrounded by the enemy, the very bridge invaded by the foe.

"'How shall we rid ourselves of this rabble, lieutenant?' asks Trémintin, the captain.

"'By making them jump with us, Trémintin.'

"The powder-magazine is open, and into it Ensign Bisson flings a lighted brand.

"'Farewell, Trémintin!'

"'Till we meet above, lieutenant!'

"A puff of white smoke, a loud explosion, and every one is in the air. Trémintin, however, had had time to make the sign of the cross and commend himself to Our Lady. And so now he finds himself setting forth for Paradise! . . ."

But, as the Breton author has it, "Paradise did not want him yet!" and he was saved in some miraculous fashion. But Bisson—Bisson, the hero who had planned this heroic deed—Bisson, the true successor of those heroes of whom I said that they feared death far less than cowardice—Bisson was heard of no more. And to-day his story is told with fitting pride by the people of his native town, and by that author who loves to gather together such incidents as exhibit the daring and devotion of the race of which he is the true descendant.

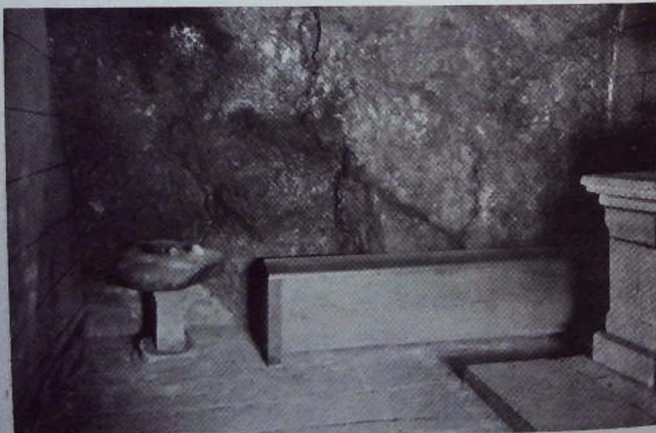
But we must not linger at Guémené, for our automobile has to take us a long distance before nightfall. On the map the road which we have to traverse to Saint Nicholas des Eaux looks quite a little matter, some five and twenty kilometres perhaps. But it takes us back over fifteen hundred years to the days of the good Saint Gildas, and even further than that, to the mysterious twilight age of the old Gaulish goddess the Groac'h Houard, as she is called in Breton. For it was on the point of high land

round which the River Blavet makes its way, that there formerly stood that granite figure, called the Venus of Quinipily, which we will presently visit when we reach Baud.

This valley of the Blavet is the most beautiful country in all Brittany, and there is no spot whence it is more effectively seen than the height of Castenec.

For some time we have been travelling toward the south-east, over high-lying land which gradually sinks a little in front of us, so that we can see the landscape toward which we are hastening. Suddenly, on the left, the land drops away precipitously, and we look down over a long stretch of the river. There in front is Saint Nicholas lying far below us. As we are looking at it Le Velly calls out to us to notice the view on the right, and there also the ground has disappeared from our side, so that in fact the automobile is running along toward the point of a narrow, wedge-shaped promontory of high land that projects into the broad, low-lying river valley. As we proceed the wedge grows rapidly narrower, till we gaze down a steep cliff on either hand, and see the broad silver waters of the Blavet flowing below through the rich smiling meadows that bound it. Just at the very point when the road seems about to take a plunge over the height, it turns to the right, and after winding along the extremity of the promontory, where we may look down and see the stream below making its sharp turn round the height on which the "Venus" once stood, we begin zig-zagging down toward Saint Nicholas. It was rather silly of us to do this, and the mistake gave us a long walk, for the Chapel of Saint Gildas, the Roche-sur-Blavet, as it is called, lies on the further side of the narrow promontory, and we had to mount on foot to the summit and descend again to the south-west before we could reach it. It was quite a climb, and we were hot

LA ROCHE-SUR-BLAVET



INTERIOR OF THE CHAPEL OF LA ROCHE-SUR-BLAVET, SHEWING THE "BELL" OF SAINT GILDAS

when we found ourselves once more on the neck of land along which we had so lately made our way. A tiny path led steeply down to the other side, where, beneath a sudden height overlooking the river, is an ancient rock shelter, such as served some prehistoric ancestor for a dwelling. It has been walled up and formed into two little chapels, but the rocky wall within is exactly as it was fourteen hundred years ago, when it was the favourite home of that great saint and historian Gildas the Wise, and his friend and disciple Bieuzi. It was not the first place they settled in upon reaching Brittany. After having been driven away from England by the coming of the Saxons, these two holy saints went to live on the savage little island of Houat off the coast of Morbihan, and always at intervals during his life Gildas returned there, no doubt as a sort of penance, for it was a bare rock, as it is to-day, and life there was hard and desolate. He had also his monastery at Rhuys, where he taught the sons of most of the great Breton nobles. But his favourite haunt was his rock shelter on the Blavet, and surely it is not surprising that an artist like Gildas should have found such a home to his mind.

Of all the exquisite spots in which to live and dream one's life away, none can rival La Roche-sur-Blavet. The hermits took up their abode on the little space of ground overshadowed by the mighty rock, and all they had to do was to build against it a rough wooden shelter to protect them from the wind. From the entrance to the cell so formed the ground sloped away to the river bank, where among yellow iris and purple orchids was a great boulder hollowed like a chair where Bieuzi used to sit and fish while Gildas cast those wonderful metal bells of his that were the pride of sixth-century saintdom.

But for himself he made no bell. When he wished to

summon the peasants to Mass he would strike on a great black stone, and the note he struck was that to which he tuned all his bells. It stands there in the little chapel to-day, the "bell" of Saint Gildas, a large flat black stone of about the size and shape of an ordinary Breton loaf. It rests on a low pedestal, and upon it are three flints with which every pilgrim sounds a note. We struck the "bell," of course, for to any one acquainted with the history of the two hermits of La Roche-sur-Blavet it has a special message.

Clang! . . . The sunny shore of the Breton river has faded away. We are in the old Border Tower of Dumbarton on the estuary of the Clyde, close to the Wall of Antonine, and the year is that of 493 A.D. The British have just gained a great victory over the Saxons at Badon, now Bath, and the news is brought to the King of Clydesdale just as his wife gives birth to his fifth son, whom he names in consequence Gildas Badonic, in memory of the battle.

Clang! We are away down south, on the broad mouth of the Severn, at a Celtic monastery called Lann-Iltud. The boy Gildas has grown considerably since we saw him last. He is a tall, strong lad, with fearless grey eyes, and a noble carriage, the favourite pupil of the great saintly schoolmaster, Iltud the Druid knight. For some time the students at Lann-Iltud had been much exercised in their minds as to the inroads the current has been making on the land of the monastery, and only yesterday they came and confided their anxiety to their master. This morning there happens to be a very low tide, and Iltud has taken his staff, the staff he carries as the successor of the Druids, and, followed by his pupils, among whom are all the budding saints of Western Europe,

including the great Welsh David, Samson of Dol, Magloire, Pol Aurelian, and Gildas the Wise, he makes his way far out on the space left by the receding tide. There, with holy incantations and words of power which have descended to him from his ancestors, mingled with Christian prayers learned from his master, Saint Germaine d'Auxerois, he marks a trench in the sand with his magical staff, while the lads watch eagerly, and as he ends they set to work making a great dyke, which soon grows to such proportions that the sea is unable to pass over it, and a large area of land is reclaimed that later yields an abundant harvest.

Clang! The sound comes louder this time, like the rich musical tone of a mighty anvil. It calls Gildas, a tall priest of thirty-one, to leave the land of his birth and go to save from the advancing tide of paganism, the gallant little Christian Church that Saint Patrick founded in Ireland. It is a rough life we find him leading for the next five years, but Gildas cares little for that! What he does find irksome is the popularity which follows him everywhere, the crowds that dog his steps and hang upon his words. For solitude is his passion, but he cannot indulge in it yet awhile. He is too valuable a servant of the Church to be spared. It is: Gildas the Saint! . . . Gildas the Wise! . . . Gildas the Physician! . . . Gildas the great Historian of the Celtic Race!

And now the old "bell" sounds once more. We find the holy man several years older. He has been living in Wales writing his "De Excidio Britanniæ," which still remains the chief authority we have on the history of that time. He has removed to the little island of Flatholme in the Severn's mouth, and there he has built a chapel to the Trinity, and a cell in which he eats and does his writing, while at night he sleeps after his fashion in a

cleft of the rock. Close by, on another island called Stepholme, dwells his friend Cado, with whom he has been familiar since the old college days at Lann-Iltud.

Ah, but what is this? As the sound of the "bell" reaches us once more, we see poor Gildas gazing sorrowfully down at a heap of smouldering ashes, all that is left of the little chapel he built with such care. Saxon pirates have come and gone leaving him homeless to starve on his rocky island. But see, a British ship comes sailing down the river. They have observed the gaunt figures of the hermits waving to them, and have taken them on board, and to quote his own words, he "passes beyond the seas with loud lamentations instead of the voice of exhortation. Thou hast given us as sheep to be slaughtered, and among the Gentiles hast Thou dispersed us."

For the ship is bound for Southern Brittany, or as it was then called Armorica, and Gildas will never see his native land again. And now come one or two sharp, short strokes on the bell. Gildas is living on the island of Houat, where we find him surrounded by spirits and angels, and by a very material-looking devil who haunts that part of Morbihan, and plays him many a scurvy trick. There sits Gildas in rough goat skins, wearing the Celtic tonsure, the hair shaved off in front, and hanging long behind. He is reading the Scriptures, meditating, praying, till the news of his holy life, his austerities, and his amazing victories over the devils that haunt the island are carried to the mainland by the people of Hoaut, and poor Gildas finds himself once more called back to take his place in the world.

Clang! A wild and very pagan note this time from the shrine of the great goddess of Castenec. At its sound Gildas comes hastening from his new monastery at Rhuys,

where he has founded a school modelled on that of Saint Iltud, and makes his way into the heart of the forest that in the sixth century covered the centre of Brittany.

A festival is being held, a festival whose rites are so coarse and obscene that Gildas hides his face for very shame. But the worship of the Groac'h Houard is so ancient and popular that there seems little hope of stopping it, so Gildas takes the wise course of settling near by, and preaching his purer faith as he finds opportunity to the pilgrims who flock to the shrine of the goddess.

Clang! With the full rich sound we find the river flowing by among the yellow iris. There sits Bieuzi, fishing, and here at our side is Gildas striking with a master stroke the stone "bell" he brought with him from Glamorganshire. As the pure sound still lingers in the air, he moves the tongue of the curious flat bell of beaten metal he has been making, and a smile of satisfaction lights his face as the tones ring true together. He is a very old man now, and most of the saints have been supplied with his bells, for it is a favourite hobby of his this working in metal. But for Gildas, the disciple of the Druid Iltud, nothing will serve but the old sacred resonant stone that was employed for thousands of years before the use of metal was discovered!

And now the door of the rude cell opens, and a young girl appears. Gildas lays down the new bell, and Bieuzi leaves his fishing, and both make their way toward her. Then it is a pretty sight to see the little Countess Tryphina, still weak and feeble from her illness, supported by the two old men, taking the air in the cool summer evening. Her white gown gleams against their rough brown coats, and her golden hair shines as though it were already a nimbus around her little head. I can see them

walking slowly up and down, before the door, talking of those holy things that interested the saints of those days, and then the shadows fall and I see them no more.

Clang! Yet once more the bell calls Gildas hence, and Bieuzi is left to fish alone.

A strange man this Bieuzi, a mere shadow of his friend and master whom he followed in all his wanderings. To-day he shines chiefly in the reflected glory of Saint Gildas.

He had, however, the gift of curing hydrophobia, and gradually the hermitage of La Roche-sur-Blavet became a sort of Pasteur Institute. It was sometimes so crowded by would-be patients that the poor professor found no time to eat or drink, and was obliged at last to make a private way up to the top of the rock that he might say his prayers in peace.

One day as he was celebrating Mass, the servant of a pagan chief of the neighbourhood came running into the chapel crying out that all his master's dogs had gone mad, and Bieuzi must come at once and cure them. Offended by the man's tone, and unwilling to interrupt the service, Bieuzi continued his sacred occupation, and the servant returned to his master. Mass was still in progress when the infuriated chief arrived, and rushing up to the altar struck the saint such a blow as cleft his head in two. With the sword still in the wound Bieuzi continued to celebrate, and when he had finished, followed by the whole congregation, walked to the monastery of Rhuys, where he received the blessing of Saint Gildas, and then fell dead at his feet.

It is most satisfactory to add that the whole establishment of his murderer perished of hydrophobia, while the Blessed Bieuzi reposes near his beloved master in the church where he died on the peninsula of Rhuys.

How long might we linger here beside the Blavet! For my part, I could ask no better fate than to take up my permanent abode in the hermitage of La Roche-sur-Blavet. To be awakened every morning by the birds in the ivy overhead, and find the sunshine pouring in through a little window glazed in a more ordinary and modern fashion than that of Saint Gildas' cell. (It will be remembered that the glass for the window of Gildas' cell at La Roche-sur-Blavet was given to him by a miracle in answer to his prayer.) Still are there fish in the river; and breakfast could be furnished by some Bieuzi, who should do his cooking in the primitive fireplace we find among the rocks. We could drink of the fountain, and listen to the stories the old bell has to tell us, tuned to the note of our own twentieth-century imagination, till the sun set behind the hill of Castenec, and soothed by the rippling murmur of the stream among the flowers we would sink to sleep in the old rocky bed of Saint Gildas, behind the green curtains of ivy. But the age of hermits is past and gone! We must retrace our steps, and climb back over the hill to Saint Nicholas, where civilization is waiting for us in the persons of Le Velly the chauffeur, and his Good Mademoiselle. Yet for a moment we linger at the pretty little village beside the river to wonder how this saint Nicholas, who in Greece has so adroitly replaced the old sea-god Poseidon, came to take up his abode beside the river Blavet. I suppose he heard of the trout for which the village has always been famous, and so took the fishermen under his special protection. At the charming little inn one may dine upon the delicious fresh-caught fish to-day and dream of gods and saints innumerable as we sit in the rustic summer-house that overlooks the river.

Not far off the road leading from Saint Nicholas to

Baud stands the curious church of Saint Nicodemus, built on the site of a worshipping place that must long ago have been sacred either to the sun or to some other god of fire.

It is difficult to see why the man of the Pharisees should have been selected to preside over the curious worship that still goes on at this hidden shrine of Morbihan. Possibly in some symbolical way he is supposed to lead blind people to the healing fire, just as he himself came in the darkness to find the true light. But this is merely surmise. He has been associated with Saint Cornély, the great patron of animals, and the two saints are honoured together at the Pardon that is held here on the first Saturday in August.

The church lies in a little hollow, so that from the low wall which bounds the precinct in which it stands we look down upon the Gothic fountain lying in front of the great west door. The festival itself is not one of those great public pardons, like that of Guingamp, or Sainte-Anne-d'Auray, to which all the world goes. It is a little peasant fête at which no one assists save the farmers of the neighbourhood, who bring with them their domestic animals that they may share in the religious privileges of the day.

On the occasion when I was present at the Pardon of Saint Nicodemus I found the church so full that there was no possibility of entering, and I had time to go and see the bonfire that had been built at the eastern extremity of the chapel ground. Immediately in front of the pile of gorse a post had been planted in the soil, to which were fastened, one above another, three discs or tambourines, lined with fireworks. A slow match connected them one with another, and ran from the topmost disc to the bonfire, and a long cord had been carried from the lowest one, and

fixed to the gallery running round the top of the church tower.

In the meadows around, every kind of farm animal had been installed. There were long lines of handsome young fillies, cows, sheep, goats, and one young farmer had brought an immense crate containing a sow and her twelve little pigs.

Beside the fountain an old and ragged beggar was singing an extremely long and melancholy dirge which I tried in vain to understand, and people were incessantly drinking, or bathing their eyes in the healing waters. There were three niches to this fountain, and in each niche a saint presiding over his own particular source. There was good old Cornély, whom we hope to meet again at Carnac; patron of horned beasts is he, and in consequence much venerated by farmers. Next to him stood Nicodemus, presiding over the eye department; and beyond, round the corner, was a third niche containing a saint whose name I have forgotten, but who, not being a specialist, attended to the more general needs of the pilgims. As I was watching the curious scene, out from the great porch issued the procession, headed by the beadle, much beribboned, and a couple of drummers. First came Saint Nicodemus wearing a mitre like a bishop. Cornély followed dressed as a pope, as is but meet according to the popular tradition, and there were others. Finally came the clergy bearing the reliquaries, banners, candles, all glittering in the sunlight.

And now came the most interesting part of the ceremony, for the procession made the tour of all the meadows, and the animals were solemnly blessed, while the holy symbols were exhibited to them by the priests. Finally, reaching the place where the bonfire had been built, a halt

was made, hymns sung, prayers repeated, and while the congregation fell on their knees, or removed their hats, down the long cord from the church tower came the figure of an angel, a lighted candle in his hand to light the firework discs which in turn set fire to the Tantad.

By this time every one had joined the crowd round the fire, and as soon as all had risen from their knees and the brushwood pile was fully blazing I made my way back to the church. Attached to the north-west end of the nave, with a window giving in to the church, was a stable, still evidently used, in which sick animals might pass the night, and derive benefit from this close connection with the cult of the saints. Up to recent years the beasts took part in the procession, and were certainly at one time offered in sacrifice, burnt offerings to the god who preceded Saint Nicodemus at this shrine. Indeed, for some time after he came they were made to pass through the fire, or at least to jump over the ashes.

But the chief connecting link between the ancient worship and the modern Christian festival is to be found in the three discs of fireworks by means of which the bonfire is ignited. They are a direct survival of sun worship, like those mentioned by Frazer in the "Golden Bough," which the people of Swabia throw into the air at the time of their Fire Festival. And the angel, is it not a beautiful piece of symbolism? There stands the mighty Moloch, god of fire, the Tantad, and before him the symbols of the sun. But the real power that governs both fire and sun, the Creator of light and heat, the great fertilizer and lifegiver of the universe, is the Being adored in that little Gothic chapel, from the tower of which comes the fire to kindle both discs and Tantad.

All around the outer ring of the precinct booths have

A REFRESHMENT BOOTH

been erected for the sale of sweetmeats, and souvenirs of the Pardon, and here it is pleasant to sit and refresh one's self before setting out on the hot walk back to Saint Nicholas. For on the occasion of our assisting at the Pardon of Saint Nicodemus we had no good automobile at our service.

I wish I could show my readers one of those refreshment booths. Imagine a lengthy tunnel made of willow boughs twined together at the top. Over this white sheets have been spread, so that the interior is lighted by a pleasant diffused radiance like that of a leafy lane in summer time. From end to end runs a narrow trestle table, bordered on either side by handsome bronze faces shaded with broad straw hats, or snowy coifs. What costumes! There are the jaunty white cloth jackets embroidered with orange and blue, and edged with bands of black velvet. Here again are blues of all shades worked with yellow or red. And there are the quaint dresses of the women, the big white hoods so closely resembling in shape those formerly worn in Wales and some parts of England. One or two old women have, in spite of the weather, put on their black hoods lined with scarlet, and very well their wrinkled faces look in them. Indeed, age would lose half its terrors if elderly people always dressed as they do in Brittany.

As the attendant is filling my cup some one jerks his arm, and he spills some cider in front of me.

"Ah," he cries merrily, "there's some money coming to you, as they say in England," at which there is a laugh all down the table at my expense.

Suddenly a boy's nose begins to bleed, and his mother, grasping him by the neck of his jacket, rushes him off towards the fountain. Anxious to see which saint she will invoke for the purpose, I follow, and arrive just in time to

see the child forced down on his knees, and his head and face plunged into the water watched over by the saint whose name I have forgotten.

But as we pass in sight of the Chapel of Saint Nicodemus to-day it is quite deserted, for the Pardon is long over, and during the rest of the year no one save an occasional farmer with a sick beast remembers the existence of the place.

No doubt in ancient times, when the priests possessed the only knowledge of drugs, this little hidden nook served as a regular veterinary college for the people of the neighbourhood. To it they took their animals when anything ailed them, and received good advice and other aid from the specialist who resided there. The great fire made once a year was supposed to have a fertilizing effect on flocks, herds, and cereal crops, as well as to cure from blindness and other troubles of the eyes. The ashes of the victims offered were scattered over the fields, or mixed with water and given to the beasts, and good results were sure to follow.

And to-day, in this civilized twentieth century, the same beliefs hold good, only offerings are made symbolically, and the merciful cult of the two Christian saints have modified that of the savage Moloch.

CHAPTER XII

Baud—The Venus of Quinipili—Hennebont—Story of the siege.

THE Hôtel du Commerce at Baud is better than it looks, in fact quite possible, though not one of the best places of entertainment to which the reader has been taken in the course of this Breton pilgrimage.

Baud is so far from everywhere that, if travelling by road, one seems always to reach it at night. Thus dinner was over when we entered the billiard-room which serves as an entrance hall to the Hôtel du Commerce. The house had lately changed hands, but the landlady was very agreeable, and soon sent up a steaming supper, one of those astounding meals always forthcoming in Brittany at whatever hour of the day or night one arrives.

After we had finished supper my husband, putting his hand in his pocket, discovered that he had no cigarettes, and we went out to find some.

A bright little room, half kitchen, half shop, and beside the hearth the tobacconist and a friend smoking a pipe together, while they discussed the affairs of the town. As the door opened to admit us, the master of the shop rose, and while attending to our wants, indulged his Breton curiosity as to what brought us to Baud.

"Without doubt monsieur and madame have come to

see the Venus ?" he inquired with studied unconcern, while his friend took out his pipe, and sat open-mouthed to hear the answer.

"The Groac'h Houard," I answered; "yes, I want to photograph her. Tell me, is she reckoned as a saint by the people round here ?"

"Oh no, madame !" replied the tobacconist, evidently shocked at the suggestion. "Does not madame then know the meaning of the name she used ?"

"Yes," said I, "it means the Wicked Old Woman, doesn't it ? But I have often found statues with very strange names worshipped as saints."

"Pardon, madame, not the Groac'h Houard !"

"Why, what's the matter with the poor old Venus ?" asked my husband.

But with a reproving glance at me the tobacconist had turned away to his companion, and, noticing that his pipe had gone out, pushed the tobacco jar toward him.

"I suppose no one goes to visit her now ?" I asked innocently.

"Faites excuse, madame ; my brother and his wife went to her but the day before yesterday."

Thoroughly roused, I continued my catechism. "But why ? If she is not a saint, why visit her ?"

The tobacconist shifted his foot uneasily. "They have been married fifteen years," he answered at length, "and no children, not even a girl. It is hard to leave one's earnings to any but one's flesh and blood. And my brother is rich, very rich."

"But why not try Sainte Anne d'Auray, or the Mother of God at Quimper ?"

"Oh, madame, they had done so many times, but always without success. At last my sister-in-law said,

THE GROAC'H HOUARD, OR VENUS OF QUINIPILI

'There is only one thing more we can do; we will visit the Groac'h Houard!' My brother was averse to the idea; but what will you when the saints turn a deaf ear and refuse to listen? It was not the fault of my sister-in-law; she had been everywhere, even to Sainte Anne de la Palude in the Finisterre, and to Bulat Pestivien far away in the arrondissement of Guingamp, of which some one had told her. Poor thing! She had worn her feet bare with her pilgrimages, for she is very devout."

"But I thought it was against the rules to pray to the Venus."

"Oh, madame, she did not pray! My sister-in-law would never think of praying save to the Blessed Virgin, or to the saints. She is a very good Christian, . . . n'est-ce pas, Charles."

But his friend whom he thus apostrophised, having learned the reason of our coming, had lost interest in the conversation and was intent on his pipe. So he merely grunted an assent.

"But if she did not pray, what did she do?"

"That, madame, I do not quite know," said the tobacconist. "I, like my brother, do not bestow my approval on such practices. Yet in the case of my sister-in-law who is so devout, who has left no saint unvisited, and who is besides so rich—well, madame—even the saints cannot blame her; they should have attended to her wants themselves!"

"And she believes that she will now obtain her wish?"

"Monsieur," said the little man, looking fixedly at my husband who had asked the question, and nodding at him mysteriously, "Monsieur, I have never known the Groac'h Houard to fail. Even in the most extreme cases, when

persons have been married for twenty or five and twenty years, she has given them an heir."

"Dear me, that is most interesting. But can you not tell me what rites are used?"

The tobacconist shook his head. "They are forbidden to speak of it afterwards," said he. "All I know is, that my brother and his wife spent several hours with the Groac'h Houard, and that on their return, when they stopped at my house for a glass of cider, my sister-in-law looked happier than she had done for years. As she embraced me before mounting into the carriage she said: 'Thou wilt soon have a niece, Thomas, or even perhaps, who knows, a nephew, if the Groac'h Houard so wills it.'"

"And that was yesterday!" said I.

"The day before yesterday, madame," corrected the tobacconist.

"And this," I remarked to my husband, as he paid the good little man, "this is the twentieth century of the Christian era!"

Yet when one sees the Venus, as she is usually called, she is truly impressive enough to account for the stories one hears concerning her. She stands on a high pedestal presiding over the vast granite bath in which, formerly, her devotees made their ablutions.

A certain French savant has recently declared that the so-called Venus of Quinipili is nothing but a modern imitation of the old figure that formerly stood on the hill of Castenec. But whatever conclusion archæologists may come to concerning the authenticity of the figure, the cult of this curious old Gaulish goddess is genuine, and as I have just shown, persists to the present day. She was visited for many complaints, rheumatism, gout, skin disease

and so on. Those who required her aid made offerings, bathed in her granite trough, rubbed themselves against her rough stone person; this last ceremony reminding us of the custom which once prevailed of rubbing against certain menhirs or sacred stones. The position she has always occupied, looking down over, and commanding her bath, shows that the worshippers saw some connection between the goddess and the efficacy of the healing waters, just as the Druidical priests gave as medicines the water with which they bathed the stones at Stonehenge and Carnac, just as once a year the priest at Saint Jean du Doigt to-day plunges the sacred finger into the water of the cistern that is used by pilgrims for diseases of the eye. It is contact with the sacred object that is essential, and next to direct contact is contact conveyed by water. Water has always been looked upon as a particularly sacred medium, and is so regarded to-day.

But as I have hinted the worship of the Groac'h Houard was not of a character to be assimilated by the religion preached by the missionaries of the fifth and sixth centuries, and Christianity which set her seal on so many pagan practices, utterly refused to countenance the rites of this old idol.

Where Gildas and Bieuzi failed to uproot her cult, later teachers of the purer faith were not likely to succeed, and the idol was adored with undiminished fervour till 1660, when Charles de Rosmadec, Bishop of Vannes, shocked to find so flagrant an example of paganism flourishing in his diocese, requested Claude Comte de Lannion and Seigneur de Quinipili to have the idol destroyed. The following year, therefore, men arrived with orders to pull down the figure, and roll her from her height into the Blavet that flows round the base of the mount of Castenec.

This was done, and a cross erected on the spot where for so long she had been adored.

But the Old Woman of Castenec was not to be disposed of so easily as that! No sooner had she disappeared in the river than the weather changed. Storms of rain fell, ruining the crops; every one began to foresee a famine. The peasants naturally attributed the disaster to the insult offered to their old favourite, and cast about for means to deliver her from her watery bed. At last, in 1664, she was with great trouble fished up, and laid on the river bank. Here, all bruised and broken as she was, she was again visited by her worshippers, and her cult became as popular and as scandalous as ever. Again she was ordered to be cast back into the river, after being broken to pieces. But the very workmen held her in too great awe to do more than mutilate her slightly, and replace her in the Blavet. Thence, in 1696, she was dragged by Pierre de Lannion, son and successor of Claude. Being something of an antiquarian, he had her placed on a pedestal in the courtyard of his château at Quinipili near Baud, together with the great granite bath which had been associated with her worship.

Time passed; the Revolution came and went. The château disappeared, together with the noble family which owned it. And now to-day the Groac'h Houard looks down from her height at Quinipili on the orchard that has replaced the stately courtyard of the Comte de Lannion. Beside the huge mysterious granite trough lies the homely wooden kneeling-stool used on washing days by the farmer's wife, who lives in what may have been the kitchen of the castle, a large, comfortable building, with a hearth broad enough to roast an ox.

Little is known concerning the history of the Groac'h

Houard till she was brought to Quinipili. It is quite within the bounds of possibility that she began her career, like so many idols, as a rough and formless menhir.

It is well known that certain stones have been held sacred since prehistoric times, as witness the great Crom Cruach of Tara Hill, the Stone of Destiny now in the Coronation Chair at Westminster, the Stone Mare of Saint Ronan in Finisterre, and many others. The Kaffirs say of such stones: "This stands for God, but we do not know his shape, therefore we leave the rock untouched by the chisel."

Such rude menhirs were adored by the Greeks long before they took to making statues, and even in the days of Praxitiles it was the ancient unsculptured stones which were reckoned the most sacred. I cannot help thinking it possible that the Groac'h Houard may once have been just such a block of unhewn granite, worshipped in much the same fashion, and with just such rites as the menhir at Moëlan, and the Kazec-wenn, or White Mare of Locronan. The Romans probably found her thus, and noticing a connection between her rites and those offered to their own Venus, sculptured her rudely into the form of a woman. No doubt it was thus that Gildas and Bieuzi found her, when they came to take up their abode at La Roche-sur-Blavet. How many times since then she has been recut it is impossible to say, for the Bretons are fond of renovating their statues. Each time she no doubt became a little more refined in appearance, till at last, being taken out of the Blavet by the emissaries of Pierre de Lannion, she was given a final polishing, and dragged by forty pairs of oxen to Quinipili, to be set up in the courtyard where she stands to-day. But though now she wears a comparatively modern form, she bears

within her the same old heathen soul that inhabited the Groac'h Houard when she was the great menhir that stood on the hill of Castenec.

As we were walking round her, the farmer's wife accosted us, and it took but little persuasion on our part to induce her to pose beside the goddess. We had already taken a photograph of her father near the trough, and they now asked us into their charming old kitchen to drink a cup of cider.

"Which is your bed?" I asked, looking round at the five carved oak sleeping places that lined the walls.

The woman pointed to that beside the hearth and smiled indulgently.

"You have no beds in England?" she inquired sympathetically

I reassured her on this point, but added that it was our custom to sleep in separate rooms.

"But how lonely!" she exclaimed. "Bon Dieu, I should not dare to sleep so. Here we protect one another. My husband and I sleep there beside the fire, my father next to us, then my brother (that is his bed without shutters), and beyond lies the servant, Margot, with the children. This bed beside the window we keep for visitors."

From this room opened the stable, where a dozen or so cows and calves were housed.

As we refreshed ourselves at the table by the window, the woman went to stir the soup simmering in the great pot which hung from a chain over the fire, and while she did so sang us a strange old ballad, which I regret I did not write down, so deeply was I occupied with the exquisite grouping of the figures of the white-capped mother and her baby children, against the dark background of the cavernous hearth.

Upon leaving Quinipili we visited an ancient hermitage, now used as a chapel, excavated in the rock just above the road that runs past the entrance to the château. It seems strange that both at Castenec and Quinipili the old goddess should have had so near her a rock-dwelling hermit.

Our long-suffering chauffeur showed signs of relief when we told him that we should not want to stop again till we reached Hennebont. Any but a French driver would have rebelled at our loitering ways before this, for the country is so interesting that we were perpetually stopping to look at something or another. However, though temptation put itself in our way in the shape of a most fascinating-looking pardon that was being held at a little village we passed on the road, we resisted our inclination to descend, and were soon lunching in the comfortable and excellently clean Hôtel de France at Hennebont.

No town in all Brittany can rival in historical interest this old fortress lying in the mouth of the Blavet. It has been through so much, the poor old place, that little remains of the picturesque beauty that once characterized it. But there is still enough of the ancient fortification to call up remembrances of the Hennebont of Froissart's days. According to him it was: "One of the best fortified castles, and the strongest town without comparison in all Brittany, situated near the sea, with a river running about it in deep trenches."

One of the great gates still guards the landward entrance to what was the walled town of the fourteenth century, and as one gazes up at it there rises a vision of Sir Henry de Spinefort and Lord Jean de Montfort riding slowly and apprehensively towards it. Within the strong little place Sir Henry knows that his brother Oliver, to

whom he is much attached in spite of their differences in politics, is holding out for Lord Charles of Blois and the French, and is likely to give the Bretons and English, who have joined Lord Jean, a world of trouble before they can gain this fortress which is the key of Southern Brittany. He knows, too, the kind of punishment that is meted out to those who resist the Lord Jean, and so at last after a long silence he says—

"My lord, you have admitted me to the honour of your council, and I have sworn fealty to you. I perceive that you mean to sit down before Hennebont. You may lie before it a whole year, and never conquer it by force. But if you will put your trust in me I will show you how you may gain it. Give me five hundred men at arms and I will advance with them half a league before the rest of the army with the banner of Brittany displayed. As soon as my brother, who is commandant of the town and castle, shall see the banner and distinguish me, he will open the gates, and I will enter and seize the town and castle and arrest my brother, if for your part you will promise to do him no harm."

"By my head, I will not!" replies the Earl; "and you have hit upon a very lucky expedient. I shall love you more than ever if you can bring it about that I may be master of this town and castle."

And so was Hennebont gained for the Earl of Montfort, and Sir Henry talked in so persuasive a manner to his brother about the Lord Jean and his claims to the Duchy, that the inhabitants, headed by the commandant Sir Oliver de Spinefort, repented of their former ways and gave in their allegiance to the Earl of Montfort. Time passes. Jean de Montfort is a prisoner, and the Countess his wife has taken her little son and shut herself in her castle of

Hennebont, where she prepares to be besieged by Lord Charles of Blois, who has just taken Rennes, and is on his way hither accompanied by all the flower of the French nobility. A few leagues distant, however, they stop, and a curious scene takes place on the high-road.

Before all things Charles of Blois was a saint! Reading his story, it really seems as though he must always have been deliberately preparing for canonization. It has been told in another place how he walked barefoot from Roche-Derrien to Tréguier, making himself lame and unfit for service for a couple of months. It was on his way to besiege Hennebont that we have another example of his piety. Fearful that he might not find a place where to hear Mass, he told his priests to take with them wine, water, and fire in a pot, so that they could hold the office wherever they might happen to be. Being much pressed for time, the delay greatly vexed Auffroi de Montbourcher, one of the chief of his supporters.

"Sir," said he, "you see that your enemies are here close to you while you are amusing yourself at the risk of being taken."

But the holy Charles merely answered with his accustomed meekness, "Sir Auffroi, we shall always have plenty of towns and castles to take; and if we lose them we can get them back by the help of God. But if we neglect to hear Mass it will be a loss for which we can never make up."

And so after Mass was done they made their way on and sat down outside the gates, within which was the valiant countess.

She was in good spirits, the countess, for her garrison was well provisioned, she had absolute command of the port, and she had sent Sir Aumari de Clisson to her friend

Edward the Third of England, begging for help. She was, moreover, one of the bravest women who ever lived, with the courage of a man and the heart of a lion. In Brittany she is usually spoken of as Jeanne la Flamme, because of a very gallant deed she did, just after the French had taken up their position outside Hennebont. Villemarqué has told the story so vividly that, although it differs slightly from the actual facts as set down by historians of the period, I cannot do better than give a translation of it.

I

See the great flock of black, black sheep,
Come stealing down the mountain steep!

Ah no, it is the Frenchmen come,
Come to besiege our Breton home.

II

Carrying her baby full in sight
The duchess rides her palfry white.

Hark how the bells ring out amain,
While Hennebont shouts and shouts again:

"God keep the mother and her son,
And grant the French may be undone!"

As to the tower the duchess came,
She heard the Frenchmen call her name:

"Take them alive within the lair,
The young cub and his mother fair."

Quick, raging like a sudden flame,
Down to her men the duchess came.

Clad her in steel and helmet black,
And sprang upon a charger's back.

"Give me a sword in my right hand,
And in my left a flaming brand;

Welcome ye are to come or stay,
I, Jeanne la Flamme, will lead the way."

III

The French are feasting at their ease,
Singing and drinking as they please.

Close shut within their tents they lie,
Assured of full security.

Sudden towards the midnight skies,
A strange wild song is heard to rise,

And many a voice is hushed to hear,
While cheeks turn pale with dreadful fear.

"Who laughs to-night, shall weep e'er day,
Who eats white bread shall then eat clay!

"Who drinks red wine, warm blood will shed,
Who boasts himself shall soon lie dead!"

Now from all quarters rose the cry:
"'Tis Jeanne la Flamme, fly, comrades, fly."

See, like a monstrous glowing spire,
The towering flames mount higher, higher.

Even the wind its aid hath lent,
To help her in her brave intent.

For Jeanne hath with her flaming brand
Fired the French camp, and saved our land.

All night the fire raged wild and free,
Rejoicing in her victory,

And when the morn came late and grey,
The camp a smoking ruin lay.

IV

Our Jeanne la Flamme smiled from her tower
Upon the wreck of Frenchmen's power.

"A glorious harvest shall we reap
From these bold foemen laid to sleep!

"Truly our fathers taught right well
That foemen's bones the good corn swell!

"A glorious harvest shall we reap
From these bold foemen laid to sleep."

My readers probably know the poem, but I shall be forgiven for quoting it because of the fine picture it calls up of the great woman who so bravely defended this town of Hennebont against the enemies of her husband and little son.

But the firing of the French camp did not drive away the French. Day by day the attack grew fiercer. In vain the court ladies cut short their kirtles and fought like men, casting stones and pots of quicklime over the walls on the heads of the foe. Charles has sent to Rennes for his twelve great catapults, and day and night they are battering at the walls, and hurling huge rocks into the fortress. Men are getting scarce, and already the Bishop of Léon, who has so far remained faithful to the countess, is begging her to allow him to make terms with Lord Charles. One night he even steals out of the town, under cover of the darkness, and confers with his brother, Sir Hervé de Léon, who assures him that all the inhabitants will be spared and allowed to depart if only the countess will surrender.

But the countess is still hoping against hope that succour will arrive from England. The bishop shakes his head, and even her own knights tell her that the ship of Sir Amauri de Clisson must have been lost on its way out, or the English would have arrived long ago.

"Three more days!" begs the countess; "if the help does not arrive in that time we will surrender. Give me but three more days."

She spends them in her high tower overlooking the mouth of the Blavet, into which the ships must sail if they come at all. A day passes, two, it is the morning of the third. Already Sir Hervé de Léon is at the gate asking for admission, and his uncle is preparing to lead him to the countess, when Jeanne, who has risen before day, and is

gazing sadly from the window, suddenly springs to her feet, and throwing up her arms cries wildly —

"The succour I have so long wished for is coming. I can see the banner of England!" and the next moment she is lying senseless on the floor.

We are told that the bishop was so annoyed that he left the countess and joined his nephew's master. But the countess cared little for that.

"There are plenty more as good as he," she cried, as soon as she had recovered from her faint, and down she hastened to the water-gate to welcome Sir Walter Manny and his knights, kissing them all one after another, "as a gallant lady should."

The English had not been many hours ashore when they began to make things hot for the French.

"I should like before supper," said Sir Walter Manny, "to take a look at that great machine which is making such a noise. If we could destroy it we should all sleep more quietly."

And out of the great gate by which we have just entered he sallies, and presently returns, having silenced the engine, and "made many legs to kick the air," as Froissart has it.

Ah, there were many gallant deeds done before this old gate of Hennebont, and not the least brave were accomplished by our own countrymen.

At last, after several weeks' useless fighting, the siege was abandoned, and the French departed to try what could be done with the castle of Auray.

We had entered the massive old gateway as I was thinking of these things, and found ourselves in the narrow winding street of the ancient walled town. Beside the low entrance to the south tower of the gateway sat the old

custodian, who asked whether we would like to see the dungeons and the chambers over the entrance.

As she led us from prison to prison, she told the stories of those who had suffered and died there, till the gruesome place seemed thronged with pale phantoms, and I shuddered with horror. The more she noticed our interest, the more she gave way to her romances. In the ground-floor prison she told the story of Jeanne la Flamme much as it is given in the ballad. But on the way to the chapel above the countess's character underwent a change, and suffered considerably. She became a most immoral person, and a monster of cruelty besides, using these prisons as death chambers for the lovers of whom she had grown tired.

"It was here, madame," said the old woman in a hollow voice, as she laid her hand impressively on the stone shelf which she declared had once served as an altar—"it was here they came to attend Mass before they were put to death."

"What, these lovers of hers?" I inquired.

"Dame, oui," she groaned. "Ah les braves gens, combien, madame, combien!"

By this time she had worked herself into a proper condition to show us a dark passage beside the chapel, at the end of which was an oubliette. The old woman declared that it had been examined some few years ago and that knives, bones, and other horrors had been discovered.

And now her imagination quite ran away with her. Anne of Brittany had in some way become mixed up with the story, and by the time we reached the frightful lower dungeon, the good little "Duchesse en Sabots" had been carried back a century and was doing duty as the sister-in-law of Jeanne de Montfort.

Three ancient doors covered with locks and bolts, and

we stand in the dark cell! Fastened to the wall by a short chain is a ring of iron large enough to encircle the waist of a prisoner.

"It was here they passed their last days together," said the custodian in a thrilling whisper. "Ah, it is to be hoped that they repented of their wickedness!" Here she took up the ring of iron. "See, madame," she moaned in her heavy masculine voice, "it was by means of this that she was fastened to the wall. Picture to yourself, for a duchess, madame—for a duchess!"

It did not look a particularly attractive waistbelt for any one, duchess or otherwise.

"She must have had a slender waist," said I, trying to fit the ring round myself.

"Oh, she was without doubt fair enough," answered our guide; "but what is beauty, madame, without virtue!"

After bolting me into the dungeon that I might the better realize the feelings of poor Jeanne, she invited us up to her room above the gate, and asked us to sit down and rest.

It appeared that she considered herself very badly treated by the authorities, who simply gave her a room, and allowed her to make what she could by exhibiting the dungeons to visitors.

"While Défunt Fouquet—God rest his soul—was alive," she exclaimed, wiping her eyes respectfully at mention of the name of a late mayor of Hennebont, "I had my three francs a week, and a loaf of bread. Ah, what a man he was, madame, what a man he was! Mon Dieu, but things have changed since his day!"

She told us much about the life of the old town, with frequent references to her hero, Défunt Fouquet, each time never failing to wipe away a tribute of respect.

"Have you ever seen a ghost here?" I inquired, looking round the eerie chamber in which I would not have slept alone for a hundred pounds.

The old face became very heavy and mysterious.

"It is many years ago," said she. "My husband—God have mercy on him—was alive at the time. We had been for eight days settled in this apartment, when one night after we were in bed, suddenly in the room over this . . ." she turned and marched heavily backwards and forwards the length of the floor. Nothing could have been more expressive. No words could have made my flesh creep like that slow, deliberate, heavy tramp of her felt-slippered feet.

"Were you frightened?" I asked.

"Dame, oui, madame; it is not a pleasant sound to hear at midnight in this building. I lay still listening, while up and down, up and down . . ." again she took a short turn in the room.

"But my husband was more frightened than I. 'Go!' he cried. . . . Ah, madame, you know what men are, they are all alike. . . . 'Go and see who thou hast locked up in the chamber overhead!'

"Up I went with a candle, but though I peeped through the keyhole I could see nothing but the moonlight that came in through the window. And all the time" . . . another heavy tramp to the door and back.

"'Is there any one there,' I cried; 'say, is there any one there who wants his soul delivered?'

"There was a sigh, a groan, and the flame of the candle flickered and went out. You may picture to yourself, madame, whether I was long getting back to my husband!

"Next morning I told Monsieur l'Abbé. He came with twelve boys from the school, and while they sat here in

the room below saying good words, he ascended to the chamber. Some time he was gone, and on his return he said—

"'Marie le Flemm, you need never trouble yourself about the matter any more, the poor soul is at peace, it will not disturb you for the future.' Three times he repeated it to reassure me, and from that day to this all has been still as the grave."

With the last words her voice died away into silence, and a long impressive pause ensued. She had certainly mistaken her calling, this old Breton woman. On the stage she would have been a Mrs. Siddons. Her voice, her movements, the commanding majesty of her face, all belonged to a great tragedy queen, who could have moved men as she willed. Instead, fate had decreed that she should be the custodian of the gateway of Hennebont, to make tourists laugh with her strange fantastic stories. As I gave her a franc at parting, the poor old thing seized my hand and kissed it impulsively.

"Thank you, madame; thank you a thousand times! You are not like the others, you understand. You resemble Défunt Fouquet, God have his soul in His keeping!"

CHAPTER XIII

Carnac—The Benediction of the Beasts—Mont Saint Michel—The legend of Saint Cornély.

THE afternoon closed in grey and ghostly. As we sped southward the country itself began to alter in aspect, the smile died out of it, leaving it stern and sombre, as befitted the burial place of a prehistoric people.

At Merlévenez, an insignificant little village, there is a fine church, dating back to the Romanesque period, with grotesque carvings both outside and in, well worth a visit from a photographer. But the light was poor, and after a hasty glance we continued our journey.

More and more desolate grew the scene, darker and heavier the sky. Near Belz the road passes over a suspension bridge, spanning one of those arms of the sea which eat their way into the very heart of this low-lying country of Carnac, separating it, isolating it from the mainland, marking it out as a place apart.

To the ancients this sad, inaccessible realm of dreams and visions must have seemed a veritable underworld, and there can be little doubt that when the mourners took thither the bodies of their chiefs for burial, they thought that they actually visited the Land of Death. Conducted by some Iberian Charon, they crossed the "River," and found vast mysterious temples, served by a special race of

priests who were regarded almost as gods. After their return, the dread memories that haunted them of the mists, the phantoms, the wonders they had seen, grew and expanded, becoming in course of time a regular mythology, which persists to-day in the fables and legends of the district.

As we crossed the viaduct the tide was rising, swirling round the bases of the piers in deep glassy whirlpools of aqua-marine. Truly an awful place for a boat on a stormy day, an impressive representation of the River of Death! Having crossed this Armorican Styx we find ourselves in another world, a bare, rolling wilderness of scant grass, and stunted heather. The soil is so poor that the very gorse finds it hard to exist, and is small, starved, and dwarfish. Here and there, a few thin knots of pine trees break the monotony of the landscape, but for the rest it is grey and deathly, full of the ashes of the past. Grey mist blots out a grey horizon, grey sky lowers low over grey land, and as we plunge in among the labyrinth of loose grey walls that traverse the country like a gigantic cobweb, the greyness eats into our very souls, and we become silent and thoughtful.

Immediately to the north of the road, where we have left civilization in the form of the automobile, we find ourselves among the Stones of Erdeven. If my readers, following my example, approach Carnac from this quarter, it will be their first experience of these mysterious, prehistoric monuments.

I know nothing to compare in weird majesty with the *stones*. They stand in their rough grey robes of granite, the only memorials of the race who reared them. What were the people who left these rude unsculptured emblems to guard the tombs of their dead chieftains? They were not Iberians, those first inhabitants of Brittany, of whom

survivals may still be found in the hamlets nestling here and there among the menhirs.

This girl, for instance, wandering with her cow among the gorse and heather, what is she but a descendant of the short, dark, wiry people who lived here during the glacial period? Talk to her, if you can. You will find her inquisitive, it is true, anxious to know where you come from, what there is inside your camera, but it is not much more than the curiosity of a monkey. As for intellect, I am not sure but that the monkey has the advantage! Certain it is that no ancestor of hers raised these great pillars of stone, or built the temple tombs which we are about to visit.

It was the Aryans from central Asia who scattered these monuments over Europe. We know how, somewhere in the Neolithic period, a tall, fair, intellectual people came wandering westward from Asia, dominating and subduing the lower race they found already in possession of those countries through which they passed. With them came civilization, a knowledge of agriculture, domestic animals, an inflected language, and ideas of religion. They believed in a future life, burying their dead instead of leaving them to rot on the ground, or become the prey of wild beasts. In some dim way they worshipped a mighty, eternal god, whom they typified by the *menhir*, the huge granite pillar-stone, the most eternal thing they could find. And so deeply have those Aryans left their impress on most of the race, that in his heart the Breton believes, feels, and acts to-day very much as his ancestor did five thousand years ago. He sets up the sign of his God, the granite crucifix, at every cross-road, at the entrance to all his villages, almost on the very spot where the earlier man erected a menhir. Sometimes he even puts the cross on the top of the very menhir itself, as though wishing to express the idea of love triumphing over mere brute force. Or he carves a strange, short-armed cross out of the heart of the menhir, so unconsciously typifying the continuity of the two religions. Still he uses a modification of the quaint language of long ago, believes in wandering spirits, in fairies and demons. Still he lights his sacred fires, resorts to his miraculous fountains, carries charms and amulets about him. Still in spring time, nomad that he is, he takes to wandering off into the country, to distant Christian festivals that have supplanted the old pagan rites which his fathers celebrated on the self-same spots. He still considers certain stones as infallible for the cure of certain diseases, rubbing himself against them, or bathing them and drinking the water.

Above all he believes literally, as did the primitive Aryans, in a future life, regarding it indeed as a mere continuation of his present existence. This it was which marked the Aryan so distinctly from the lower race he conquered, the people who had no religion, no idea of God. It was this which led him to build dolmens wherein to lay his dead, and when once he had arrived at the idea of such a building as the dolmen, the rest was merely a question of time and available material. Where marble was plentiful, the little rude sanctuary gradually expanded into the Greek temple; where there was only granite, the architecture developed more slowly and clumsily, but still developed; so that it is not too much to say that the beautiful buildings of Greece, Italy, France, and England owe their original conception to the strong, masterful, religious race, a tribe of which set up these monuments in Morbihan. Egypt exerted an influence in the process of development and perfecting, but the first germ of the temple is contained in the dolmen.

Let us, therefore, not linger among the stones of Erdeven, weird and impressive as they are, but set off through the grey mist that is beginning to fall in fine rain, toward one of the little groups of farm buildings, away to the right, for there we shall find one of the finest of these temple tombs.

How can one give any sense of the extraordinary solitude of this country! Beneath the whole grey span of sky there is not a note of sound or colour, not a bird, a sheep, a cow, still less a human being. Villages there are, built from the Stones themselves, but apparently the whole district is deserted during the day, though in the night, who knows what takes place! According to the legends, we are in the land of wicked gnomes and fairies, who hold mad revels here by moonlight. The weird little elfish children one occasionally comes across will tell of Korrigan dances, and babies who have been stolen from their mothers by fairies living in the dolmens, who must surely be spirits of the ancient chiefs once buried there. They are a malicious race, these Korrigans, it is death to come upon them during one of their merry-makings, for one is drawn into their magic circle, and whirled round and round till one dies of fatigue and giddiness.

As we made our way among the intricate maze of loose walls that form a network of narrow lanes over this part of the country, the stillness closed down upon us, till we felt as Ulysses must have done when he came to the land where the Cimmerians dwell, "encompassed around with mist and cloud, those regions of the dead, where never doth the sun behold them, but darkness surrounds them for evermore." Our voices when we spoke sounded so sharp and loud in the deathlike stillness, that they startled us, and we shrank back into a whisper.

THE DOLMEN OF CRUCUNO

THE STATUE OF SAINT CORNÉLY AND HIS OXEN ABOVE THE DOOR OF THE CHURCH OF CARNAC

At last, in one of the deserted villages, we found a solitary boy, who undertook to guide us to the Dolmen of Crucuno. He was a morose child, no doubt one grows silent dwelling in that phantom land. However, after a while, he cheered up and told us one or two stories of men who had found treasure buried beneath the stones. He said that the best time to seek for it was on New Year's Eve, for then the Stones leave their places to go and drink at the river, leaving the gold that lies beneath them exposed. But the boy declared that it was dangerous work, and not to be attempted save by one who carried a horse-shoe, or a four-leafed trefoil. At the entrance to the village of Crucuno he stopped, and refused to go any further.

"You will find the dolmen," said he; "but for us, we do not enter strangers' villages." And with this extraordinary statement he made off by the way he had come, just as two little girls came forward to inspect us.

The dolmen is magnificent, a true mortuary chapel, beneath the floor of which some mighty Aryan chief was once buried. The approach, the nave, or as it is technically called, the *allée couverte*, has been destroyed, the stones having no doubt been used to build the cottage which now stands against the dolmen. But the large chamber, or sanctuary, is perfect as when the chief was first buried, and it requires but little imagination to realize the vanished part of the building, with the funeral party grouped around the entrance, the priest offering sacrifice on the stone at the end of the nave.

In one of the most ancient of the Vedic hymns there have come down to us words chanted on such an occasion by that branch of the Aryan race which settled in India. It may be that some such dirge was sung at the funeral of the chief of the Crucuno dolmen.

"Go thou far from us, thou who seest not, and hearest not. Fall not upon our warriors, nor upon our children; we stand separated from the dead. Between those living and him now dead we heap up stones. Let none pass beyond them. By this stone we now raise up let death be kept away. First let the women not yet widowed, those with noble husbands, go hence, strong, adorned with jewels, let them not weep, but go toward their homes. Now let the wife of the dead man arise. Let her go to the world of the living. Your husband's life has fled, you are now the wife of him who grasps your hand and leads you forth. Take now the bow from the hand of him who lies dead. . . ."

Before the clansmen left the spot they had another task to perform. The dolmen had to be covered up with earth. This was a sacred duty to the dead. It will be remembered that when Ulysses met Elphenor in the Dwellings of the Dead, the latter made request that his body might be burnt with fire and covered with a mound. Ulysses and the other Hellenic heroes, belonging as they did to a branch of the Aryan family, kept somewhat the same mode of burial that had prevailed in the old land from which all Aryan tribes migrated.

"Forget me not," Elphenor implores, "neither leave me without lamentation or burial. Burn me with fire and my arms with me; and make a mound for me by the shore of the sea. . . ."

The Vedic hymn to which I have referred says with regard to this piling up of earth above the tomb—

"Oh Earth, as a mother covers her child with her garment, so do thou cover him with thy arms. May the earth which has been raised above him like a tower become light to him, may it give him shelter, and serve him as a canopy."

To-day the dolmen of Crucuno is quite uncovered, while others, such as that in the Mont Saint Michel at Carnac, still lie in the depths of the hills that have been raised over them. It is probable that at the time of the funeral all that was done was to cover in the dolmen, leaving the entrance accessible. Afterwards, when members of the clan came to the dolmen to worship on the anniversary of the dead chief's death, they added to the mound, the men bringing stones, the women baskets of earth. Thus the dimensions of his mound depended on his popularity, and the size and importance of his clan. To his descendants he came to be regarded as a god, and offerings were made in the dolmen which was at once his tomb and his mortuary chapel. If his tribe prospered and grew, the mound gradually grew also, till it became a veritable hill, in which later members of the same family were interred.

Beyond Crucuno is a dolmen that deserves special notice. It lies in a field to the south of the road. The "nave," or *allée couverte*, is still standing, and consists of two rows of great slabs placed side by side, roofed with other slabs. The passage thus formed leads to a square chamber built in a similar manner, which may be taken to represent the sanctuary or chancel of this primitive church, while from it on either side open two chambers or mortuary chapels, each roofed with a single flat granite block. No doubt this curious building was the family vault and chapel of some great clan. It curiously foreshadows the cruciform church of to-day.

By the time we had found our way back through the granite maze to the high-road where we had left the automobile, we were damp enough to enjoy the comfort of our warm dry rugs, and as twilight was gathering, set off

with thankful hearts toward the great centre of all mysteries, the Alignments of Carnac. What is this vast monument of Carnac?

The guardian of the museum, Zacharie le Rouzic, who since boyhood has lived, laboured, and dreamed among the stones, believes that the Alignments represent some vast religious monument, where that tribe of the Aryans called the Celts, they who pushed furthest westward in the great emigration across Europe, assembled at certain seasons to celebrate their sacred festivals. The ten aisles formed by the rows of vast stones that stretch for nearly three miles across the open country, were ten sacred ways, down which the tribesmen walked or danced in procession, singing wild chants, and leading their victims toward the cromlechs or sanctuaries where stood the priests waiting to offer up sacrifices.

It was, in fact, or so it seems to those who have studied the subject, a vast temple dedicated to the supreme god of all Aryans, Father Heaven or Sky. No roof had it, for why should a temple dedicated to the sky be covered in? The stones themselves may have represented the great heroes of the past, who thus stood continually adoring the great god, in the same manner as the granite figures of the apostles or saints, or the sculptured forms of our dead ancestors, find a place down either side of a modern church.

It was to this vast "Westminster Abbey" that, from all parts of western Europe, the great Celtic chiefs were brought for burial, that they might rest in the sacred precincts of the Holy Place. As in many Christian churches to-day the bones of early heroes and saints receive special honour, so were the tombs of these mighty warriors regarded as sacred. As masses are said on the various

saints days, so did the tribes who claimed these neolithic chiefs as ancestors make pilgrimages to their shrines on the anniversaries of their deaths, to offer up sacrifices for the repose of their souls, and beg favours on behalf of themselves.

There is at least one instance where we shall find this ancestor worship persisting at Carnac to the present day; Christianized it is true, the old chief figuring even as a Pope of Rome. But if we look closely at his triple crown, we shall find that it is in reality a prehistoric headdress, just as the pontifical robes in which the ages have dressed him are only coverings to disguise the rank paganism that is at the heart of his worship.

* * * * * *

But here we are at the door of that most charming of hostels, the Hôtel des Voyageurs, and here is mademoiselle looking like a nun in her white cap and little grey shawl, come out to us, attended by her pretty niece, and the crowd of funny, merry little women servants who are such a feature of the inn at Carnac.

"We are quite full!" cries mademoiselle . . . . Then as I raise my veil, "Ah, it is madame!" and next moment I am embraced, smiled over, laughed over, carried into the great kitchen, and set down in the chimney to dry, and give an account of myself.

"And why have you not been here for so long?" inquires mademoiselle, reproachfully, after the little women have finished running up and down stairs with our baggage, like an army of tiny ants building a nest. "Oh yes!" she continues, as I ask anxiously where we are to sleep—"oh yes, I said that the house was full. So it is, but not for madame! The Hôtel des Voyageurs is never too full for so old a customer as madame!" And she squeezes

my arm sentimentally, while her little fussy satellites stand round in a semicircle laughing with delight, and making absurd, ecstatic exclamations to each other about our appearance, which, to tell truth, is by this time decidedly dusty and travel-stained.

After thanking the good creature with a very sincere sigh of relief, I go on to explain that there were other places I had to visit, that pilgrimages to Carnac could only be made once in several years, it had always been so even at the time of the great pagan festivals. But at this unorthodox allusion mademoiselle looks serious and shakes her finger at me, saying that it is to Saint Cornély the pilgrimages are made nowadays, and that I know it very well or I should not be sitting there on the afternoon before the thirteenth of September. . . .

At this sally of mademoiselle's there is a merry ripple of laughter from the admiring circle, and I looked round at the rosy, apple-cheeked group with amazement.

"Why, so it is! To-morrow is the thirteenth of September! We shall see the Benediction of the Beasts at last!"

* * * * *

The Benediction of the Beasts! How often had I wished to be present at this extraordinary survival of a pagan cult, believing as I do that the so-called Saint Cornély is none other than the chief who once lay beneath the great tumulus now called the Mont St. Michel.

After dinner, finding that a light breeze had arisen and chased away the clouds, I strolled up to the mount to meditate. There is an old calvary on the top, and a chapel, sole survival of the little monastery, whose foundations are still to be seen. The chapel is dedicated to Saint Michel, Prince of Dragon Slayers, and no doubt was

placed here in order that the great archangel might keep watch and ward over the region so long devoted to the worship of pagan gods, who are ever regarded as evil spirits, demons, dragons, by the priests of a later religion. The moon had risen in the slate-blue sky, and the desolate land lay floating on a sea of silvery mist. My readers will remember Souvestre's beautiful description of the scene—

"As far as eye can reach the eleven rows of stones stretch away into the night, an army of motionless phantoms, drawn up to be reviewed by Death, who, armed with his scythe, mounted on his skeleton horse, will surely come riding down between their ranks. The moon across which the clouds are drifting, now lights the stones, now plunges them in shadow, so that they seem to move mysteriously."

But standing on the height it is not of the stones that one dreams, they are too far away to be effective, mere dots on the vast plain. No, it is the mount itself that fills one's thoughts, as one sits up there alone in the moonlight.

Before Zacherie le Rouzic excavated the mount, honeycombing it with his marvellously designed and executed tunnels, the Saint Michel was simply a hill, but an artificial hill, to which, until lately, the pilgrims who came to the "Christian" festival of Saint Cornély added their contributions of earth and stones.

No pilgrim knew why he did this, any more than he knew why he came to visit Saint Cornély at this particular spot, bathing and purifying himself at the fountain in the curious pagan manner he used. But as I sat there on the eve of the Festival of the Oxen, the explanation of the whole cult became as plain to me as such an ancient custom can.

The people of this region never forgot the great foreign chief brought here for sepulture in the dim days of their early forefathers.

During the two or three thousand years that intervened between his burial and the advent of Christianity, the story of that Neolithic funeral underwent many modifications, growing in wonder and mystery as it was handed down from generation to generation. It told of the strange rites practised on that day, of the tall, princely strangers who formed the cortége, all drawn up in lines over the plain, of the sacrifices, the feastings, the sacred dances and processions, of the building of the wonderful tomb . . . nothing was forgotten, yet all was magnified, symbolized, "mythified," if I may be allowed to coin a word. The chief became a sort of deity, dwelling in the mysterious mound that had been raised over him. Here he was visited at stated intervals by members of his clan, who practised in his honour certain rites of which the ignorant peasants of the neighbourhood picked up the outward and visible forms, but knew nothing of the inward truth. Only one detail remained unchanged. When this mighty being came to take up his everlasting abode at Carnac, he arrived wrapped in splendid skins, adorned with necklaces and bracelets, lying on a moving couch, drawn—oh, wonder of wonders!—by two great unknown beasts with horns, beasts which were offered in sacrifice as soon as their master had been laid in his grave.

In course of time, as he was one of the oldest and greatest of the chiefs buried in this cemetery, he took rank as the tutelary god of the district, and was so honoured, his worship continuing to be associated with oxen.

When the Romans came and conquered Morbihan, the massacre of the inhabitants was so general that the legend

of the old Aryan chief was considerably changed. But horned beasts were still connected with the worship which was practised at Carnac, as may be seen from the little bronze bulls found among the ruins of the Roman villas.

Time passed, and Christianity came to southern Brittany. The first missionaries who penetrated to Carnac found the people still adoring a Druidized, Romanized re-incarnation of the phantom of the old Neolithic chief. As horned animals still played a part in his worship, they renamed him Cornelius or Cornély, after a certain papal saint of the Roman Church, crowned him with the triple crown, wrapped him in splendid pontifical vestments, but left him as ever the Patron of Oxen. Hundreds of years have passed since then, and still the spirit of the Celtic Aryan reigns triumphant at Carnac. What cares he about the name he bears, so long as the pilgrims who come to his festival continue to heap up stones and earth upon his mound and to use the strange magical rites and ablutions he himself practised when in life? Even last year oxen were still brought to him, made to kneel and adore his figure which stands over the church door, and after being blessed by his priest, taken away and sold under his banner for the benefit of the splendid church which has superseded his little mortuary chapel in the heart of the Mont Saint Michel.

But for some years lately the festival of Saint Cornély has been changing. The curious customs that connected it with the old worship have been gradually suppressed, and Cornély himself as Patron of horned beasts seems likely to be forgotten, to become merely a Christian saint, though still a somewhat unorthodox member of the fraternity.

One day when rummaging among the tombs he has

found in the mound, Zacherie le Rouzic, "High Priest of the Cult of the Stones at Carnac," came upon a chamber lying close beside that of the old chief; and in it were the burned remains of the skeletons of two oxen!

Strange, is it not, to see above the principal door of the Christian church to-day the statue of the tutelary saint of Carnac, supported on either side by one of his favourite oxen, while close by, in the heart of the mound, he lay there through the ages, and beside him the bones of the original beasts?

Have I made too much of the story? . . . I hope not. It possessed me, not only as I sat on the sacred mount in the moonlight, but next morning when I woke and heard the bells ringing for Mass, and cows and calves lowing as they passed through the town on their way to the meadow that has always been reserved for them.

And the Benediction of the Beasts itself? Ah, that is another story!

For the first time for hundreds, nay, as I believe, for thousands of years, the beasts went away unblessed by the priests. The crowd that always assembles to watch the curious ceremony gathered round the church door, cameras were ready, cows and oxen made their appearance, but the doors remained obstinately closed.

A hawker of toys, into whose cart I had climbed to get a better view, explained the matter thus—

"They haven't been paid enough," said he. "You don't find the Church giving its blessing for nothing—at least, not in these days. But there, I dare say they'll get on just as well without it up in the meadow."

All the same, it was a sad disappointment to some of us; though when we came to think the matter over we could not but feel that it was interesting to have assisted at the

beginning of a new era in the Cult of Carnac. For I think that there is no doubt that what we witnessed was the final separation between the Christian worship and the original old religion of the Mont Saint Michel. The Church has at length refused her sanction to the traditional cult of the district.

So I left the closed and empty church and made my way down to the museum, where I found that exponent of the earlier faith, Zacherie le Rouzic, looking like a pre-historic king, triumphantly holding forth on his favourite theme. Here, at all events, the old religion was in no danger of being forgotten.

How full were the streets of the little town! Gipsies had set up their booths on either side, and between them poured a broad, slowly moving stream of handsome peasants, dressed in their best, all wending their way to the meadow. Most of the women wore the little white bonnet caps of Vannes, though there were many of the great Auray hoods, which remind one so forcibly of those the Welsh women once wore. There was also a good sprinkling of the curious Phœnician-like coifs which come from the Ile aux Moines, coifs that give a strange classic aspect to the proud, dark-looking women who wear them.

Down the side of the meadow are set up drinking booths, the long arched tunnels of sailcloth familiar to every one who has seen a Breton pardon. Beside each is the cider barrel, and here the young farmers are to be found trying sheepishly to persuade their sweethearts to share a glass with them. It is to these tents also that men come to drink together after shaking hands, in their noisy way, over a deal they have made. As for the rest of the meadow, it is filled with groups of cattle, and in the brilliant sunshine nothing can be more picturesque.

Yet as I wander round there seems to me in the soft eyes of the cows a saddened look, and one dear old black and white lady, who is very thirsty after her long walk from Quiberon, gives me a pathetic glance that sends me away wondering whether the Church has done wisely in refusing to sanction any longer the ancient recognition accorded by the older religion, of the rights and needs of beasts.

From the meadow I strolled to the square, and was watching the setting up of the inevitable merry-go-round, when I was accosted by a delightful looking old woman against whose door I was standing. She was broad and thick-set, and her brown old face set deep in its white hood made one think of some russet apple.

" Are there no festivals in England ?" she inquired, with the Breton's usual thirst for knowledge.

I shook my head.

" Ah !" said she, looking very serious, " so I have heard. That, no doubt, is why so many English come to Brittany. Well, for my part they are welcome, though you would not find every one who would say so."

I replied that I had always found her people most kind.

" But madame is not English," said she, " madame is Celtic. We Celts love one another. When England was Celtic it had religion. Many of our saints came from there. Since they left, however, the Saxons have destroyed the country, and it is now pagan as our land once was."

I inquired whether Saint Cornély had been an Englishman.

" God forbid !" she exclaimed, crossing herself ; " Saint Cornély came from Rome. He was pope ; and what a pope! Mon Dieu! not only was he protector of men, he loved all creation, beasts as well as men. Is it possible that madame does not know the story of Saint Cornély ?"

I deplored my ignorance, and the old lady threw up her hands in amazement.

" Madame is assuredly a Christian," she said ; " we all saw her at Mass. A Christian and not to have heard of Saint Cornély ! "

" The books," said I, apologetically, " speak of Cornelian, a Pope of Rome. Was he the same as Saint Cornély ? "

" The books ! " she exclaimed, with great contempt. " Who needs a book to tell of the glorious Saint Cornély ? See, madame, I shall tell you myself, I Genovéfa Morvan, his humble church-cleaner.

" It was during the reign of the wicked Emperor Decius that our Cornély came to us. He was a very cruel man, was the emperor, and persecuted the Christians, so that for a long time there was no one found brave enough to be pope. Then at last came our 'Bien-heureux,' who seeing the blood of the Christians flow like water, raised his voice on their behalf. In return the emperor banished him, drove him from Rome ! Mon Dieu ! it was as when Sodom and Gomorrah drove away the brother of the Blessed Abraham ! Therefore one night Saint Cornély placed all his goods on a cart, to which he attached two oxen, and after saying farewell to his friends, journeyed away into Brittany.

" But no sooner had he departed than the furious emperor repented that he had not slain him, and calling his captain told him to take an army and bring the pope back to Rome. It was here at Carnac that they overtook him. Before him lay the sea, behind was the host of the emperor, there seemed no way of escape. Then falling on his knees Saint Cornély prayed aloud to be delivered. When he rose, there indeed stood the army as before, stretching over

the plain, but each man was now of stone, as we see him to-day; and the saint remained here with his oxen till his death, and taught us Christianity."

"The books," I suggested timidly, "say that Cornelian, who I think must have been the same person as your Saint Cornély, went back to Rome and was martyred."

"Without doubt, books will say anything! But you need not trust my word, you may see for yourself that what I say is true."

She led the way up a dark old staircase to a room on the first floor, a kind of sacristry, and showed me relics of the saint. I forget what they were, the usual tiny, yellow, indefinite morsels. There was a fine monstrance, I remember, and some other treasures. But what caught my eye at once was a collection of horns, antelopes' horns, stags' horns, horns of oxen and reindeer.

"Where did you get these?" I asked.

"They were found buried beneath the church," the old woman assured me; but why, when, or by whom she could not tell.

So after buying one of the rude coloured pictures of the saint, where he figures in more than human size, surrounded by his dumb friends, I made my way back to the hotel, where lunch was ready. It was rather a silent meal, for, like ourselves, every one had come to see the ceremony, and to tell the truth it had been somewhat of a "take in." Many of the guests were learned archæologists, whose names are known in connection with matters prehistoric. They talked together in low voices of the attitude the Church is assuming in Brittany, till one of them, an intellectual-looking, keen-faced man, said that after all it was some satisfaction to think that this mushroom growth of Christianity was to be cleared away, and the

Cult of the Stones left once more in its primitive eternal mystery. He made the astounding remark with a sly twinkle in his eyes, having noticed two very stout, red-faced priests listening indignantly to the conversation.

But if it was quiet within doors, a perfect pandemonium was reigning without. The merry-go-round had been fixed and, owing to the suppression of the religious ceremonies, had begun earlier than usual; in fact, all the fun of the fair was in full swing. Round and round went the circle of wooden horses, each with its serious-faced rider on its back, and between the horses were revolving seats that whirled round horribly, making their foolish occupants sick and giddy, and all the time the so-called music filled every corner of the little town with its penetrating, raucous din, and the old white horse walked round and round in the centre of all the gaudy paint and looking-glasses, turning the diabolical machine, the only sane and reasonable being connected with the whole concern.

Penny squeakers were beginning to sound, accompanying the shrill voices of fat pigs, protesting against being hustled into farmers' carts. And there was the continuous stream of men and women, moving slowly along, talking at the top of their voices. At last the noise became so intolerable that we returned to the cool tranquillity of the museum to obtain some information as to Cup Marks, those mysterious circular depressions found on sacred stones in all parts of the world.

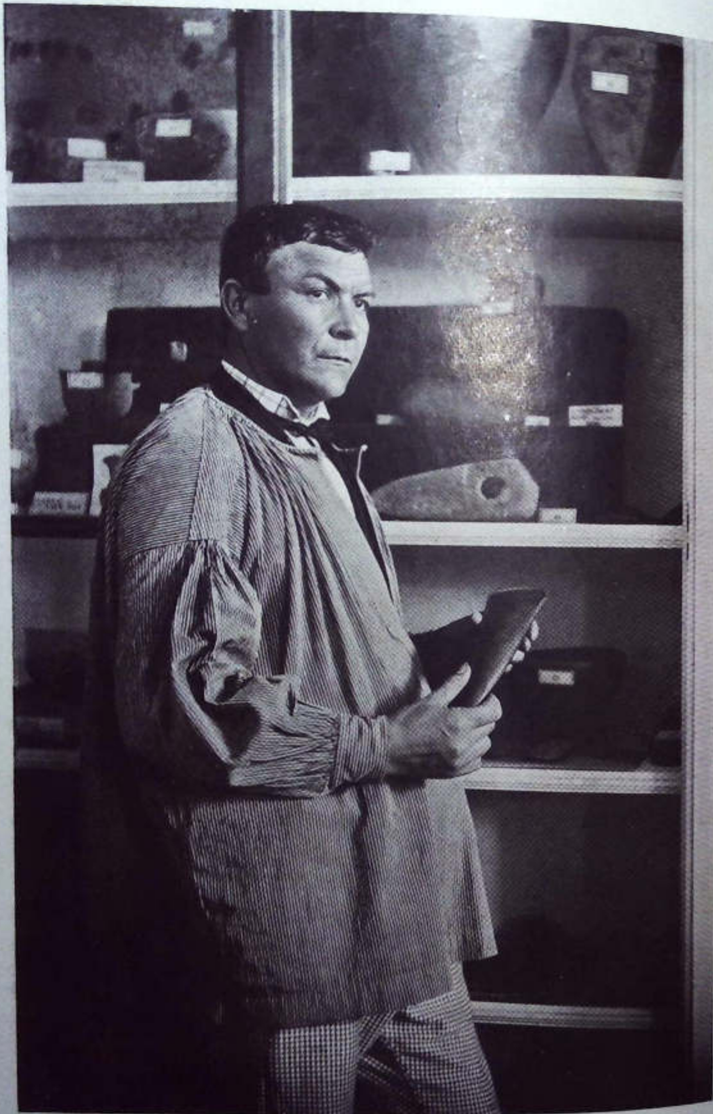
"The finest in this neighbourhood," said the curator, "are on the dolmen of Rocenaud, on the Peninsula of Quiberon. If you have nothing better to do I will show them to you this afternoon."

It would be difficult to find anything "better to do" than to be shown things prehistoric by Zacherie le Rouzic;

so about one o'clock we called for him at his house at the foot of the Mont Saint Michel.

"Shall we take a look at the excavations before we go?" he asked. "You have not seen them since they were finished."

No, last time we had entered that narrow, black opening, the passage that Le Rouzic and his men were digging through the heart of the tumulus was rough and insecure, shored up with bits of old wood, and I remember thinking what terribly dangerous work it was upon which this man was engaged, working away in the rubble heap which at any moment might fall in and bury him alive. But now, as we made our way to the chamber of the chief, we passed through neat stone galleries, in the walls of which opened to left and right round recesses which were the graves of later members of the chief's clan. At last, after passing the chamber where the bulls had been found, we came to the entrance of the central dolmen. I had photographed it some years before, and it was as well that I had, for it had been found necessary to build within it many little pillars to support the great roof stone which was cracked across, broken by some earlier excavator. The tomb of the Founder of Carnac had been to all intents and purposes destroyed. But as we came out of the darkness into the sunlight, I felt him still beside me, the mighty old man, and it was not till we had lost sight of the Mound and gone some distance toward Quiberon that his spirit left me.



MONSIEUR ZACHERIE LE ROUZIC

CHAPTER XIV

The Peninsula of Quiberon—the Dolmen of Rocenaud—Cæsar's conquest of the Veneti—the Massacre of Quiberon—Lotivy—Quiberon—Locmariaquer—Gavr' Innis.

ONE of the strangest parts of the Morbihan is the narrow tongue of land stretching out into the ocean, the Peninsula of Quiberon. It is so slender that at one point, Fort Penthièvre, there is only just room for the road and the railway to pass.

It was a perfect afternoon, the wind in the north, a slight breeze ruffling the surface of the sea. As we sped down the level road that leads along this natural pier, and found ourselves encompassed on either hand by the waters of the Atlantic, the world seemed to resolve itself into a jewel of turquoise and aqua-marine, set in silver, and seen through a mist of amber.

"The weather seems settled," I observed to the curator, who sat beside me in his blue blouse, his broad felt hat with its long velvet ribbons shading his powerful intellectual face.

An extraordinary man, this Zacherie le Rouzic, surely a descendant of the ancient race, the Venetii of whom Cæsar speaks, they who worshipped at Carnac and Mont Saint Michel. The Cult of the Stones is still his religion. All his interest in life centres round them; probably no one living knows so much about them as he.

"They have been my passion since I was ten years

old!" he one day told me simply. "Sometimes, on a sunny morning, when I stand looking down the long aisles of Carnac, I can see the tribes coming, the wild skin-clad men, dancing, singing, driving their victims toward the cromlech where I am waiting with the priests. I can see them! I can see them!"

His eyes as he spoke, strange black eyes, that seem to find it difficult to focus themselves on anything nearer than the neolithic age in which their owner is always living, blazed for a moment into mine, and then faded back into the past. To those who know him, and are interested in what, to him, is so supremely important, Monsieur le Rouzic delights to open the storehouse of his knowledge, and the dead Stones of Carnac straightway become living memorials. He shows to such persons stone sacrificial knives he has found in the tombs he has opened, and tells how they were used for religious purposes long after metal had been discovered, just as the Egyptian priests employed a flint knife for the sacred purposes of embalmment, and the Jews of to-day keep one for the rite of circumcision. There are little stone amulet knives too, which were worn as charms, and axe heads that could never have been intended for use at all, unfurnished as they are with any means of fixing them to a handle, axe heads that were simply votive offerings laid beside the dead, and symbolizing, as in Egypt, the power and strength of God. Above all, he will show the skeletons of the ancient people, still lying crouched in tombs that have been carefully modelled from the cists in which they were found. In the glass cases of the Milne Museum are several such skeletons, among the shrivelled yellow bones of which were found necklaces of amber and turquoise, beside all the domestic utensils needed at that early time.

And it was he who had unearthed all these treasures, who was taking us to see the examples of the Cup Marks, concerning which I had so often wondered.

When last I had visited Quiberon the harvest was about, and on the common threshing floor of every little group of houses women were beating out the grain, while others winnowed it in their primitive, wasteful fashion. I remember telling one of them about the machines that do the work with us.

"Yes," she said, "I've heard of them. Nasty, dirty things, I should think! We shouldn't like to have our corn winnowed like that!"

As we stopped at Rocenaud to-day, the village was deserted save for an old witch of seventy and a few ragged-looking children; every one else had gone to Carnac.

The great dolmen stands in the centre of the place, the white cottages being all built around it in a very suggestive fashion. After pointing out to us the Cup Marks, which are grouped after a rough semblance of the constellation Pleiades, M. le Rouzic turned to the old woman who was looking on.

"My friend wants to know what these marks are for?" he inquired in Breton.

The old lady smiled shrewdly. "Folks say," said she, "that they were made by the elbows and knees of Saint Roch. He fell down on this stone when he landed from Ireland."

"Ah, that's very interesting. Do you believe it?"

The old woman shrugged her shoulders. "It's as good as any other explanation," she observed philosophically. "We use the holes now when we want the wind to change. We knock in them."

"Do ask her to knock!" I cried eagerly, as soon as the mysterious speech had been translated.

There was a moment of hesitation on the part of the old woman, a half-franc shown in a careless way, and . . .

"What wind would madam like to have?"

"South-west," said I, looking at the cloudless sky.

The old woman took up a flint, and went slowly to the dolmen. Without any pause for reflection she knocked three times in a particular depression, murmuring some words I should not have understood even had they been audible.

"Come," observed our friend, "we have yet to see the rest of the peninsula."

The old woman said something, at which M. le Rouzic laughed.

"She says that if we are going further it will be best to be quick," said he.

"Why?"

"The rain you asked for will be here shortly!"

As we set off once more I noticed that the wind which, up to then, had been at our backs, blew in our faces. Gradually the sky which had been so blue and dazzling became grey, and a mist crept up from the sea blotting out the south-west horizon.

I know it sounds an absurd story, indeed I scarcely expect any of my readers to believe it, but the fact remains that within an hour it rained! A storm, fortunately a slight and passing storm, a fairy storm as it seemed, came blowing in upon us from the south-west, and for a while the curtains had to be let down to keep out the driving rain. Truly, there are more things in heaven and earth—as the poet says!

The Bay of Quiberon is a place of terrible memories. It was here that the great naval fight took place between

Cæsar's fleet and the two hundred and twenty ships of the Veneti, the people who inhabited this portion of Brittany at the time of the coming of the Romans. We can almost see the vessels come sailing into the bay as we read the words of the Roman general—

"The enemy's vessels had flatter keels than ours, so that they were not so likely to get aground in those shallow waters (for much of the fight took place in the actual Gulf of Morbihan). Their prows were very high, their poops specially constructed to resist the violence of waves and tempests. All the ships were built of oak, able to sustain the rudest shocks, the benches formed from beams an inch thick, fastened in place by great iron pins. The anchors were held by iron chains in place of ropes, the sails being of supple well-tanned leather instead of sail-cloth. During the action our only advantage lay in the superior quickness and smartness of our rowers, the Veneti being far better prepared against the violent tempests that prevail in these waters."

It was a gallant defence which the inhabitants of the coast and islands of Morbihan made, for in spite of Cæsar's words, the poor ignorant fisher people found themselves face to face with the skilled legions of Rome. They fought bravely, however, and there is no knowing what the result would have been, had not the treacherous wind, that at first favoured them and made them a match for their foes, suddenly dropped, leaving the ships of the poor "barbarians," as Cæsar calls them, stranded, for they had no oars to trust to like their enemies. Then took place the awful massacre of which the Romans themselves have left the record. The Veneti were brave enough, and could have held their own fighting at close quarters. But they knew nothing about slings and catapults, and

all those advanced instruments of war which enabled the Romans to attack at a safe distance. They were soon, therefore, worsted by their foes, who burnt their ships, killed those who did not kill themselves, and finally, after cutting the throats of all the chief inhabitants of the district, sold the rest as slaves.

Years passed; the Roman domination ceased. Saxons ravaged the land, and the Britons arrived, bringing Christianity and peace with them. In this remote Peninsula of Quiberon much that took place in other parts of Brittany passed unheeded. But in 1795 it was again the scene of a massacre.

The Royalists under Puisaye determined to make an attempt to re-establish the monarchy in France, and with this end in view invited all the *emigrés* who had taken refuge in England to join the Chouans at Carnac in June, and march on Vannes and Rennes. It was a disastrous failure. Ill led, and ill supported by the English, these four thousand gentlemen, hearing that General Hoche was coming upon them, took up their stand in the Peninsula of Quiberon behind Fort Pentièvre. As long as they held the fort they were safe, and if only the English had sent to rescue them, might have escaped. But the Republican general captured the fort, the boats did not arrive, and the miserable men were taken in a death-trap. Some were drowned, many butchered, and the rest, after being led to hope for pardon, were shot to the number of eight hundred in a meadow, called to-day the Martyrs' Field, near Auray. Out of the four thousand, not more than four or five hundred escaped.

To-day, the long strip of land is peaceful and at rest, chiefly known as one of the centres of the sardine fishery, but the horrors of the past have left their mark upon it, and it is a Land of the Dead through which we pass. As at Carnac, there are no trees, and the sand dunes, covered with thin, poor grass, resemble barrows beneath which ancient heroes are slumbering. The old women grubbing in their potato patches remind one of ghouls or vampires scratching for something they have left behind in their graves. And as for the children . . .

"They make me think of that text in the Bible," said my husband, "'And the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground'!"

Here and there seaweed is being burned for the iodine it contains, and the smoke of the fires hangs over the land like the smoke of those horrible sacrifices offered in earlier ages to the gods of the sea.

At Saint Pierre there is a fine group of twenty-one menhirs, and not far from these lies the little fishing village of Lotivy, where most of the *emigrés* landed. It is a tiny place with an old church, in which are many votive pictures of ships, painted by men who have escaped from wrecks.

As we were looking at them, there came in a very old and feeble woman, who knelt down before the figure of Our Lady of Lotivy, and after saying her prayer, came and joined me before the picture I was examining.

"Did you know him?" I asked gently, pointing to the inscription beneath, telling how one François Keller, Capitaine de Bihan de Quiberon, had been surprised by "un ouragan épouvantable," and had escaped only by the merciful intervention of Our Lady of Lotivy. "Did you know this Captain Keller?"

The dull eyes of the old woman turned slowly from the picture and fixed themselves on my face.

"Oh, aye!" she said, "I knew him well. He was my

husband. A good man, a very good man. I wanted for nothing as long as he lived."

"How happy you must have been to see him safely back after such a storm," I remarked, looking at the amazing waves which were apparently swallowing the ship.

"Happy?" repeated the old woman dully, as though she had forgotten the meaning of the word. "Ah, yes, I was happy to have him back, my good Fanch. But I soon lost him. He was drowned off Hirlande two years after. Fifty years ago it was, fifty years ago to-day."

The poor old creature had turned her eyes once more to the picture and was regarding it with that dumb expression which in the peasant so often masks the deepest feeling.

"I always come here," she continued, "on the thirteenth of September, to say a prayer for him, and for the others. . . . But my old legs are getting too weak for the journey; it is a good step from Quiberon."

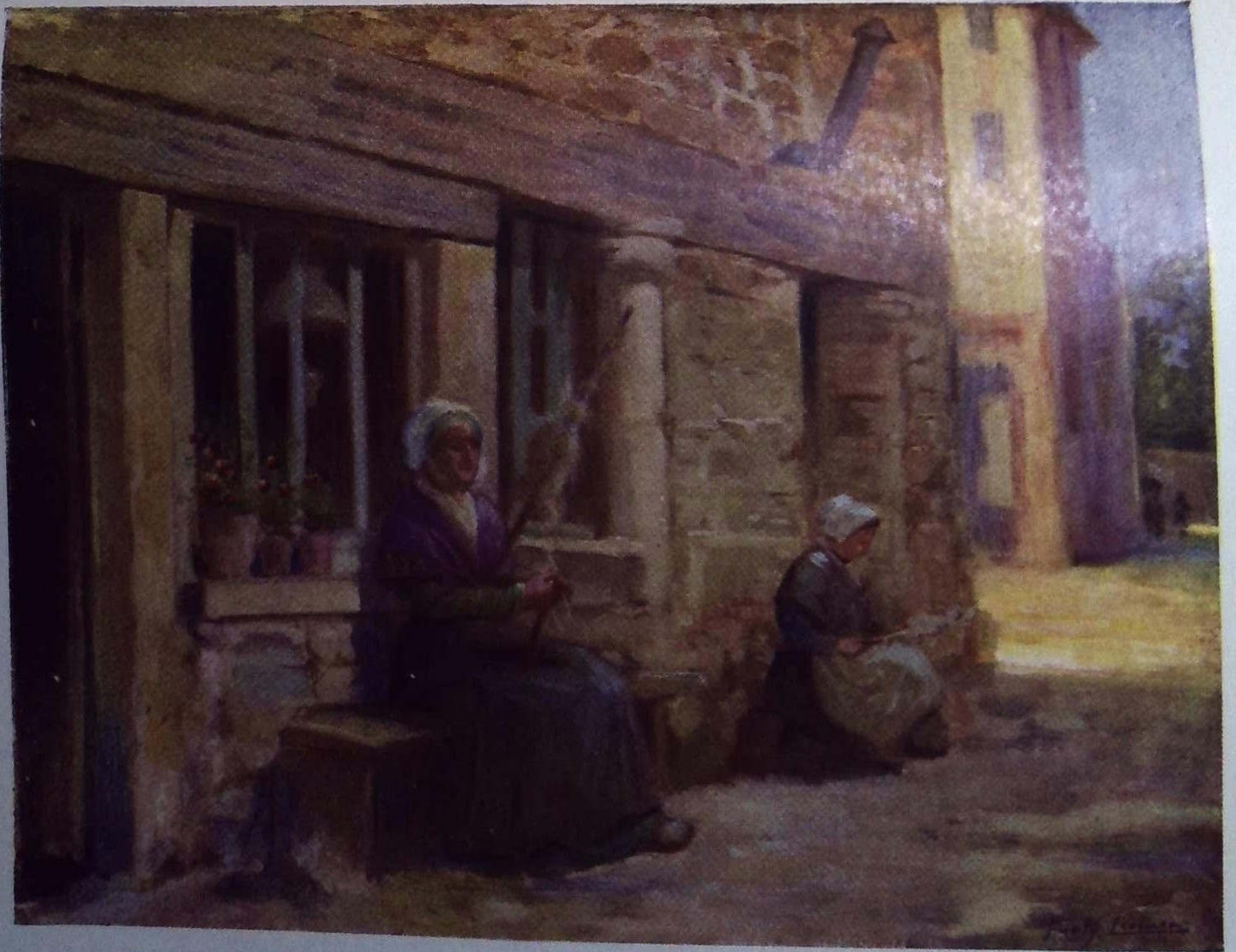
"Do you live alone?" I asked, looking at her wrinkled face and wondering what it had been like fifty years ago, when the news first came to her of her loss.

"Yes, madam, I live alone," she answered. "First I had my children, my Jean, my Yves to comfort me. But they are all gone, the sea took them one after another, so now I am alone once more, as I was before I met my Fanch. . . ."

She paused, then added, her face brightening as though a ray of sunshine had fallen across it—

"But I shall not have long to be alone. The good God will soon call me, and I shall find them all waiting for me in Paradise."

Knowing that it would be of no use trying to induce the good soul to enter the automobile, we saw her into



BLIND PEASANT SPINNING

a cart that was just starting for Quiberon, and ourselves made our way also toward that port.

It is a beautiful thing to sit at one of the restaurants on the quay in the late afternoon, and watch the fishing boats come sailing in. The little fleet of brown sails crowds up to the harbour's mouth, the boats falling into line and following one another in orderly succession, as they pass the white lighthouse that guards the entrance. As each boat comes to its moorings, the nets—the fine-meshed, peacock-blue sardine nets—are hung up to the yards to flutter and dry in graceful, diaphanous folds. Then the silver fish, counted into baskets, are carried to the factories that lie beside the landing-stage, and after being sorted and cleaned are put into wire baskets, plunged into boiling oil, and hung up to drain. Later they are packed in boxes into which fresh oil is run, and after being soldered down, are ready for exportation. The beautiful cleanliness of the factories is not their least interest.

* * * * * *

It is most difficult to leave this district of Morbihan! It seems to exercise some subtle charm, something of the same fascination one feels when wandering among the mossy hummocks of an ancient graveyard. It is charged with that indefinable influence which we all feel in presence of death.

At first sight the country appears unattractive, monotonous, barren. "What an ugly place," we mutter; "how flat, how colourless!" and vow that we will hasten off next morning. But then we see the Stones, and a feeling of curiosity, always the accompaniment of the unknowable, begins to possess us. We determine to walk down the ghostly aisles by moonlight, that we may meet the phantoms of the old Aryans who raised this amazing temple. Then . . . but

then the spell is upon us, and we find ourselves chained to the spot. Gradually we lose our taste for the coarser and more material effects of the world we have left, and grow to appreciate the pure, delicate half-tones that characterize this Spirit Land. Here dwell the ghosts of those living colours we find elsewhere. Faint shades of pink, lavender, blue, green, amber, grow out of the pearl grey mists in which they lie shrouded. Colourless? No one has ever known what colour really is till he has been to Morbihan! These fine opalescent transparencies are the very souls of the colours of the everyday world. To dwell among them is like living in the heart of a rainbow, or the fairy twilight of some great silvery sea-shell. All strong effects of light and shade have ceased, even at noon the sun casts no deep shadows, and at evening sinks into a sea of molten opals and pearls. It is a spiritual world, and as we linger there our emotions become refined and purified like the colours, till we lose our sense of time and individuality, and find ourselves entering that Nirvana to which the poetic Aryan aspired, and which forms the true inner life of Carnac.

Afterwards, as the history of the past begins once more to fashion itself from the vague symbolical legends in which it lies sleeping, another charm, a charm particular to this part of Brittany, a wild mystical pagan spell, fastens its web of fancy round us, and we linger on and on, blissfully unconscious of the great stirring world which lies remote beyond the Auray River and the estuary at Belz.

The morning after our visit to Quiberon broke fair and calm. The "Elfin storm from faery-land" had sunk back into the dolmen or wherever else it had come from, and the sky once more was blue, grey blue, with a note of mystery about it that accorded well with the expedition

on which we were bound. For on our way to Vannes, where we had appointed to meet the friend with whom we were going to the wedding, we intended to visit that island which formed the innermost shrine, the Delos, so to speak, of the ancient "Cult of the Stones."

About twelve kilometres from Carnac is the little fishing village of Locmariaquer, to-day occupying the site of a great maritime port which in Gallo-Roman times lay at the mouth of the Gulf of Morbihan.

A very short acquaintance with the present village will serve to show that it has been largely built upon, and out of, the remains of the old town. Many of the little white houses are floored with Roman tiles, everywhere they stand on Roman foundations. All the country round is full of ancient remains, pottery, coins, bricks, marbles, little statuettes of heathen gods, while the cemetery occupies the site of the old amphitheatre. But the church forms the most interesting link between the past and present, with its curious apse, and the strange carvings of rams' heads on the capitals of the pillars.

No one knows the history of Locmariaquer, or what was the nature of the disaster which put an end to its prosperity. Some think that the inhabitants grew too strong and independent for the safety of the other villages on the gulf, and that the authorities destroyed the town, and obliged its rulers to remove to Darioritum, now called Vannes, which being in a less isolated position was easier to keep in check.

However that may be, Locmariaquer is to-day a tiny, picturesque fishing village, the white houses of which, overgrown with wistaria and crimson roses, sit bathing their feet in the blue waters of the Gulf of Morbihan.

It is the loveliest place imaginable in which to spend a

summer week. All around are dolmens, menhirs, the finest to be found in Brittany, and there are islands to visit, charming old fishermen to take one sailing, children to play with, dogs to console and feed. One can go out fishing if one is so disposed, or sit talking in his shadowy study with Monsieur the Rector, who will tell you the stories he has picked up during the forty odd years he has been at Locmariaquer. Yes, one can stay very pleasantly at the Restaurant Lautram, as the clean little inn opposite the south door of the church is modestly called, and one day, when the tide is high and the wind serves, two of the sailor-men who spend so much of their time sitting on the low sea wall overlooking the harbour, will tuck you up in oil-skins if the sea is choppy, as it often is, and take you across the strip of swift-flowing water that separates Gavr' Innis from the mainland.

"Why is it called Gavr' Innis?" I asked Pol Marac, the piratical-looking grown-up baby in whose boat we made our way across the racing tide that was filling the gulf.

"It means the Island of the Goat," said Pol innocently, surprised at my ignorance.

"I know; but why Goat?"

"Oh, because that's always been its name."

Yes, that has always been its name, ever since the people who strewed Brittany with these astounding monuments went on pilgrimage to this Holy of Holies, to worship the Sacred Goat that lived in the sculptured dolmen, beneath the stone floor of which some Aryan chief lies buried. The rings cut in the stone wall, about which so many theories have been formed, were they not for the purpose of tying up the sacred beast?

The goat has always been regarded with great reverence, both by the Celts and other ancient peoples. It was

supposed to divert evil influences from other beasts and even from men, to form as it were a kind of living amulet. In early times it was the custom in some parts of Wales to lead a goat into a house where any one was sick, that it might take upon itself the malady. Even to-day, farmers in many districts of England keep a goat with their flocks and herds, because they consider it healthy for them. The goat, too, which is always associated with the Welsh Fusiliers, does it not owe its origin to some belief that the sacred beast will protect the regiment from danger and death?

It is well known that in early times the skin of the goat was held to be a talisman against various ills (and indeed, with its strong smell, may possibly have acted as a mild disinfectant); and there was scarcely a portion of its body but formed a medicine for some complaint.

In Greece the goat was closely associated with the worship of Dionysus, he having at one time taken the form of a goat; and in Egypt, in the country about Chemmis or Panopolis, goats were held sacred as being specially connected with the god Pan, and were worshipped at Mendes. Indeed, it was the fawns and satyrs, the goat-men who followed Pan, who are said to have first spread the news of the murder of the good King Osiris by the wicked Typho. There is, in fact, no doubt but that the goat was formerly a very sacred animal, and it seems quite reasonable to suppose that this magnificent dolmen on the Gavr' Innis was the special shrine where he was adored by the Celtic Aryans of prehistoric times.

One would not, of course, suggest that this was the original intention of the building. It was, like all dolmens, set up as a mortuary chapel.

As I stood there last September, looking at the strange

tattooings which are sculptured all over its walls, my imagination ran away with me to the time when that long-headed, artistic race came wandering across Europe, sending out branches to north and to south, branches which carried the germs of civilization wherever they settled. Into Greece they went, into Lombardy, Germany, Gaul, and the strongest of them, the first to emigrate, the last to settle, pushed their way far, far west to this land of Armorica, and to our own Britain. The chiefs of the race did not mix with the people among whom they settled, they only intermarried with their own caste, as in India. But they spread their religion and language among the aborigines they found settled in the lands they traversed; and above all, as already pointed out, they scattered Europe with these burial-places, and with memorials of the god they worshipped.

Surely it is not too fanciful to imagine that the great sculptured tomb set up in this innermost island of Morbihan, consecrated cemetery as it is of the Western Aryans, was intended to serve first as a grave, a mortuary chapel, and finally as temple for that great chief who finally led his people safely to their Promised Land. They brought him here from far away, lying on his great ox cart that afterwards provided wood for the sacrifice as the oxen and slaves were used for the sacrifice itself. Here, probably in a vault beneath the chamber, they laid him, and above they placed the sacred beast which was especially associated with him and his clan, the goat. There were no doubt priests appointed to attend on the pair of goats (for there were surely two, that is no doubt the reason of the two rings), and the Island of the Goat became a place of pilgrimage, especially for the tribe owning the great chief as their particular ancestor.

The people of the Morbihan say that there are just three hundred and sixty-five islands in the gulf, one for every day in the year. Of all these Gavr' Innis is the most difficult to reach, the innermost, and therefore the most sacred, which is no doubt why it was chosen as the resting-place of the greatest of the chiefs.

As I came out of the gloom of the mysterious sanctuary, I stood for a moment looking round at the sunny prospect of dancing blue waves and rocky islands. Far away to the north lie Auray and Vannes, nearer is the Isle aux Moines, Isle d'Arz, while close by is Isle Longue with its tumulus. The eastern horizon is bounded by the Peninsula of Rhuys, so closely associated with memories of Saint Gildas, and that strange creature Abelard; and there, where through the waves a smooth swift current is running, that is the channel leading to the open sea, the fatal opening through which the fleet of the Veneti went to meet the hosts of Cæsar.

Everywhere is sunshine, white-flecked waves, the rich brown sails of fishing-boats, and islands crowned with funeral monuments.

"Has madam finished?"

At the voice my mind makes a leap over several thousand years, and my imagination hastens to hide itself for shame.

"Yes," I answer, looking at the rosy-cheeked woman and her three children who are hanging to her skirts—"yes, I have finished."

"It is because I am going to Port Navalo with my husband, and he is anxious not to lose the tide."

"And the children?" I ask, smiling down at the little group.

"The children? I shall lock them into the dolmen till

I come back. Oh," she adds, laughing at my look of horror, "they are never so happy as when they are shut up there. They play all kinds of games, and tell wonderful stories about the fairies they see."

No doubt they do. We should see fairies too, were we locked up in that ghostly tomb. Fairies? Say rather the Korrigans who, if the tradition of the country speaks truth, built this wonderful place as a storehouse for their treasures. The children, even the grown-up children of these parts, will tell you that these fairies sometimes come out of their underground homes and play tricks on the men and women of the villages round about. They are very fond of pretty babies, it appears, and sometimes steal one, leaving an impish little black changeling of their own in its place. Villemarqué has recorded one of these legends of which every one in Morbihan has some version ready to tell.

> Marie the Fair is in trouble, she has lost her dear Loïc, the Korrigan has taken him away.
> "Going to the fountain to draw some water, I left my Loïc in his cradle; when I came back to the house he had gone.
> In his place was this monster, whose face is as brown as that of a toad, who scratches and bites, but never says a word;
> Seven years have passed, and I have not yet been able to wean him.
> Virgin Mary, on thy throne of snow, remember me in my sorrow as thou holdest thy Son in thine arms;
> Thou hast kept thy holy Son, but I, I have lost mine. Have pity on me, thou Mother of all pity!"
> "My daughter, my daughter, do not grieve so; thy Loïc is not lost, he will return, thy dear Loïc will return!
> If you pretend to prepare supper for your ten labourers in an egg-shell, the changeling will speak;
> If once he speaks beat him, beat him well. When he is beaten he will cry, and when he cries the Korrigan will hear him and will come and fetch him away."
> "What are you doing, my mother?" asks the changeling in surprise: "what are you doing, oh my mother?"
> "What am I doing, my son? I am preparing supper for our ten labourers in an egg-shell."
> "For ten, dear mother, and in one egg-shell? I have seen the egg before seeing the white fowl, I have seen the acorn before the oak tree;
> I have seen the acorn, and I have seen the great trunk of the tree; I have seen the oak in the forests of the other Brittany, but I never saw anything like that."
> "Thou hast seen too many things, my son! Click! Clack! Click! Clack! Old rascal! ah, I have thee now!"
> "Do not strike him, give him back to me; I have never done any harm to thy son; he is our king in the country where we dwell."
> When Marie came back to the house, she saw her son asleep in his cradle.
> And as she watched him in rapture, and as she stooped to kiss him, he opened his eyes;
> He opened his eyes, and sat up, and stretched out his little arms to her, crying: "Ah, mother, what a long time I have been asleep!"

All Celtic lands are full of such stories; Ireland especially teems with them. What do they mean? Who are the fairies, and what is their treasure? Where is the underground kingdom, where they still use stone implements, and have such a horror of metal that they disappear if one touches them with it?

All symbolism, is it not? The race of to-day, the gods of to-morrow, the Korrigans, fairies or demons of the day after. And the treasures? Ah, they are the children who have been the treasures of all ages!

CHAPTER XV

Vannes—Saint Patern—Saint Tryphina—the Story of the Constable's Tower—Françoise d'Amboise—Peninsula of Rhuys—Sarzeau—Saint Gildas—Castle of Succinio.

THE morning after our arrival in Vannes, I was awakened by a sound of singing in the square that lies in front of the Hôtel du Dauphin. It was a strange song, a kind of minor chant, sung by men, many men, and there was a rhythm about it which suggested the idea that they were dancing as well as singing. Hastening to the window, I flung open the shutters and looked down. At the upper end of the "Place" is the Hôtel de Ville, a handsome new building. It was evident that the Conscription was being held, for up and down the broad steps crowds of young men, dressed in their best clothes, were passing. In the open space below, those who were waiting to draw the lot had formed a great circle, and were dancing, accompanying themselves by the minor chant I had heard. Now and again a gendarme approached, spoke, and some of the young men would break from the dancers, and go slowly toward the hall, while others took their places. But the dance never stopped, and the song continued its monotonous, rather savage rhythm. It made me think of the old sword dance which the ancestors of these same people had performed before they started on their ill-fated expedition against Julius Cæsar. The town of Vannes is

full of interest. So ancient is it that its origin is lost in the mists of those ages that preceded the conquest of the Veneti by the Romans. In his "Commentaries" Cæsar tells us that of all the people of Gaul the inhabitants of Morbihan made the most determined resistance, and fought most fiercely for their independence.

Vannes, whose very name connects it with these Veneti, was probably their seat of government. If so, it was here that the old men of the Council had their throats cut by the Romans, though De la Borderie thinks that this took place at a city which stood on the site of what is now Locmariaquer. In any case, in the fourth century we find Vannes the chief town of Morbihan.

The Romans were not the only foes who attacked it. There were the Huns and Alains who ravaged it in the fifth century, and the Saxons who appeared a little later. Nevertheless, Vannes was early Christianized from the neighbouring bishopric of Nantes.

If we pass down the busy street that opens from the "Place," we soon find ourselves before a very old church, the church of Saint Patern, first Bishop of Vannes, an old Armorican saint, whose curious legend has been told by Albert le Grand and Dom Lobineau. A strange little boy was Patern. The old legend writer of Morlaix, whose stories of the saints, if less accurately correct, are so much more picturesque than those of his successor, describes the child as pre-ordained for beatification, declaring that his mother, Julitte the White, "made him suck in piety with his very milk." He probably inherited his extreme taste for religion from his father, Petranus, who, we are told, left his wife and baby and went across the sea to Ireland to be a monk. Many charming stories are told about the childhood and youth of this Patern, and as he is still patron

of Vannes, I shall perhaps be pardoned for quoting one or two.

One day as Julitte was sitting at an open window, making a frock for her baby, she was called away, and left the little garment lying on the sill. A bird flew past, and thinking that the soft woollen stuff would be nice for its nest, carried it off in its beak. When, a year later, the nest was destroyed, the little dress was discovered fresh and clean as the day it had been stolen ; a pretty piece of symbolism, foretelling the purity and holiness of the future saint.

Scarcely could Patern speak when his mother sent him to school, sparing no expense, we are told, in the education of the son from whom she hoped such great things.

"Mother," said Patern one day, "all the other boys have fathers. Where is mine? Is he dead?"

"No, my boy," said Julitte, the tears coming into her eyes at the question. "But he is dead to you and to me. He wished to serve God more perfectly than he found possible at home, so he left us and went over the sea to Ireland, where he lives shut up in a monastery."

"I shall go, too," said Patern, "when I am a man! Certainly, mother, I shall go and find my father, and be a monk as he is."

Accordingly, having finished his studies in the monastery of Rhuys hard by, the young man set out for our Great Britain, where he founded two monasteries, and then passed over to Ireland and met his father.

After many adventures, which I should like to tell if space permitted, we meet him again in Vannes, much older, and figuring as one of the nine bishops of Brittany, but a Gallo-Roman bishop, agreeing but ill with the Welsh and Irish clergy who were swarming over from Great

Britain in such numbers. At last, fearing that if he remained among them he might "lose his patience," he abandoned his diocese, and went to live in France, where he ended his days a simple monk.

But as we walk down the Romanesque aisles of the old church we are reminded of the end of the story, the legend of the foundation of this very building where we find ourselves.

For three years after Patern left them the people of Vannes had been afflicted with a grievous famine. No rain fell, and they were in great distress. At last it was remembered that the bishop had departed without bestowing his blessing upon his people, and immediately a pilgrimage set forth to bring back his sacred body that it might rest in his own episcopal town. But, as was so often the case with saints, the corpse of the Blessed Patern refused to be removed, and it was not until one of the pilgrims, who had made himself particularly disagreeable to the bishop by denying him a certain piece of ground, promised to give it up and build a church on it to Patern's honour, that the body became light enough to be lifted from its grave. I need scarcely add that as it entered Vannes the longed for rain fell in torrents. Vannes, too, we must not forget, was the home of Saint Tryphina whom we met at Mur. Her father, Comte Guerroc, lived in, and probably built, the Château de la Motte, which, until Duke Jean the Fourth erected the Château de l'Hermine, was the residence of the dukes of Brittany when at Vannes.

It may be remarked in passing that these *mottes* on which the early castles were built are always interesting. Some people say that they were mounds of earth piled up by early chiefs, who claimed as their domain all the land they could see from the top. It was on his mound that

the chief sat to administer justice, and later, when he had advanced so far as to build himself a tower, he naturally put it on the summit of the seigneurial motte. The towers developed into the keeps of mediæval castles, standing as ever on the ancient mound, as the Round Tower of Windsor stands to-day.

It was while she was dwelling in the old Château de la Motte at Vannes that Comorre saw Tryphina, and fell in love with her. It was probably also in the old wooden church which stood on the site of the present cathedral that they were married, and from the heights above the city she looked her last on her home. The dukes of Brittany in early times often held their court at Vannes. It is there we find Jean IV., in June, 1387, calling together a meeting of the States, the Breton Parliament. This Jean was the son of Jeanne la Flamme, the heroine of Hennebont. Having finally, by the help of the English, conquered and slain his rival Charles of Blois at the battle of Auray, he had become Duke. But a misunderstanding had arisen between Jean the Duke and that hero Olivier de Clisson, Constable of France, concerning the sons of Charles of Blois, who were kept prisoners in England. Concealing his feelings, however, Jean summoned the Constable to Vannes, and received him with the utmost honour.

One of the most picturesque features of Vannes is a fine old tower, still to be seen forming part of the walls of the town. It is called the Tower of the Constable, and if you ask any of the women who pass their days washing in the river that flows round its base, you will be told the following story concerning it.

After the long sitting of the Parliament, the Duke gave a splendid banquet to the nobles in the old Château de la

Motte. Nothing was talked of but hunting, and dancing, music, wine, and beautiful ladies. Every one was as merry as merry could be, and though the Constable was in haste to get away to Tréguier, where lay his fleet ready to set sail for England, he stayed a day later, in order to give an entertainment in the house where he lodged, in return for the hospitality of the Duke.

Dinners in those days were served at midday, and the Duke was late. He arrived at last, however, and ate and drank with the guests. On leaving, after saying farewell to the others, he turned to Sir Olivier and his brother-in-law, the Sire de Laval, and begged them before they left to come and see the new palace he was building in the town, the Palais de l'Hermine as he called it, after the royal ermine of the dukedom.

They had gone through all the rooms, and had even sampled the wine in the cellars, when they came to the great tower, the keep, at the door of which the Duke stopped.

"I want you to examine this keep for me, Constable," he said. "No one knows so much about fortifications as you do. Look over the place for me, will you, and tell me of any improvements you think I could make."

Gratified at the compliment, the Constable bowed, and motioned for the Duke to enter first.

"No," said Jean, "I am not going in myself. I have several matters I want to talk over with your brother-in-law. Go you up alone."

Without a thought of treachery Sir Olivier sprang up the steps. He had already passed into the second room when he heard the doors slammed and the bolts shot to. As he turned, startled at the sound, men sprang upon him from every corner, and, all unarmed as he was, he was

quickly overcome, loaded with three great chains, and laid on the floor.

Meanwhile at the door the Sire de Laval was pleading for his brother's life. His first glance at the Duke had shown him how serious the affair was, for the Duke's face was as "green as a leaf."

"Monseigneur!" cried Laval, in his old French. "Pour Dieu. . . . Merci. Que voulez vous faire? N'aiez nulle male voulente sur beau-frere le Conestable!"

But the Duke was inflexible. The gallant Beaumanoir, who had done such good service in the Combat des Trente, coming in just then, and daring to protest, was cast into the tower to bear Sir Olivier company. Thus was the Constable of France, the hero of a hundred fights, caught like a rat in a trap!

"Drown him at midnight!" commanded the Duke to Jean Bazvalen, the Governor of the Tower. "Drown him, or cut off his head. Do what you will with him so long as you rid me of this fellow who is planning to take away my dukedom with his talk of marrying his daughter to the son of Charles of Blois."

After vainly trying to appease the Duke, Jean Bazvalen departed, and his master went to bed. But not to sleep!

Early next morning, his passion being calmed, he called Bazvalen, and asked him whether he had done as he had been told.

"My lord," said Jean, "your orders have been obeyed."

"*What*," cried the Duke, "is Clisson dead?"

"Even so, my lord; he was drowned at midnight, and his body lies buried in a garden."

"Alas," said the Duke, "this is a most pitiful good morrow! Would to God, Sir Jean, I had listened to you. All comfort has fled away from me. Go, and let me never see your face again."

Then he made a great lamentation, in which his squires and varlets joined, though they had not the slightest idea what they were weeping about. At last, when evening had come, Jean Bazvalen again found his way to the Duke.

"My lord," he said, "I know the cause of your grief, and I believe I can assuage it, for indeed there is a cure for all things."

"Except for death!" exclaimed the Duke, bitterly. "Except for death, Master Jean."

"Aye," remarked Jean, with a demure smile, "but knowing your lordship's goodness of heart, I ventured to disobey you. Sir Olivier is yet alive."

"Alive?" cried the Duke. "Alive, did you say?"

And then he fell on Bazvalen's neck weeping for joy, promising to give him anything by way of reward. . . .

Yet his sorrow did not prevent him from making very hard terms with the Constable, who, besides having to pay a ransom of a hundred thousand francs, was deprived of every strong castle he had in Brittany before he was allowed to go free.

Vannes is indeed a place of many legends. As we look up at the picturesque old gateway that still forms an entrance to the walled town, we can see the saintly Vincent Ferrier come riding through it on his "sorry ass," and hear him as he refuses in proud humility to lodge in the Château de la Motte, which Duke Jean V. wishes to put at his disposal, while he and his court remove to the Château de l'Hermine that then stood in the Place des Lices. As we follow thither, we can almost see the platform that has been built for the famous preacher in the midst of the great open space, and hear the tones of his wonderful voice as he

speaks to the crowds that have gathered to this great revival meeting.

We may be sure that Jeanne de France, the pious wife of Jean V., was one of his congregation, for from that time she called herself his spiritual daughter. She it was who undertook the bringing up of that saintly prodigy of the fifteenth century, Françoise d'Amboise, who came to Vannes to be educated with the family of her future husband, Pierre de Guingamp.

We met her in an earlier page of this book, but Vannes is so full of remembrances of her that I must be pardoned for speaking of her again. As we walk through the streets the air is redolent of her piety. For instance, here is a quaint story.

It is a cold day in winter. Françoise has been to the cathedral to hear Mass. On her return her governess takes off her shoes, and begins rubbing the little chilled feet to warm them.

"Ah, my good girl," cries little Françoise, "have you noticed how my father and Patron Saint François always goes about with bare feet? I pray you to take my shoes to him that he may not be so cold."

I don't know what they did with the babe's shoes, unless they hung them by the statue of the great Saint of Assisi as an ex-voto offering.

Here again is a legend of the future Duchess. She is not quite five years old. Every time that the court goes to take the sacrament they find her, on their return, bathed in tears, refusing to eat, and sobbing as though her heart would break.

For a long time no one could discover what was the matter with the little Françoise, till at last one day the Duchess, taking her on her lap, begged her to say what they could do to make her happy, for it went to all their hearts to see her in such distress.

"Alas, madam!" cried the baby, "monseigneur, you, and all the court enjoy the great privilege of receiving the body of our Saviour. I alone, because I am so young, am deprived of this precious benefit. Do you not think I have good cause to lament?"

Weeping for joy, the pious Duchess took out her handkerchief, and after drying the child's eyes, kissed her, saying—

"Stop crying, my little sweetheart; I will see that at the Feast of All Saints you shall come to the Communion with me."

Poor little Françoise! She lost her good friend the Duchess next year: the story of her grief and devotion is very touching. It was in the great hall of the Château de l'Hermine that the scene of her betrothal took place, she being seven years old at the time. We can imagine the prim little maid standing beside the Duke, as his three boys, François, Gilles, and Pierre, were brought before him.

"There they are, my daughter," said he, turning to the little girl, "there are my three sons. Choose which of them you like best, and he shall be your husband."

It was a trying ordeal for one of such tender years, but she seems to have been quite equal to the occasion. Either moved by humility, as her biographer suggests, or, as is more likely, instructed by her uncle, the Constable of France, she fell on her knees before the Duke, humbly thanking him for his goodness, and then, passing the two elder sons, went and knelt at the feet of Prince Pierre, who raised her tenderly, and kissing her, gave her his troth.

One day, about eight years later, there were grand doings in Vannes, when the blessed Françoise and the young

prince, both clothed in white damask to show the utter purity in which they intended to dwell together, were married before the high altar of the cathedral.

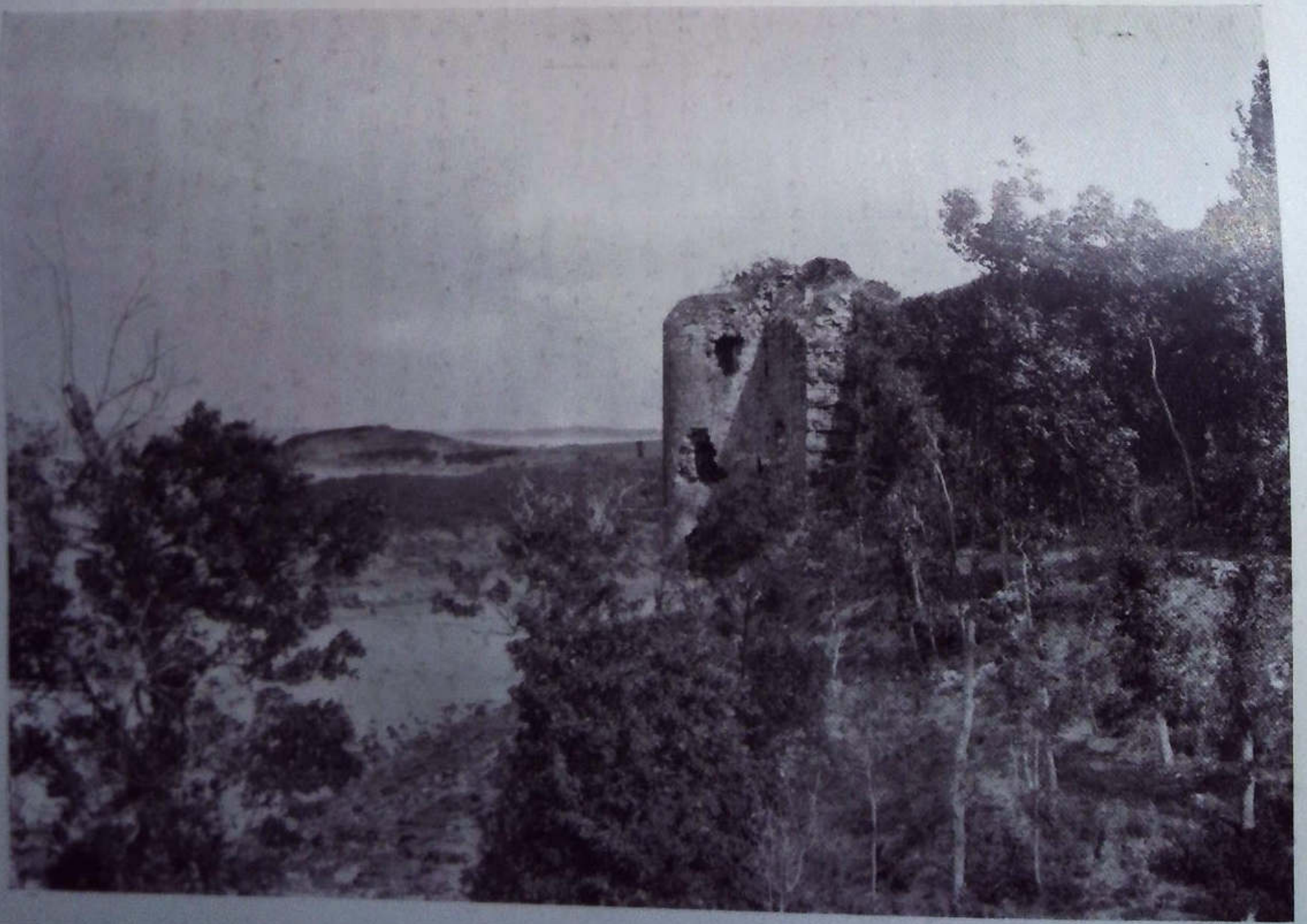
Notwithstanding her humility she became Duchess. François, the eldest son, died childless, some say from grief at the horrible fate of his brother Gilles. For Gilles was seized in his castle of Guildo, near Plancoët, by emissaries of the King of France. Every one will remember the story of how the brave, handsome young man was playing at tennis, when he heard that messengers had arrived from the king, his uncle; of how he let them into his castle and entertained them, and was treacherously taken and starved to death. Françoise's grief and indignation were very great, but she profited by the murder, for Pierre thus became heir to the dukedom.

In the great market-place of Vannes is the museum, well worth a visit on account of the splendid collection of prehistoric remains it contains. Some of the necklaces are superb. I was told that at a ball some time ago one of them, a rude string of roughly cut turquoise, was worn by a very beautiful lady, and that the effect was simply magnificent, she looked like some barbaric queen.

In the afternoon we set off to visit the church and tomb of the great saint Gildas, of whom mention has been made in an earlier chapter of this book.

The Peninsula of Rhuys corresponds to some extent with that of Quiberon. They may be likened to the two great arms of southern Morbihan, stretching out into the waters of the Atlantic. But though so closely associated, the promontories differ totally in character.

Quiberon, whether seen through the fairy glamour that gathers over it in summer, or in the darkness and horror of a winter tempest, is always a land of death. Its very



THE CASTLE OF GUILDO NEAR PLANCOËT

form is suggestive, stretching rigidly outward. But whereas this vast right arm of Morbihan ever points pitilessly toward that great emblem of death and separation, the ocean, the left arm, the beautiful, soft arm of Rhuys, is curved tenderly inward, as though offering an eternal shelter from the horrors without.

It was a glorious afternoon when we left Vannes, and as we reached Noyalo we saw, to the right, the gulf, lying like some great turquoise, inlaid with pearl and amber.

Far away, on the south-west horizon, the great bay seemed closed in by a bar of darker hue, as the blue waves merged into the purple of the great Atlantic. Passing on further, among fields and orchards, we reached Sarzeau, the birthplace of Le Sage, the author of "Gil Blas," and a little after drew up in the old village of Saint Gildas.

Saint Gildas! What thoughts does it not suggest of the great Scotch saint? Here, where now stands a convent of nuns, Gildas founded his celebrated monastery and school, where he and his disciple Bieuzi trained so many princes and budding saints whose names have become famous in the history of Brittany.

As we enter the vast silent enclosure we remember Tryphina's little son, Trémeur, who learned to read and pray beneath the shadows of the ancestors of these spreading plane trees. We can picture to ourselves, can we not, the original rude wooden building with its great oak beams and thatched roof, and the chapel which stood where is now the splendid church. Both monastery and chapel were destroyed by the Normans in the tenth century, and rebuilt in stone in 1008 by Duke Geoffrey the First. He repeopled it with monks from the neighbourhood of the Loire, setting over them a holy abbot named Felix.

About a hundred years later, we find that strange

heretical creature, Abelard, whose pathetic love story has been so often told, settled in this remote monastery. Here he lived and dreamed of the delights he had known during those early days when he had taught philosophy and . . . love to Heloise, the fair niece of the canon of the Cathedral of Paris.

These old stone walls have listened to the plotting of his monks, as they whispered together against him; till at last, one night, Abelard discovered his danger, and creeping through a drain fled away to Thibault IV., Count of Champagne, who protected him and gave him shelter.

Passing through the convent and its garden, we come out upon the downs, over which an ancient grassy path, sheltered from the east by an old stone wall, leads to the top of the cliff. If we follow it for a little while we come to a fountain, the fountain of Saint Bieuzi. Here the level path ends, and we pause to allow our eyes to wander over the expanse of scintillating water that lies below. A marvellous light streams from the south-west, and down the golden pathway that stretches over the glassy surface of the sea a little boat comes sailing.

As I watch her, fifteen hundred years seem to vanish, and I am watching another boat drifting over from the island of Houat, bearing within it the body of the good Gildas, who is thus returning to his beloved Rhuys for burial.

For, says the legend, when he found his end approaching, Gildas crossed over to the barren island where he had long had a hermitage, a "desert" as it was sometimes called. Thither, at news of his illness, assembled, not only his Breton followers, but monks from his old monastery in Wales. They came in haste, these holy men, to bid farewell to the great historian and churchman, and also no doubt to

THE ORATORY AND FOUNTAIN OF SAINT GILDAS

gain possession of his body, which was likely to prove a valuable addition to the church in which it found a resting-place.

But Gildas the Wise had thought of that, and fearing that it was likely there would be trouble as to the place of his sepulture, the dying saint gave commandment that his corpse should be laid in his boat, and set floating without any one to guide it, to be carried whither the winds and waves listed.

For three months nothing was heard of it. The Welsh monks had already returned to their monastery, when one day some of the Breton brethren, going to meditate in a little oratory which Gildas had founded by the seashore, found, in a tiny cove, a boat lying high and dry, and in it, fresh as when they had laid it there three months earlier, the body of their blessed master. . . .

The little boat has disappeared beneath the shadow of the cliff, and I turn to make my way by narrow paths and ancient steps cut in the rock to the cove itself.

Some pious pope has raised over the inevitable well a simple oratory, above which stands the figure of Saint Gildas, carved in white marble. Nothing can be more convincing than the surroundings. The cove with its rock-strewn, sandy beach; the carefully planned, much-used steps; the statue that stands out with such startling distinctness against the rugged grey background of rock. Above all, the solitude, the silence, broken only by the lapping of the waves upon the sand, and the whispering of the evening breeze among the grasses and wild flowers that deck the cliff side, tell the story of Gildas far more clearly than even Dom Lobineau or Père Albert le Grand.

As I made my way back along the broad path that leads to the convent, the saints seemed to walk before me,

their shaven heads and white gowns glistening in the golden glory that shone in the western sky.

In the church, behind the high altar, lies the tomb of Gildas, and over it a very beautiful modern statue has been erected. The church itself is extremely ancient, dating to the time of the refounding of the abbey in 1008. Some of the capitals of the columns are magnificent, superb examples of Romanesque sculpture.

Hither it was that Bieuzi came, followed by his congregation, the sword with which he had been struck still in his cleft skull, and here before the altar he died at his master's feet. He is buried in the church, though, as in the case of Moses, the exact site of his grave is uncertain.

Close to the church is the ancient graveyard, with an ossuary stacked high with skulls and bones of all sorts. For here, as in other parts of Brittany, one does not buy a grave. It is let to its occupant for a term of years, five, seven, or ten. At the end of that time the friends of the deceased receive a notice to say that the part of the cemetery in which the tomb is situated is about to be dug up, and that unless they are prepared to take out a new lease, their friends' remains will be put in the ossuary. It is a grim and rather horrible sight to come suddenly, of an evening, on one of these bone houses, and find the skulls peeping at one from behind the unglazed windows.

One might linger long at Saint Gildas, peaceful in its old age as it probably was in the days of its founder. But the afternoon is closing in, and if we would see the Castle of Succinio before dark we must hasten.

In point of fact we arrived *juste au moment*, as Le Velly observed, for the great towers that still form the five angles of the huge pentagonal mass were bathed in the crimson glory of the setting sun. Draped with rich

green curtains of ivy, the ruined walls yet looked imposing and impregnable as when Jean le Roux, in 1260, first built this pleasure palace for himself and his successors.

Here in 1393 was born to Jean the Fifth and his wife, Jeanne of Navarre, Arthur, who afterwards became such a celebrated character in the history of France. After the death of his father, Arthur and his elder brother were abandoned by their mother, who married the King of England, and the boys were brought up by the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy. The kindness he received at the French court had a strong influence on the character of the young Arthur, who all his life remained faithful to the cause of his sovereign. He began his military life at the age of fifteen, and was yet a mere boy when he fought at the battle of Agincourt, where, after struggling against odds at the head of his three hundred Bretons, he was left for dead on the field of battle. But though he did not, like the hero of the song, *run away*, he *lived to fight another day*, and was the chief instrument in restoring the wretched Charles VII. to the throne of France. His story is one of the finest and most inspiring among the many fine stories of Breton gallantry. . . .

After photographing Succinio we had but time to climb one of its mighty towers, from whence the eye may rove over the deserted country once known among Bretons as The Earthly Paradise. On the horizon lay the sea, grey and melancholy; in the west a crimson glow still told where the sun had just set; and intersecting the meadows and fields were the narrow roads and lanes still haunted by the ghosts of those who had dwelt in the peninsula in former days. As we finally took our seats in the car and fled away toward Vannes, they pursued us; phantoms of

Gildas and his monks, flitting hither and thither through the deepening shadows ; ghosts of Abelard and his Heloise ; memories of royal dukes, and their wives and children . . . so that when at last we entered Vannes with its walls and battlements, we were dazzled by the lighted streets, and confused to find ourselves once more in the busy, bustling world of to-day. And a gay little world it proved that evening at the Hôtel Dauphin.

No sooner had I reached my room than there was a gentle tap at the door.

"May I come in?" cried a well-known voice. "I've been looking out for you all the afternoon. I'm just dying to know what time you've had, you and the doctor."

Well, it was so pleasant to meet in that foreign hotel, and there was so much to tell each other, that the inevitable happened, and when we entered the dining-room we found the rest of Mrs. Murrey's party waiting for us.

"We were so sorry you couldn't join us at Pont Aven," said a pleasant-looking young girl who sat by me. "It's a perfectly ideal spot, and the people were just as nice and sweet as could be."

"Were you all there together?" I asked, looking at the three other American ladies who were talking to my husband.

"No, only auntie and I. Miss Julia Jakes and her sister have been at Carnac for the Benediction of the Beasts."

"We saw you there!" exclaimed one of the ladies alluded to. "Wasn't it imposing? . . . No, we didn't stop for the actual ceremony; we wanted to go on to Belle Isle (Sara Bernhardt lives there, you know). But we heard all about the beasts from the custodian of the museum, and felt exactly as though we waited. His photographs are

just rare! I wrote an article about it to the Boston Episcopal Clarion the same evening."

It appeared that all the ladies were going to the wedding. Mrs. Murrey had received an open invitation for herself and "friends," and there was great rejoicing at the prospect. It was late when we parted that night. We had hoped that Mrs. Murrey would have gone with us in the automobile to the wedding next day, but she said that she felt obliged to travel with her friends in the wagonette they had already hired from the hotel, so we arranged to meet at Locqueltas, the village where the bride had her home.

CHAPTER XVI

The Wedding at Locqueltas—A breakdown—Drive to Baud—Josselin—The Forest of Brocelianda—Merlin's Tomb—Fountain of Baranton—Rennes.

NEXT morning, as I lay snugly dreaming in my high, comfortable bed, I was awakened by a trinity of bells announcing the fact that it was seven o'clock, and that if I intended to be in time for the wedding I must make haste.

What a morning! As I threw open the windows of my room, and looked down into the square, there was the bronze horse of Du Guesclin curvetting in his strange impossible attitude, while his master sat rejoicing in the sunshine. Birds were hopping about, everything wore a festive aspect, and the old town itself seemed to have renewed its youth. True, the sky was paling a little, speaking of the approach of autumn. But as yet it was but an approach, something that gave an added zest and value to the golden warmth of lingering summer.

Presently the voices of the American ladies, packing themselves away into their wagonette, came up to me from the road below, and as they caught sight of me at the window, they waved me a gay farewell.

"Make haste," cried they, "or you will be too late in spite of your motor."

I was watching them, full of the thought of the bride, and the festive scene to which we were bidden, wondering

A WEDDING PROCESSION (MORBIHAN)

how the great meadow would look with its five hundred guests, and enjoying in anticipation the sight of the glittering snowy caps and embroidered costumes; when down one of the narrow roads leading into the "place" came a monotonous voice intoning a prayer. Nearer it sounded, and nearer, till from the shadow of the high houses there emerged into the brilliant sunshine a sight which suddenly brought back the remembrance that this was Brittany, that land where the brightest joys are ever mixed with sorrow.

It was a very humble, baby's funeral. In all there were but four persons to form the procession. In front walked a choir boy with a candle, then the intoning priest in cassock and surplice, and behind him father, mother, and hearse in one, for the man carried the tiny white coffin under one arm, while he supported his wife with the other. They were so poor that the woman had only been able to put on mourning to the extent of a long black shawl, beneath which showed the hem of her rough brownish skirt. I don't know why, perhaps it was the contrast from the festive anticipations which had been filling my mind, or the exceeding fairness of the morning, but the sight was one of the most pathetic I have ever seen, and for a little while took all the glory from that golden day.

The monotonous voice of the priest died away towards the far corner of the "Place" . . . now it was but a faint humming mingling with the voices of some old women on their way to the market. Then the figures grew too small for the tiny white-covered box to be distinguishable, the little group turned the corner . . . and were gone.

Thanks to Mademoiselle l'Automobile, we were able to start in a more leisurely fashion than the American ladies, and only set forth on our journey after a good breakfast.

The country to the north of Vannes consists mostly of high, bare moorland, covered in spring with a glowing expanse of golden gorse, from which, as summer advances, rise great blazing flames of genista. But when we reached the upland, September had spread over all a thick carpet of ashen green, and purple, with here and there a spark of dying gold.

We found the little village lying in a dip of this country, separated by many miles from any town or hamlet. Nevertheless, guests had already begun to arrive in large numbers, and our car caused great excitement among the smart young farmers who were tethering their horses wherever they could find standing room. We found our friends already arrived, and the brother of the bride, a young Dominican friar with a pleasant, merry face, waiting in his white woollen robe to welcome us, and take us to the little convent opposite the church, where we dusted ourselves, and were entertained by the sisters. One delightful young woman, whose soft cambric-covered bosom looked more suitable for pillowing a baby's head than the hard black crucifix that nestled there, gave me a charming little history of the bride, and finally fetched her over from the neighbouring house to be introduced.

What a pretty sight it was! The bare, whitewashed room, relieved only by a big jug of monthly roses that stood on the window-ledge, and one or two highly coloured prints of the pope and other sacred personages, the gentle sisters in their large white coifs and dark-blue gowns, and in the midst, blushing shyly at our admiration, the bride. How shall I describe her? Set against that simple background she looked like some gorgeous butterfly just alighted on a bed of white lilies. Her black satin dress, with its broad bands of velvet, was cut low at the

THE PROCESSION FROM THE MAIRIE

THE WOMAN WITH THE CAKE BASKET

neck, and filled in with lace and gold ornaments of filigree. Her cap, the tiny shawl, and inner sleeves, together with the coquettish little collar that finished the dress behind, were of fine old lace, and on her head, set above the cap itself, was a crown of orange blossoms. But her glory of glories was her apron! a magnificent confection of dark pink velvet, embroidered with sprays of wild roses, while over it fell long trails of orange bloom.

Round this vision of splendour the simple sisters fluttered with childish exclamations of delight, as the girl turned slowly round and round to be inspected. At last, after kissing us all, and saying how pleased she was to see us, she ran away home again to prepare for the visit to the Mairie.

And now the village is getting as crowded as a bee-hive. Bands of young girls in the different costumes of that part of Morbihan are wandering about, laughing and joking with the young men. The butcher is still engaged in cutting up meat in the garden outside his cottage; beggars are beginning to swarm; dogs to quarrel and fight; and everywhere are carts, with horses feeding between the empty shafts, or being led away to the meadows, that lie beyond the group of cottages.

Suddenly there is a hush and a movement. The crowd draws back, leaving a broad space down the middle of the road, and from the door of the low white Mairie issues a procession. First comes the bride, led by her godfather, the only Breton, by-the-by, who has not had the good taste to put on the costume. Then follows the bridegroom with the mother of the bride; the best man, with a waist-coat made from a bit of the wonderful apron; the bridesmaid, only second in splendour to the bride herself; and other near relations of the pair. As the group walks

slowly along, the crowd fall in behind, and all make their way to the church, the white inner walls of which have been decorated with flowers, and festooned with pink and blue ribbons. Facing the southern end of the altar rail are two chairs, before which are immense decorated candles, jewelled with bits of coloured glass. Here the couple seat themselves, and the service begins. It is very simple, very homely, very impressive and beautiful. The white-robed brother officiates, his cowl drawn over his head, and preaches a very excellent little sermon in his rich, sweet voice. And when all is finished, and the two cracked bells are doing their best to sound a wedding peal, we make our way to the meadow where the feast is to be held.

A great horseshoe table has been prepared for the five hundred guests, and against the hedge twelve immense cooking stoves are at work, each with the name of the village from whence it is borrowed painted in white upon its black face. A proud man is the cook this morning, and a merry man too, for he has evidently fortified himself during the service with some of the cider from the great barrels that lie yonder in the shade of the chestnut trees.

As the bride and bridegroom enter the gate of the field, they are met by two peasants, who make an offering to them of meat and cider, of which they partake before proceeding further ; an ancient custom dating back to days long before the coming of Christianity.

And now we are all seated at table, and the bride is helping the first spoonfuls of soup. Before her is a huge, very flat, and formal bouquet, the like of which I have never seen save at a wedding in Greece. It is so large that, when later I wish to photograph the bridal pair, it has to be removed, or it would intercept the view. During

dinner, pairs of young men, very much beribboned, walk to and fro from the table to the cider casks, carrying between them large earthen jars, with which they fill up the smaller jugs that stand on the table. As they move about they sing a melancholy song, something to the effect that though we are so happy and festive to-day, we must not forget that we shall die to-morrow, and that, therefore, it behoves us to be merry while we may!

It is a wonderful sight to see these five hundred men, women, and children seated in the green meadow, the sunlight glittering on their snowy caps and embroideries, and lighting up the rich tints of their sunbrowned faces.

But now into the gate comes a very ancient woman. Blind she is, yet she totters along, leaning on her stick, straight to the spot where sit the newly married couple, who rise as she reaches them, and turn to face the cemetery, which as usual is close to the scene of merry-making. The old woman has fallen on her knees and in a high quavering voice begins reciting a long litany, to which those around, led by the bride and bridegroom, respond.

It is the *De Profundis*, the prayer for the dead, the Christian survival of the old evocation of the spirits of bygone ancestors to come to the feast and seal with their blessing the marriage that was lately solemnized. And, indeed, no ceremony could have been more impressive. The golden sunshine, the bright green meadow, the happy, healthy faces, the gorgeous costumes, the feasting, laughing, rejoicing. . . . Then the sudden hush, as this old creature, herself so soon to join the ranks of the departed, recalled to remembrance those who had passed away. She was the oldest woman in the village, and formed a fitting link between the living and the dead. As she proceeded

with her chanting, she gradually assumed to my eyes the form of some old pagan priestess, uttering an incantation addressed to the first of all gods, the spirit of the ancestor of the clan. Gradually the meadow seemed to fill with silent forms, the air to thicken with phantoms, as though the long-since dead were gathering from the Land of Shadows to take part in the solemn ceremony.

At last her voice sank into silence, and she rose from her knees. The spell was broken, and the wedded couple went off to the lower end of the meadow to lead the dance. And what a dance! It began with only the immediate relatives of the bride, some six or eight couples, who, formed into a ring, moved round and round the musicians who were seated on two chairs in the midst. Moment by moment the ring grew larger, the "biniou" and the "bombard" played louder and quicker. Now every one was dancing, keeping the measure by tapping the ground with the heel, and raising and dropping the clasped hands. It was a frenzy, a delirium of waving aprons, tossing hat-strings, fluttering white caps, red perspiring faces. There is always the feeling of a pagan festival mingling in these Breton dances, just as there is with those of modern Greece. Perhaps the wild notes of the bagpipe, that most primitive of instruments, which, as some would have us believe, led our prehistoric ancestors the Aryans in their long migration across Europe, perhaps this strange music has some mysterious influence upon us. Nothing rouses in the heart of the Celt such wild longings, such barbarous instincts, such vague unutterable memories and imaginings, such savage excitement, and need for violence, as the nasal skirl of the bagpipe. Its effect can only be compared to the influence of the tom-tom on the inhabitants of Western Africa. It is evident that the huge, solemn-faced

THE WEDDING FEAST

ring is moved by some impulse, conscious or instinctive, far deeper than that of mere pleasure, as they circle round and round to the ancient measure of La Ronde.

Every one is dancing save the woman with the cake-basket, followed by her crowd of little satellites, and the beggars who are feasting beneath the hedges.

For a Breton wedding is like one of those great feasts of which we read in the Bible. All are welcome, and not least the halt, the maimed, and the blind. At news of the marriage they assemble from far and near, and the sight of all these destitute creatures taking part in the good cheer with the more wealthy guests, is the crowning charm of the entertainment.

And now we approach to say farewell to the bride. The dance stops for a moment, and she turns to kiss us heartily on both cheeks.

"You will be tired before the day is over," I say, laughing.

"Oh no," says she, "I am never tired of dancing. And besides, it would be of no use to be tired, for we shall go on all day to-morrow!"

In the little white upper room, where we drink a glass of wine with the Dominican and his mother before leaving, I am shown the simple presents: a picture of the Pope, with his special blessing to the pair; a gorgeous pin-cushion; various articles of attire. . . .

But it is clear that the guests are not invited for the sake of the presents they may bring, that custom has been reserved for more civilized and less delicately hospitable communities.

We had seen very little of our dear old friend through whose kindness we had been invited to the wedding, and it occurred to us that she might accompany us in the

automobile back to Vannes. Suddenly a bright thought struck her.

"Is it very far to Baud?" she asked. "Is it much out of your way?"

Now, we had been to Baud, as I have told previously, and we wanted to get as far as Josselin that night. But we would have gone to the moon, had there been a suitable road, to please the dear lady, and so I answered warily—

"No, it is quite near. Do you want to go there?"

"I want to see the Venus of Quinipili!" in a sudden burst of longing. "I have been wanting to see her for twenty years. If it is *really* not troubling you, there is nothing I should like so well."

It is one of the charms of an automobile, that one can change one's route at any moment. Thirty or forty miles mean so little when the car is going well, and ours had been behaving splendidly ever since we began our trip. So packing our old friend into one of the comfortable corner seats, and covering her up with rugs, we said farewell to our kind hosts and the American ladies, and set off towards Grand Champ.

Mrs. Murrey was in a flutter of delight. The unexpectedness of the outing added to its charm.

"I shall sleep at Baud," she declared, "and after seeing the Venus to-morrow morning, you will go off to Josselin, and I shall return by train to Carnac. And I shall feel that I have done quite a good work in introducing you to the old idol."

The latter reflection evidently added so much to her pleasure, that we forbore to tell her that we had just visited Baud; and indeed it mattered little to us which way we journeyed that glorious afternoon.

We skimmed gaily along over the vast "Landes" which form so large a part of this country of Morbihan. Very sparsely populated are the Landes, covered with short gorse which, chopped very fine, makes the chief fodder of the Breton horse. The country lay high, forming a table-land, and the view as we gazed around was immense. Miles upon miles of undulating grey-green, shot through with gold, closed round us like an ocean, and in the distance purple hills rose and melted in a turquoise sky. Toward the east lay a heavy bank of apricot-tinted cloud, the smoke of forest fires which were just then devastating the country.

As we passed Grand Champ we called to mind the time when Edward III., on his way to take part in the siege of Vannes, stopped at the little place. What an excitement it must have been for Grand Champ to find its quiet disturbed by the advent of the foreign king and his generals!

It was here that Edward learned of the death of the brave Sir Robert d'Artois, who, wounded before Vannes, had since died. The letters arranging for his body to be taken home to England are dated from Grand Champ.

For six days the king remained there, making his plans for the investment of Vannes; and finally, when he departed, behaved to the inhabitants, we are told, "as mercifully as possible, only taking from them what was absolutely necessary for himself and his men."

And now we have passed the little sleepy town, and are out in the midst of the wild, uninhabited Landes once more. . . . Suddenly we stop! . . . Le Velly gets out, opens the bonnet of the engine, and looks inside. . . . When he raises his face it is very grave.

"Nothing serious?" I inquire anxiously.

"Ah, madame," cries the chauffeur, "it is not a slight

malady from which she is suffering. It will be hours before I can induce her to walk again. . . . And what are you to do out here on the Landes?"

Well, of course it was very aggravating. For some time we sat in the ditch listening to the chauffeur's language, which fortunately we could only partially comprehend. At last, when all the cigarettes were finished, and Le Velly's stock of adjectives appeared to be waning, seeing that twilight was falling, my husband and he started to search for a horse and cart to take us to Baud, still many miles distant.

They were gone some time, and we were feeling very cold and lonely, and beginning to think that they had lost themselves in that desert of gorse, when they appeared out of the dusk, together with a man who spoke French, a rare accomplishment in those parts.

It seemed that his wife was following with a conveyance, and as soon as she came, leaving poor Le Velly to sleep at their cottage, wherever that might be, we packed ourselves and our bags into the trap, and set off on our long drive. Never shall I forget that journey! We had scarcely started when the man asked my husband whether he had a pistol he could lend him.

"Pistol!" I exclaimed, startled. "Why do you want a pistol?"

"It is a lonely road," said the farmer; "as I return I may be stopped and robbed."

"Nonsense," I answered; "you are surely not afraid of robbers about here."

The man looked round at me, nodding mysteriously.

"They are bad people," he declared. "They know little of reading and writing, and are very ignorant in some ways; but they are 'assez instruits en méchanceté.' Oh yes,

madame, I can assure you they are sufficiently instructed in wickedness."

"You are not from this part of the country yourself?"

"À Dieu ne plaise! I am from Plancoët. It is because I am a foreigner that I am persecuted."

He went on to tell us that years ago he had taken service in the neighbourhood, as a gamekeeper, and had married a woman of the country. He now owned a little farm, and might have been as happy as a Breton farmer ever is, but for the evil dispositions of the people around him.

"Alive or dead, madame, they never cease to torment me!" he declared. "Landes or forest, at home or abroad, it is all one, haunted by sorcerers and 'revenants.'"

While he had been talking the night had fallen, and a ghostly white moon, wrapped to the chin in a winding sheet of cloud, began peering down upon us from the east. The old horse ambled on at his own pace, except that whenever we came to a cross-road his master shook the reins, crying, "Allez! Allez!" glancing fearfully to right and left as he did so. We had quitted the open country, and entered the vast pine forest of Camors.

It is a region haunted by memories of those gallant brothers, George and Julien Cadoudal, two of the finest and most picturesque figures among the ranks of the Chouans. Our driver, being a "foreigner," naturally knew nothing of the hero of Morbihan, and listened somewhat indifferently as I told the story. He showed some interest, however, at the recital of George's feat of strength; how he held a young horse by the hind legs, and kept him from running away, while another man struck the animal with a whip.

"Ah," said he, "no need to tell me he was of this country. Such things are not so difficult as they seem when one has learned the charm."

Of Julien he had heard, and we talked of the brave young boy and his sad fate.

It will be remembered that he had been imprisoned on suspicion, and that hearing that his powerful brother intended to rescue him, the authorities had him moved to Hennebont, en route for Lorient. On the road, they were waylaid by a band of would-be rescuers, and without waiting a moment, shot Julien, and left him lying dead in a ditch. Here he was found by some young girls, who had known him in happier days. They bore him to his home, and as they walked along sang one of his songs, for he was a well-known bard, a song he had composed in prison only a few nights before, and which his gaoler had heard him singing in the darkness.

"I know that song," said the farmer; "my wife is very fond of it. She often sings it to the children in the evening;" and he begun murmuring it over to himself:—

"Once I was happy, gay, and free,
But now lie in captivity;
Gone are the joys of heretofore,
I seek them, but they come no more!

"Beside my father was I sleeping,
No sort of watch or vigil keeping,

"When in there broke, to our dismay,
Four men who led poor me away!

"Bound with a chain, to prison cell,
With scarce the time to say farewell,

"They tore me from my home away,
And shut me from the light of day.

"Once I was happy, gay, and free,
But now lie in captivity;
Gone are the joys of heretofore,
I seek them, but they come no more!

"Where is my brother Joseph dear?
No more his sweet songs shall I hear!

"And Louis too, where art thou gone,
Leaving thy brother here alone?

"My Mary, ah, what bitter pain,
That I shall see thee ne'er again!

"And the dear fields and meadows gay,
Where once I worked, and sang all day!

"The horses which I led to grass,
Ah, who will tend them now, alas!

"Where are the dogs with whom so oft
I hunted in the little croft?

"And all the streets of Auray town
Through which I wander'd up and down!

"Ah, I was happy, gay, and free,
But now lie in captivity;
Gone are the joys of heretofore,
I seek them, but they come no more!"

The measure is rude, and the language homely, but the feeling is true and genuine, and the picture evoked of the strong, simple, peasant life is more beautiful than that contained in many more polished poems.

The moon had cast off her grave clothes, and was cutting a phantom path of silver through the thick blackness of the forest that lay on either hand. As we travelled along the glittering track we began ourselves to feel uneasy, for the shadows gathered thicker moment by moment, blocking up the spaces between the tree trunks, and the atmosphere was alert and spiritual.

"If one believed in ghosts, for example!" said I.

The man glanced at me uneasily. "Three of my neighbours have died this year," said he, in a low voice,

"and each one has come knocking at our door asking us to go to Saint Anne d'Auray to have a Mass said for the repose of his soul. And that at midday, mark you, madame!"

It was evident that he spoke seriously. His eyes as he turned them towards me were so full of fear that they made me shudder.

"Did you see the ghost yourself?" I asked gravely.

"No, it is my wife who *sees!*" he answered simply. "We people of Plancoët are not like that, as madame knows, for she comes from the north, does she not? But here, every one *sees!* One day last week my wife and her sister were looking from the window, when they saw rising out of the forest two forms of young girls. They floated nearer and nearer, but just as they reached the window my wife shut it against them, and they disappeared. . . . Another day we were sitting in the kitchen when my wife saw a woman enter, dressed in white, as though she had just come from her coffin. My mother-in-law rose to shut the door, and as she came to the woman stepped aside to pass her.

"'What, do you see her too?' cried my wife.

"'See whom?'

"'The woman in the white sheet!'

"'I see no one, daughter.'

"'Then why did you move aside as you passed her?'

"'I felt I must move aside, but I saw no one.'

"That is the way things go on, madame, in this Sorcerers' Land of Morbihan. And it is not only my wife, it is my children also who *see.*

"My brother-in-law died nine months ago. For ten nights after, he came and walked about the room where the children sleep. They were not frightened, for he was dressed as usual; but they talked about it, and when we knew we went and had a Mass said for his soul at Saint Anne d'Auray, and he walked no more."

"She is a great saint about here," I observed.

"Oh, dame, oui! One should always have a Mass said at her shrine directly the breath is out of a person. It is the only way to get any peace."

"All that you tell me is very strange," said I, after a pause.

"Ma foi, you may well say that. If I should tell all that I know to my friends at Plancoët, they would laugh at me. There are no 'revenants' there. I myself did not believe in such things formerly; I should have laughed also. But it is true, madame, every word that I tell you is true."

It was evident that this strange underworld in which he had been living had had its effect on his mind. In another year, unless something happened, he would go mad.

"Has madame heard of the difficulty there is here about the butter?" he asked presently.

"About the *butter?*"

"When first I came a 'foreigner' among them, I could not keep any at all. I could not even get it. The milk was good, everything was right; yet the butter would not come. Even when sometimes it came, I lost it."

"You lost it?"

"It went," he whispered mysteriously. "Though I locked it up, still it disappeared. At last I spoke to the rector, who, though he is of this country, is *un bon garçon*, only a little too grasping, too fond of his tithes of corn and butter. However, in this case he knew what to do.

"'Say that you are going to the town to get poison to put in the butter,' said he. 'Tell every one. You can

spend a day in Auray, it will do you good, and give you a change of scene. Only be sure that every one hears about the poison!'

"Ah, madame, it was a fine charm! Since then I have had no trouble about the butter."

"Have you many cows?" asked Mrs. Murrey, who had been listening eagerly to the conversation.

"Only six at present. The drought has made fodder so dear that I cannot keep more this year. And then even the poor beasts themselves are not safe. There are men here who would eat and drink with you, and if they thought you had anything they could steal, would put poison in your cup."

But he had, it appeared, learned a little magic on his own account, and knew a smart method of curing burns, which I got him to write down for me later, thinking it might interest some of my medical readers. Here it is—

"Faire le tour de la brûlure trois fois avec le doigt, et souffler dessus en croix, en disant: Brûlure je te conjure au nom de Dieu de ne pas rire devant les hommes comme Judas a fait devant Notre Seigneur Jésus Christ. S'il vous plait par l'intercession de Dieu et Saint Laurent."

[25 centimes d'offrande à Saint Laurent.]

After begging me not to let any of his neighbours know that he had given me the charm, he consented to sign his name, Robert Ange of Violgoët, Commune de Brandivy, and assured me that the spell was infallible. He had tried it on his baby whose face was badly scalded by the soup, and she was quite well in nine days; only, he added impressively, one must be very careful to include every portion of the scald in the circle traced by the finger. He gave me at the same time a certain cure for anthrax. Taking the tail of the afflicted beast in your hand, you twist it, commending the creature to Saint Cornély, Saint Meriadec, and La Mère de Dieu. Then flinging the tail out of your hand you exclaim, "Allez vous en!" and in one hour, or at the most two, the beast will be quite well!

"And who uses all these charms?" asked Mrs. Murrey.

"Oh, most of the folks about here know them. But there is one 'réligieuse' who is especially 'instruite.' She has many cases brought to her every day. Doctors? Ah, I can tell you they don't find much to do in Morbihan! I was very ill myself a few months ago. I caught a fever from the cattle. Well, I went to the great doctors of Pontivy, and what do you suppose they said? They told me that I had nothing the matter with me! I, who was as ill as any beast with 'charbon,' shivering and gasping for breath! So my wife sent for La Réligieuse. She said the Good Words over me, and immediately I was well!"

He told us of the recent defence of the Church of Saint Anne d'Auray, against the soldiers who had been sent to take the inventory; how the telegraph-posts had been cut down and used as weapons, and the treasure scattered among different religious persons for purpose of concealment.

He was very interested, too, to hear about our king, and said he should like to see one in France.

"My father was a Chouan," said he, "and though I am a Republican, the Royalist blood flows in my veins, and I am Chouan at heart as was my father."

At length we reached the outskirts of the forest, and after stopping to light the lantern, made our way into Baud.

With much persuasion he consented to sup with us

before starting on his long homeward way, but we had the greatest difficulty in inducing him to take anything for the use of his cart.

"I do not need it, madame," he protested; "I could not see you in such difficulty, and not offer to help you when I had my horse at hand."

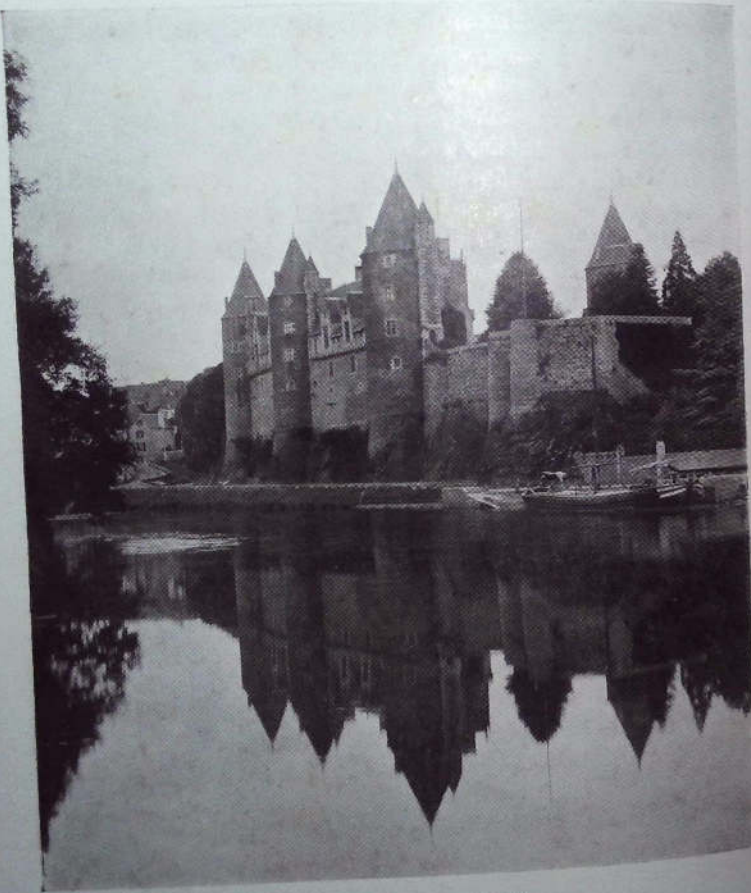
But I suspect that the real reason of his hesitation was the fear of being robbed on his way through the forest.

Next morning, as we were preparing to hire a carriage to visit the Venus, we were startled by a familiar *toot! toot!* coming down the road, and there, lo and behold, was Le Velly and his mademoiselle, bright and gay as ever. It appeared that she must have been ailing for some time, but with truly feminine perversity had put off letting us know till she found herself in that wilderness of gorse. Then suddenly she refused to go another step. But Le Velly knew her little ways, and after sitting up all night with her, oiling, cleaning, filing, coaxing, the crisis passed, and she declared herself ready to set off once more whither our fancy dictated.

I need not take the reader, as I did Mrs. Murrey, to visit the Venus, for we have already performed that pilgrimage. We shall therefore flit from the station, where, an hour later, we left our old friend, and make our way to Josselin.

I say *flit*, for it must indeed be but a flitting. This book of mine, instead of proving the little volume I intended, a mere literary guide, has assumed such unmanageable proportions, that I must do no more than indicate the route by which we found our way back to Rennes.

At first, the distrust we felt as to the intentions of mademoiselle, prevented the full enjoyment of the



THE CASTLE OF JOSSELIN

beautiful road that lies between Baud and Josselin. We could see that Le Velly himself was on the watch, listening for any sound that might suggest a new complication of her original disorder. But either she had been malingering, or Le Velly had discovered and alleviated the real cause of her suffering, for she continued to skim along like a bird, till about midday we found ourselves looking down on Josselin, where it lay smiling beside the river; Josselin with its white houses and overhanging roofs, its ancient church, porcupined with grotesque gargoyles; Josselin with its flowers, its pink roses and oleanders, its carnations and curtains of wistaria; Josselin with its ancient bridge, and above all its castle, the beautiful ancestral home of the Ducs de Rohan.

How I should like to take my readers to see the great equestrian statue of Sir Olivier de Clisson, Constable of France, that fourteenth-century hero who, by right of his marriage, became master of Josselyn. But it would not be only in the dining-hall that we should find him. The whole building is reminiscent of the great man.

Let us, for instance, ascend the staircase and, passing through the little ante-chamber to the right, where hang full-length portraits of the present duke and duchess, enter the vast chamber on the first floor. It is now used as a very original kind of museum. In the glass cases are intimate mementoes and relics of most of the historic persons whose names have figured in European history during the last few centuries, little things given to the reigning duke of the period as keepsakes, priceless treasures when considered from the point of view of the celebrity of their former owners. What a part these De Rohans have played in the past! There is scarcely a royal family of Europe with which they have not been

connected. The well-known device tells generally the history of their race with its superb, "Je suis ni roi, ni prince, je suis de Rohan!" And the objects that lie in the cases of the museum add details to the picture of unsullied race and ancient pride which ever characterized the family.

But after a glance at the treasures, one finds one's self turning away to the window, the circular turret window, from whence there is a view over the river to the hills beyond. How often did the great Clisson, upon rising in the morning, cast his eagle eye over this same landscape! For this was his room, the Constable's chamber.

It was here that he was lying early one morning when his daughter Margot, Comtesse de Penthiévre, rushed in excitedly, having just heard of the death of Jean IV. of Brittany.

"Monseigneur, mon pére," she exclaimed, having told her news to her father, who was still in bed, "it rests now with you to help my husband to recover his inheritance! And we have two such beautiful children. Monseigneur, I implore you to help us!"

"And pray how is it to be done?" inquired the Constable, surprised.

Then, thinking that her father's ambition would lead him to sympathize with her scheme, the lady had the effrontery to suggest that, as he was guardian of the dead duke's children, they should be made away with, when her own husband would inherit the duchy as the representative of Charles of Blois who died in the Battle of Auray.

"My children, your grandchildren," she added, "would then be heirs to the dukedom."

The Constable had heard her so far in horrified silence. But as she said the last words, he burst out—

"Ha!" cried he, "cruel and perverse woman! If you continue to live you will kill your children with honours and worldly goods!" and springing up he seized a javelin and would have killed her then and there, had she not escaped from the room. But she was so terrified, that in her haste she stumbled, and fell down the stone staircase, breaking her leg, and rendering herself lame for life.

It was in this room, too, that the great Constable died. To use the words of Dom Lobineau, "The end of his life proving no more tranquil than the rest had been!"

Knowing that he was ill, the Duke of Brittany sent officers to arrest the old lion, for various crimes he was alleged to have committed. We can imagine his children gathered in the great chamber, hearing with consternation the whispered news of the coming of the soldiers, while on the bed lay the gaunt white figure of the dying Constable. Something must be done, and quickly!

"There's only one way of quieting him," says the Vicomte de Rohan, contemptuously; "send him sixty thousand francs."

But they had to make it a hundred before the old hero was allowed to die in peace.

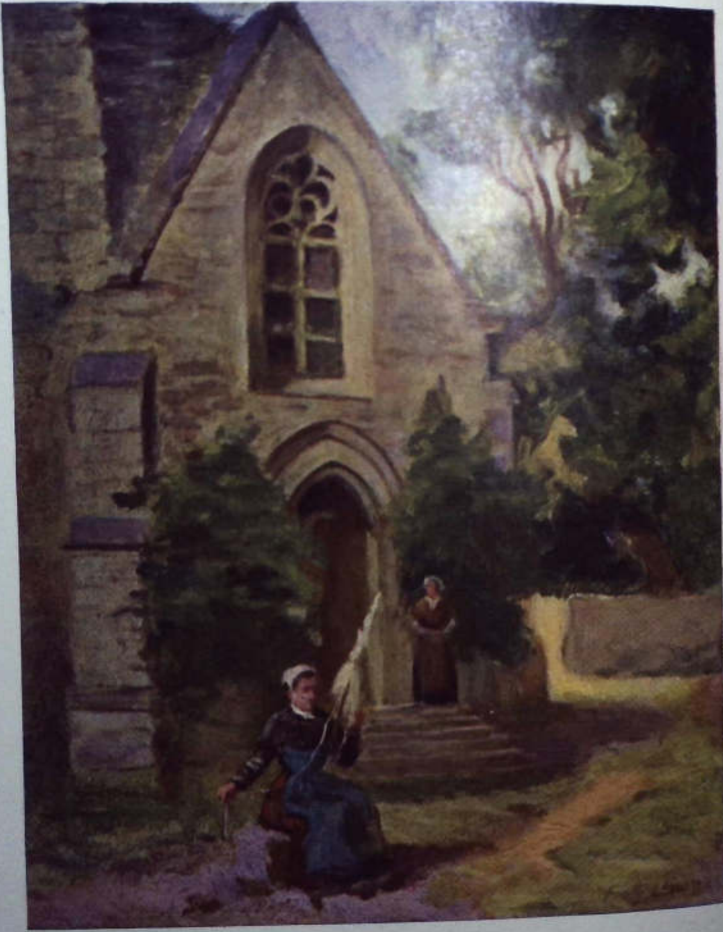
His death occurred on Saint George's Day, 1407, and he lies buried with his wife, Marguerite de Rohan, beneath a splendid tomb in a chapel on the south side of the old church of Nôtre Dame des Ronciers. In the corresponding chapel at the end of the north aisle stands the miraculous figure of Our Lady, found, so report says, lying among brambles, reminding us somewhat, as these Breton legends have a way of doing, of a similar story told of the old statue of the goddess Hera, in the Valley of Argos.

And indeed a very strange story is told in connection with the Blessed Virgin of Josselin. It is on this wise.

One day the women were washing down by the river, no doubt just where they wash to-day, when Mary, very ragged and footsore, asked them for alms. She looked like a tramp, and her little Son was naked and miserable, wrapped only in a corner of His mother's wretched shawl. So the women, who must certainly have been very unlike the good charitable Bretons of to-day, drove them away with cruel and insulting words. Then Mary turned, her eyes blazing with anger, righteous anger, for, as with the Greeks, want of hospitality has always been reckoned among the Bretons as one of the worst of crimes. She cursed them, and threw over them this spell, that for all time the women of Josselin should be subject to a strange malady, for which there was no cure, a malady which forced them to bark like dogs. . . .

Scarcely had she spoken than a horrible yapping and howling began, and the terrified people of Josselin had their first experience of that complaint said, even to-day, to haunt the neighbourhood. Years went past, and the women of Josselin continued to "bark," much to their own chagrin, and the irritation of their husbands. There appeared to be no possible alleviation for the complaint, it was as incurable as one of those tiresome tickling coughs to which some people are so prone.

At last one day a statue of our Blessed Lady was found among a heap of brambles. No one knew how it had come there, which no doubt went a long way towards making it sacred. At all events it was a very lucky find for the people of Josselin, for it was not long before it was discovered that the statue possessed the peculiar, and to the poor men it must have seemed celestial, virtue of curing the victims of the horrible plague, and ever since, those who are afflicted go to the splendid church of Our



CHAPEL OF TRÉCESSON

Lady of the Brambles, and after doing penance are healed before her shrine.

My Breton friend who told me the legend says that two or three years ago, being in Josselin at the time of the annual Pardon, he saw a young girl following the procession, with a lighted taper in her hand, and was informed that she had just been healed of the mysterious disease.

As we walk through the streets of the picturesque little town we may possibly catch a glimpse of the stately duchess, for she lives much among her people, it is said, and has a gracious reputation for being especially kind to any English students who are intelligently interested in her historic and beautiful home.

But lunch is waiting for us at the Hôtel de France, and as soon as it is over we must hasten on to Ploërmel, and so to Rennes by the forest of Brocelianda. . . .

But stay! Even if we harden our hearts and refuse to pause and dream awhile at Mi-voie, where, on the 26th of March, 1351, took place that gallant fight, known ever since as the Combat des Trente; and though we run straight through Ploërmel, neglecting the glories of sculpture that still ornament the north porch of its church, we must surely pause here and there as we thread our way through the forest. For it is thronged with phantoms, is it not?

From the top of a gentle slope we see it lying before us in the blue distance, and at the sight the automobile springs forward, and races down the long, steep slope. The hedges are full of twisted, tortured trees, that make one think of the figures in Jacque Callot's Misères de la Guerre. I wonder whether they are the ghosts of the men who fought all round here during the War of Succession.

How the purple pine trunks stand out against the sky, faded to a pale blue at this the end of summer. The road begins to be bordered by bracken and tufts of purple heather, and the green undergrowth is full of brown shadows, while the road is mottled and speckled by sunshine. And then the scent of it all! At the end of the long descent lies the Low Forest, spread out like a half-forgotten dream, and as we glide down the vision grows more and more real, and little forgotten unsubstantial villages that have been lying asleep since the time of Merlin wake and look up with startled surprise as we hurry past.

That pathway to the right, near the little village of Tréhorentec, leads, by an old water-mill, into the heart of the Val sans Retour, the lonely, rugged glen where Merlin met his Viviane; indeed, the miller looks as though he might be a lineal descendant of her giant brothers, so savage and prehistoric does he appear.

Further on, just beyond the Valley of False Lovers, we come to the Fontaine de Juvence, where the great wizard tried to renew his youth, and failing, was charmed to his eternal rest by the spell he had himself taught his companion.

"Why, I thought it was a hawthorn!" I exclaimed, gazing at the tree which shelters the tomb of the great enchanter.

"No, madame!" said the peasant who had acted as guide to the spot. "It has always been a holly. Sometimes if one passes at night, Merlin will be heard sighing and talking out of the midst of the branches. They say that it is his soul which has passed into the spirit of the tree."

But perhaps the most interesting spot of all is the

Fountain of Baranton, so celebrated in the history and legend of romance. It lies among the hills, on a steep slope, overlooking the broad blue distance, and around it are trees, trees of pine and chestnut, trees of beech, hawthorne, and oak. Beside the ruined margin lies a great stone, Le Perron de Baranton, and it is said that when the Seigneur de Montfort came to the fountain and poured some of its everflowing water on this stone, whatever the state of the weather, rain was sure to follow within a very short time. Here is an account of the miracle given by a writer of the thirteenth century.

"Oh, amazing wonder of the Fountain of Brecelien! If a drop be taken and poured on a certain rock beside the spring, immediately the water changes into vapour, forms itself into great clouds filled with hail; the air becomes thick with shadows, and resonant with the muttering of thunder. Those who have come through curiosity to behold the prodigy, wish that they had never done so, so filled are their hearts with terror, and so does fear paralyze their limbs. Incredible as the marvel may seem, yet the proofs of its reality are too abundant to be doubted."

And the custom has but lately died away. I was assured by an old man, who took us to see the spring, that as lately as the year 1833 the Rector of Concoret went in procession to Baranton and performed the ancient Druidical rites, accompanied and sanctified, of course, by Christian prayers, and that the effect was as magical as ever. . . .

Ah, this forest land! One can still wander with Arthur's knights searching for the lost wizard and his fairy love, aye, and find him too in some distant farm, or charcoal-burner's hut, where, as the good wife welcomes

you to the best she has to give, her husband will tell stories and chant long ballads which will prove that Merlin still lives and sings in the hearts of the Bretons of to-day.

But it is a strange and sombre place, this Brocelianda, and there are other memories lingering than those of song.

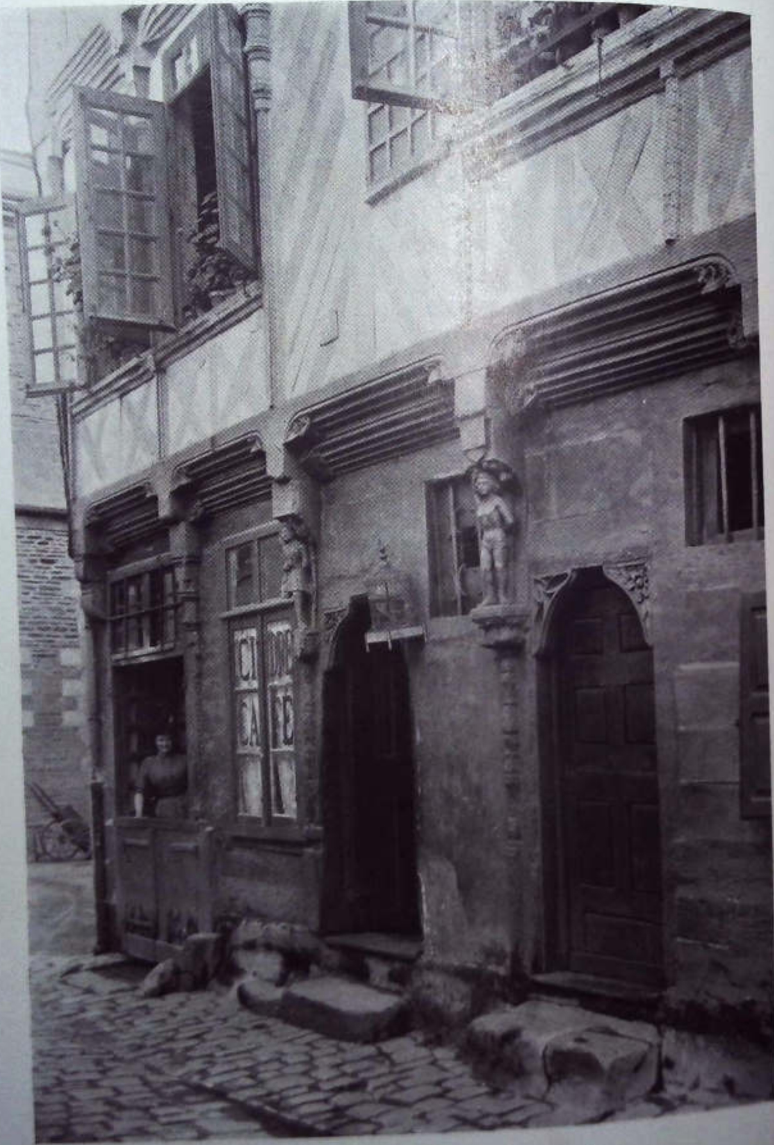
There is, for instance, this old Abbey of Paimpont, founded by the monkish king, Judicaël, he of whom it is told, that at the call of his country he left his cell, became king, married, founded a race of sovereigns, and then returned to his humble cloister to end his days. In the treasury lies his arm in a curious antique silver casket, together with a splendid ivory crucifix carved by a later monk of the same abbey.

Then, too, the forsaken castles! The beautiful moated Château de Trécesson, with its gatehouse and vast courtyard, and the exquisite little chapel, where, before the Revolution came and put an end to all things beautiful, the ladies who inhabited the painted rooms through which we wander and dream, went to hear Mass.

Or think of the little lost sanctuaries of the forest, outposts from the great Abbeys of Gael and Paimpont. The Chapel of Saint Jean served until lately by two holy hermits, whose skulls lie behind the altar. The Chapel of Saint Bartolemy, now no more than a statue and a fountain, yet still held in reverence, and visited each year by hundreds of peasants from all parts of the district. Or think. . . .

But there is far too much to think about during one short autumn afternoon. Better go in spring to Paimpont, and put up at the clean and charming little inn, where Madame Nicholas and her daughter will entertain you royally, and the stout landlord will drive you about all

THE CASTLE OF TRÉCESSON


THE HOUSE OF DU GUESCLIN AT RENNES

day in his gig, and tell you stories of the forest as he sits smoking in the great chimney of an evening.

And now we are nearing the suburbs of Rennes, and though there is much to be said of the old city, it must be postponed till another time. One picture, and only one, shall we look at.

It is that of an old, old house, with quaint doors and windows, and curious carvings, grotesque and mediæval. As we stand watching it years fade away. From it comes a young man in armour. He mounts his horse that stands before the door, and rides off to the Place des Lices, where a tournament is being held. His visor is down, and no one recognizes him. Already he has overcome many knights, when suddenly he finds himself confronted by an elderly man. The youth starts, uncovers his head, and bows himself to his horse's neck, while shouts of "*Du Guesclin! Du Guesclin!*" ring through the air. We have met him before, as a boy, this Breton hero, and now, as he bends in humble submission before his father, we recognize his ugly misshapen face once more. Yes, this is the house of Du Guesclin, though when he lived there, or whether he lived there at all, it would be hard to say. But the name of Brittany's greatest hero forms a fitting sound with which to close this record of our journey.

Yet it is sad to say good-bye, sad to feel that the bright September month is over, and we must go back to foggy England, and the long dark days of winter.

But this Brittany through which we have been travelling together is an inexhaustible mine of interest, from which those who have a fancy for building up monuments of the past can go on quarrying material indefinitely. Concerning

such a land we may say with Solomon: "Of making many books there is no end!"

And so, dear friends, dear readers, I will not say good-bye! but use the more hopeful French equivalent, au revoir!

Au revoir! au revoir! fellow travellers, until we meet again on the St. Malo steamboat, bound on another holiday to Brittany.

INDEX

Abbey of Bon Repos, 160
,, ,, Landévennec, 111
Abelard and Heloise, 266
Ahé, 109
Aignan, St., 175
Alignments of Carnac, 224
Amboise, Françoise d', 26, 262
Anatole le Braz, 42
Ankou, l', 67
Anne, Duchess, 24, 88, 212
Armand Tuffin, 15
Arthur, King, 61, 64, 74
,, and the Dragon, 75
,, of Brittany, 269
Artois, Sir Robert d', 281
Aryans, 218
Aumeri de Clisson, Sir, 149
Aurelian, Saint Paul, 105, 129
Avalon, 64

Ballad of Guenc'hlan, 28
,, Jeanne la Flamme, 208
Baranton, Fountain of, 297
,, Le Perron de, 297
Barbe, Saint, 149
Baud, 197, 290
Bay of Quiberon, 240
Beaumanoir, 260
Bertrand du Guesclin, 13, 299
Bieuzi, Saint, 185
,, ,, Death of, 268
,, ,, Fountain of, 266
Bisson, Story of, 182
Blois, Charles of, 45, 207
Bon Repos, Abbey of, 160
,, Secours, Nôtre Dame de, 23
Boteler Sir John, Story of, 148
Braspartz, 129
Braz, Anatole le, 42
Brélévénez, 59
Brocelianda, Forest of, 295
Bulat, 33
,, Legend of, 36

Cado, Saint, 188
Cadoudal, George, 283
,, Julien, 284
Cahots, 153
Calvary of Pleyben, 132
,, Plougastel, 119
Camors, Forest of, 283
Canticle of Nôtre Dame de Bon Secours, 23
Carnac, 224
,, Alignments of, 224
Castenac, 184, 188
Cathedral of Tréguier, 54
Champ Dolent, 3
Chapel of Nazareth, 14
Charles of Blois, 45, 207
Château de l'Hermine, 259
,, la Motte, 259
,, Trécesson, 298
Chateaubriand, 10
Châteauneuf du Faou, 132
Chénaie, 12
Chouans, 15
Chramme, 4
Church of Saint Nicodemus, 192
Clarté, Nôtre-Dame-de-la, 62
Cléden Poher, 132
Clisson, Aumeri de, 149
,, Olivier de, 258, 291
,, ,, Death of, 293
Clotaire, 4
Coádélan, 46
Combat des Trente, 295
Combourg, 8
,, Chateaubriand at, 10
Comorre, Count, 18, 163, 168
Conan Mériadec, 111
Conquest of Veneti, 241
Corentin, Saint, 112
Cornély, Saint, 193, 226
,, ,, Legend of, 232
Corseul, 18
Crucuno, Dolmen of, 221

Crypt of Lanmeur, 85
Cup Marks, 232, 239

Daoulas, 129
Destruction of Is, 109
Diana, Worship of, 6
Dinan, 13
Dol, 3
,, Mont, 6
Dolent, Champ, 3
Dolmen of Crucuno, 221

Edward III., 180, 181, 281
Efflam, Saint, 76
Enora, Saint, 80
Erdeven, 217

Faou, Le, 102, 105, 116
,, Châteauneuf du, 132
,, Legend of, 105
Faouet, Le, 141
Festival of the Oxen, 227
Fiacre, Saint, 153
Flamme, Jeanne la, 208
Folgoët, Le, 96
Fontaine de Juvence, 296
Fontanelle, La, 46
Forest of Brocelianda, 295
,, Camors, 283
Fountain of Baranton, 297
,, Bieuzi, 266
Fracan, 111
France, Jeanne de, 262
Françoise d'Amboise, 26, 262

Gavr' Innis, 248
Gestin, Saint, 81
Gildas Saint, 185, 265
,, ,, Monastery of, 265
,, ,, Oratory of, 267
Goats, 249
Goneri, Saint, 159
Gouarec, 154
Gralon, King, 109
Grandchamp, 281
Groac'h Houard, 183, 198
Guéméné, 180
Guenc'hlan, 28
Guimilliau, 95
Guingamp, 21
,, Pardon of, 22
,, Pierre de, 262
,, Siege of, 24

Guingamp, Sir Reginald de, 181
Guyomarais, 15
Gwenc'hlan, Ballad of, 28
Gwennolé, 110

Heloise, Abelard and, 266
Hennebont, 149, 205
,, Relief of, 211
Hervé, Saint, 29
Hoël, King, 61
Houat, Island of, 188

Iltud, Saint, 5, 186
Is, Destruction of, 109
Island of Houat, 188

Jaoua, Saint, 105
,, ,, Legend of, 129
Jean IV., 258
,, V., 261
,, de Toulboudou, 150
Jean du Doigt, St., 87
Jeanne de France, 262
Jeanne la Flamme, 208
Job Ann Dréz, Story of, 125
Josselin, 291
Judicaël, Saint, 298
Juvence, Fontaine de, 296

Ker-dluel, 61
Kerialtan, 86
Kermartin, Saint Yves of, 52
King Arthur, 61, 64, 74
,, ,, and the Dragon, 75
King Hoël, 61
Kirec, Saint, 63
Korrigans, 252

La Chenaie, 12
La Fontanelle, 46
Lambader, 100
Lampaul, 95
Landévennec, Abbey of, 111
Landivisiau, 92
Laniscat, 159
L'Ankou, 67
Lanleff, 38
Lanmeur, 83
,, Crypt of, 85
Lann-Iltud, 186
Lannion, 59
,, Dance at, 59
La Roche Derrien, 44
,, Maurice, 95

La Roche, sur Blavet, 184
Laval, Sire de, 260
Le Braz, Anatole, 42
Le Faou, 102, 116
Le Faouet, 141
Le Folgoët, 96
Legend of Bulat, 36
,, Le Faou, 105
,, Marie the Fair, 252
,, Nôtre Dame des Ronciers, 293
,, Saint Cornély, 232
,, ,, Jaoua, 129
,, ,, Tryphina, 167, 257
Lesneven, 98
Light, Our Lady of, 62, 63
Locmariaquer, 247
Lotivy, 243

Malo, Saint, 2
,, ,, 18
Manny, Sir Walter, 147
Marie the Fair, Ballad of, 252
Marquis de Rouerie, 15
Massacre of Quiberon, 242
Maurice, La Roche, 95
Ménez Bré, 27
Meriádec, Conan, 111
Merlévenez, 216
Michel, Saint, 226
Milne Museum, 238
Monastery of Rhuys, 188
,, of Saint Gildas, 265
Montafilant, 18
Mont-Dol, 6
Mont Saint Michel, 226
Morlaix, 89
Morvan, 146
Motreff, 139
Mur, 161

Nazareth, Chapel of, 14
Nicholas, Saint, 115
,, des-Eaux, Saint, 183
Nicodème, Chapel of, 192
,, Pardon of, 192
Nôtre Dame de Bon Secours, 23
,, ,, ,, ,, Canticle of, 23
,, ,, de la Clarté, 62
,, ,, des Ronciers, 293

Olivier de Clisson, 258, 291

Oratory of Saint Gildas, 267
Oxen, Festival of the, 227

Paimpont, 298
Pardon of Guingamp, 22
,, Saint Nicodème, 192
,, ,, Tryphina, 178
Patern, Saint, 255
Paul Aurelian, Saint, 105, 129
Peninsula of Quiberon, 237
,, Rhuys, 264
Perros Guirec, 62
Pierre, St., 243
Plancoët, 14, 17
Plestin, 82
Pleyben, 131
Ploërmel, 295
Plougastel, 118
,, Calvary of, 119
Ploumanac'h, 63
Ploumilliau, 67
Plouzévédé, 101
Pontrieux, 42
Port Blanc, 51
Porz Bihan, 53

Quiberon, Bay of, 240
,, Massacre of, 242
,, Peninsula of, 237
Quimerc'h, 102

Reginald de Guingamp, Sir, 181
Relief of Hennebont, 211
Rhuys, Peninsula of, 264
,, Monastery of, 188
Rivod, 85
Robert d'Artois, Sir, 281
Rocenaud, 239
Roch, Saint, 239
Roche Derrien, La, 44
,, Maurice, La, 95
,, sur Blavet, 184
Rohan, Duc de, 24
Ronciers, Nôtre Dame des, 293
Rostrenen, 153
Rouérie, Marquis de, 15
Rouzic, Zacherie le, 237
Rumengol, 102, 120
,, Virgin of, 104

Sacred Stones, 203
Saint Barbe, 149
,, Bieuzi, 185

Saint Bieuzi, Death of, 268
,, ,, Fountain of, 266
,, Cado, 188
,, Corentin, 112
,, Cornély, 193, 226
,, ,, Legend of, 232
,, Efflam, 76
,, Enora, 80
,, Gestin, 81
,, Gildas, 185
,, ,, Monastery of, 265
,, ,, Oratory of, 267
,, Goneri, 159
,, Gwennolé, 110
,, Hervé, 29
,, Iltud, 5, 186
,, Jaoua, 102, 129
,, ,, Legend of, 129
,, Judicaël, 298
,, Kirec, 63
,, Malo, 18
,, Mélar, 83
,, Nicholas, 115
,, Nicodème, Chapel of, 192
,, ,, Pardon of, 192
,, Patern, 255
,, Paul Aurelian, 105, 129
,, Roch, 239
,, Salaün, 96
,, Samson, 4
,, Suzanne, 161
,, Tivisiau, 92
,, Trémeur, 158, 265
,, Tryphina, 158
,, ,, Legend of, 167, 257
,, ,, Pardon of, 178
,, Tugdual, 55
,, Vincent Ferrier, 261
,, Yves of Kermartin, 52
Sans Retour, Val, 295
Sarzeau, 265
Sir Aumery de Clisson, 149
,, John Boteler, Story of, 148
,, Matthew Trelawney, Story of, 148
,, Reginald de Guingamp, 181
,, Robert d'Artois, 281
,, Walter Manny, 147
Sire de Laval, 260
Soul's Lament, The, 138
Spézet, 137
St. Aignan, 175
,, Fiacre, 153
St. Jean du Doigt, 87
,, Malo, 2
,, Michel, Mont, 226
,, Nicholas des Eaux, 183
,, Pierre, 243
,, Thégonnec, 92
,, Tryphine, 158
Story of Bisson, 182
,, Job Ann Dréz, 125
,, the Tower of the Constable, 258
Succession, War of, 147
Succinio, 269

Thégonnec, Saint, 92
Tivisiau, Saint, 92
Tonquédec, 65
Toulbardou, Jean de, 150
Tower of the Constable, Story of, 258
Trécesson, Château de, 298
Trégastel, 64
Tréguier, 52
,, Cathedral of, 54
Trelawney, Sir Matthew, 148
Trémeur, Saint, 158, 265
Trente, Combat des, 295
Tryphina, Saint, 158
,, ,, 167, 257
,, ,, Pardon of, 178
Tryphine, Saint, 158
Tuffin, Armand, 15
Tugdual, Saint, 55

Val sans Retour, 296
Vannes, 254
Veneti, Conquest of, 241
Véridique, Yves le, 53
Vincent Ferrier, Saint, 261
Virgin of Rumengol, 104

Walter Manny, Sir, 147
War of Succession, 147
Wedding, The, 277
Worship of Diana, 6

Yeun, The, 124
Youdic, The, 125
Yves le Véridique, 53
,, of Kermartin, Saint, 52

Zacherie le Rouzic, 237

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES.

A CATALOGUE OF BOOKS PUBLISHED BY METHUEN AND COMPANY: LONDON 36 ESSEX STREET W.C.

CONTENTS

	PAGE		PAGE
General Literature,	2-20	Little Galleries,	27
Ancient Cities,	20	Little Guides,	27
Antiquary's Books,	20	Little Library,	27
Arden Shakespeare,	20	Little Quarto Shakespeare,	29
Beginner's Books,	21	Miniature Library,	29
Business Books,	21	Oxford Biographies,	29
Byzantine Texts,	21	School Examination Series,	29
Churchman's Bible,	22	School Histories,	30
Churchman's Library,	22	Textbooks of Science,	30
Classical Translations,	22	Simplified French Texts,	30
Classics of Art,	23	Standard Library,	30
Commercial Series,	23	Textbooks of Technology,	31
Connoisseur's Library,	23	Handbooks of Theology,	31
Library of Devotion,	23	Westminster Commentaries,	32
Illustrated Pocket Library of Plain and Coloured Books,	24	Fiction,	32-37
Junior Examination Series,	25	The Shilling Novels,	37
Junior School-Books,	26	Books for Boys and Girls,	39
Leaders of Religion,	26	Novels of Alexandre Dumas,	39
Little Books on Art,	26	Methuen's Sixpenny Books,	39

FEBRUARY 1908