Title: Béarn and the Pyrenees
A legendary tour to the country of Henri Quatre

Author: Louisa Stuart Costello

Release date: December 16, 2006 [eBook #20124]

Language: English

E-text prepared by Janet Blenkinship, Chuck Greif,
and the Project Gutenberg Online Distributed Proofreading Team
at DP Europe
(http://dp.rastko.net/)

Transcriber's note:
The original spelling and puncturation have been retained.

BÉARN

AND

THE PYRENEES:

A LEGENDARY TOUR

TO THE

COUNTRY OF HENRI QUATRE.

BY

LOUISA STUART COSTELLO,

AUTHOR OF

"THE BOCAGES AND THE VINES," "A PILGRIMAGE TO AUVERGNE," ETC.

With numerous Illustrations.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,

Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

1844.

PRINTED BY R. CLAY, BREAD STREET HILL.

TO

MISS BURDETT COUTTS,

THESE VOLUMES

ARE DEDICATED WITH MUCH RESPECT AND AFFECTION

BY

HER SINCERELY OBLIGED

HUMBLE SERVANT,

LOUISA STUART COSTELLO.

LONDON,

MARCH 16, 1844.

INTRODUCTION.

WHEN I first indulged the inclination, which I had long entertained, of visiting the famous castle of Chinon, and the equally interesting abbey of Fontevraud—the palace and tomb of our English kings—and paused on my way in "the lovely vales of Vire," and gathered in romantic Brittany some of her pathetic legends, I thought I should have satisfied my longing to explore France; but I found that every step I look in that teeming region opened to me new stores of interest; and, encouraged by the pleasure my descriptions had given, I set out again, following another route, to the regal city of Rheims, visiting the vine-covered plains of Champagne and Burgundy, and all their curious historical towns, till I reached the *dominion* of Charles the Seventh at Bourges, to become acquainted with whose gorgeous cathedral and antique palaces is worth any fatigue. From thence I wandered on to the beautiful Monts Dores, and the basaltic regions of unexplored Le Vellay; and, after infinite gratification, I once more turned my steps homeward; but, like Sindbad, I felt that there was much more yet to be explored; and I had visions of the romantic and delightful realms, which extend where once the haughty heiress of Aquitaine held her poetical courts of Love and Chivalry. The battle-fields of our Black Prince were yet to be traced; the sites of all the legends and adventures of the most entertaining of chroniclers, Froissart, were yet to be discovered; and the land of mountains and torrents, where the Great Béarnais passed his hardy childhood, was yet unknown to me.

I therefore again assumed my "cockle hat and staff," and, re-entering the Norman territory, commenced exploring, from the stone bed of the Conqueror, at Falaise, to the tortoise-shell cradle of Henry of Navarre, at Pau.

Not inferior to my two former pilgrimages, in interest, did this my third ramble prove. How many "old romantic towns" I passed through; how much of varied lore I heard and found amongst the still original and, even now, unsophisticated peasantry; how numerous were the recollections which places and things recalled, and how pleasant were the scenes I met, I have endeavoured to tell the lovers of easy adventure—for any traveller, with the slightest enterprise, could accomplish what I have done without fatigue, and with the certainty of being repaid for the exertion of seeking for amusement.

In succession, I paused at Le Mans, the scene of the great Vendéean struggle, where the majestic cathedral challenges the admiration of all travellers of taste; at Poitiers, full of antique wonders; in the region of *the Serpent lady*, Melusine; at Protestant La Rochelle, with all its battlements and turrets, and the most beautiful bathing-establishment in Europe. At mysterious Saintes, and all its pagan temples and arches; at Bordeaux, the magnificent; on the Garonne, and by its robbers'-castles; at Agen, with its *barber troubadour*; in the haunts of Gaston de Foix and Jeanne d'Albret and her son; in the gloomy valleys of the proscribed Cagot; and where the mellifluous accents of the Basquaise enchant the ear. All the impressions made by these scenes I have endeavoured to convey to my readers, as I did before, inviting them to follow my footsteps, and judge if I have told them true.

CONTENTS OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Vreux—Amphitheatre—Blossac—The Great Stone—The Scholars—Museum—The Demon's Stone—Grande Gueule.

CHAPTER VII.

Notre Dame—The Keys—The Miracle—Procession—St. Radegonde—Tomb of the Saint—Foot-print—Little Loubette—The Count Outwitted—The Cordelier—Late Justice —The Templars.

CHAPTER VIII.

Château de la Fée—King René—The Miniatures—The Post-Office Functionary—Originality—The English Bank-note—St. Porchaire—The Dead Child—Montierneuf—Guillaume Guy Geoffroy—Thomas à Becket—Choir of Angels—Relics—The Armed Hermit—A Saint—The Repudiated Queen—Elionore—The Bold Priest—Lay.

CHAPTER IX.

Melusine—Lusignan—Trou de la Fée—The Legend—Male Curiosity—The Discovery—The Fairy's Shrieks—The Chronicler—Geoffrey of the Great Tooth—Jaques Cœur—Royal Gratitude—Enemies—Jean du Village—Wedding—The Bride—The Tragedy of Mauprier—The Garden—The Shepherdess—The Walnut-Gatherers—La Gâtine—St. Maixant—Niort—Madame de Maintenon—Enormous Caps—Chamois Leather—Duguesclin—The Dame de Plainmartin—The Sea.

CHAPTER X.

La Rochelle—Les Trois Chandeliers—Oysters—Bathing Establishment—Gaiety—Military Discipline—Curious Arcades—Story of Auffrédy.

CHAPTER XI.

Towers—Religion—Maria Belandelle—Storm—Protestant Retreat—Solemn Dinners —"Half-and-half"—Go to sleep!—The Brewery—Gas Establishment—Château of La Font—The Mystery explained—Triumph of Scenery over Appetite—Slave Trade—Charles le Bien Servi—Liberality of Louis-Philippe—Guiton—House of Le Maire Guiton —The Fleets—The Fight—The Mayor and the Governor.

CHAPTER XII.

Rochefort—The Curious Bonne—Americanisms—Convicts—The Charente —"Tulipes"—Taillebourg—Henry the Third—St. Louis—False Security—Romegoux—Puytaillé

CHAPTER XIII.

Saintes—Roman Arch of Triumph—Gothic Bridge—The Cours—Ruined City—Cathedral—Coligny—Ruined Palace—St. Eutrope—Amphitheatre—Legend of Ste. Eustelle—The Prince of Babylon—Fête—The Côteau—Ste. Marie

CHAPTER XIV.

Frère Chrétien—Utility of Custom-house Search—Bold Voyager—Pauillac—Blaye—The Gironde—Talbot—Vines—The Landes—Phantom of King Arthur—The Witch-finder —The Landes—Wreckers

CHAPTER XV.

Ports—Divona—Bordeaux—Quinconces—Allées—First Impression—Chartrons—Bahutier—Bacalan—Quays—White Guide—Ste. Croix—St. Michel—St. André—Pretty Figure—Pretty Women—Palais Gallien—Black Prince's Son, Edward.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONTENTS OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

BÉARN AND THE PYRENEES.

CHAPTER I.

HONFLEUR—DEJAZET—THE SAILOR PRINCE—LE MARI—LISIEUX—LA CROIX BLANCHE—ARRIVAL AT FALAISE—GUIBRAY—CASTLE OF FALAISE—THE LITTLE RECESS—ARLETTE—THE FATHER—THE INFANT HERO—THE UNCLE—ARLETTE'S TEARS—HER RECEPTION.

WITHIN ten leagues of the interesting town of Caen, where William of Normandy and his queen lie buried, the traveller, who devotes a short space of time to a search after

the picturesque, may, without straying too far a-field, find what he desires in the clean, bright, gay town of Falaise, where the hero of the Conquest was born. [2]

From Southampton to Havre it requires only twelve hours to cross, and, as was the case with myself and my companions, when, at the end of August 1842, we began a journey, whose end was "to be" the mountains which divide France from Spain, if the city of parrots is already familiar to the tourist, he has only to take the steam-packet, which in four hours will land him at Caen, or enter the boat which crosses the fine bold river to Honfleur. In an hour you arrive at Honfleur, after a very pleasant voyage, which the inhabitants of Havre are extremely fond of taking: a diligence starts from the quay, and proceeds through an avenue of a league's length between beautiful hills, orchards, and corn-fields, to the strange old town of Lisieux, to which we proceeded.

One of our fellow-travellers in the diligence was a smart, lively looking young woman, whose resemblance to the celebrated actress Dejazet, whom we had very lately seen in London, was so striking as to be quite remarkable. Her tone of voice, her air and manner, as well as her features, reminded us strongly of the *artiste* whose warm reception in England, where we are supposed to be correct even to fastidiousness, has not a little amused the Parisians at our expense. Whatever may be [3] the objections to Dejazet's style, certain it is that her imitation of the manners of the class of *grisettes* and peasants is inimitable; not a shade, not a tone, is forgotten, and the *truth* of her representations is proved at every step you take in France, either in the provinces or in Paris.

Our little talkative companion had much to relate of herself and her husband, whom she described as a piece of perfection; he had just returned from a whaling expedition, after several years' absence, and they were now on their way to Lisieux to visit her relations, and give him a little shooting. He had brought back, according to her account, a mine of wealth; and, as she had incurred no debts during his absence, but had supported herself by opening a little *café*, which she assured us had succeeded admirably, they were proceeding, with well-filled purses, to see their only child who was in the keeping of its grandmother. She told wondrous histories of his exploits amongst the ice, of his encounters with the natives—"*les Indiens*," of the success of all his voyages, and the virtues of his captain, who was an Englishman and *never spoke to his crew*, but was the most just man in the world, and ended by saying that when she met with English people she felt *in Paradise*.

Although we listened to her continued chattering with amused attention, it was far [4] otherwise with some quiet, silent, women who sat beside us; we soon gathered, by certain contemptuous glances which they exchanged, that they did not give credit to half our little Dejazet was telling; and when to crown the whole, she related a story of a beautiful maiden of Lisieux, who had been distinguished by the notice of the Duke de *Nemours* when he visited that place on his way to join *his ship* at Havre, they could support their impatience no longer, and broadly contradicted her on the ground that the Prince de Joinville and *not* Nemours was the sailor.

Nothing daunted, our gay whaler's wife insisted on every part of her history being true, asserting that she must know best, and if the young prince had *left the navy* since, it was not her affair.

As she approached Lisieux she became more and more animated, darting her body half way out of the window every minute to look out for her *papa* or her other relations;—at length, with a scream which would have secured Dejazet three rounds of applause, she recognised her parent in a peasant *en blouse*, trudging along the road carrying his bundle—on his way, no doubt, as she assured us, to see her sister, who lived at a village near. Tears and smiles alternately divided the expression of her countenance, as she now feared her sister was ill, and now rejoiced at seeing her father. All was however happily settled when the coach stopped and she sprang out [5] into the arms of her papa, who had followed the diligence, and came up out of breath; and it was then that we became aware that a remarkably ill-looking, dirty, elderly, Jewish featured man, to whom she had occasionally spoken on the journey, was the identical perfection of a *mari*, of whom she had been boasting all the way. The incredulous listeners, whom she had so annoyed, now revenged themselves by sundry depreciatory remarks on the appearance of this phoenix, whom they pronounced to have the air of a tinker or old clothesman, and by no means that of the hero he had been represented.

As it was raining violently on our arrival at Lisieux, the town presented to us but an uncomfortable appearance; and as we had to search for an hotel, and were at last obliged to be content with one far from inviting, our first impression was by no means agreeable; nor does Lisieux offer anything to warrant a change in the traveller's opinion who considers it dreary, slovenly, and ruinous. There is much, however, to admire in the once beautiful cathedral, and the church of St. Jacques, both grand specimens of the massive architecture of the twelfth century.

In this town lived and died the traitor Bishop of Bayeux, Pierre Cauchon, who sold the heroic Jeanne d'Arc for English gold. An expiatory chapel was erected by him in [6] the cathedral, where it was hoped the tears of the pious would help to wash his sins away; but no one now remembers either him or his crime, for we asked in vain for the spot; and when prayers are offered at the shrine of the Virgin in the chapel dedicated to her, which we eventually discovered to be its site, not one is given to the cruel bishop, whose ill-gotten money was therefore expended in vain; for the centuries it must have required to rescue his soul from purgatory cannot have expired by this time. The churches are being restored, and building, as usual in all French towns, is going on: when numerous ugly striped houses are removed, and their places filled up, the principal square of Lisieux may deserve to be admired, though whether it will ever merit the encomium of an old lady who resides in it, and who assured us it would in a short time be *superbe*, time will determine. The public promenades are good, and the views round the town pretty, but we did not feel tempted to wait for finer weather, and took our departure for Falaise with little delay.

The drive from Lisieux to Falaise is charming; and, although the appearance of the hotels is not in their favour, there is nothing to complain of in regard to cleanliness or attention: at least so we found it at La Croix Blanche, where the singular beauty of our hostess added to the romance of our position, perched, as we were, on a balcony [7] without awning, in a building which had evidently been part of an old tower. It is true that we should have preferred something rather less exposed when we found ourselves confined for a whole day, in consequence of the pouring rain, and found that a stream of water had made its way from our balcony into each of our rooms; whose bricked floors were little improved by their visit. Our suggestion of covering the way, in order that, in wet weather, both the dinner and its bearers might be sheltered, appeared to excite surprise, though our attendants came in constantly with their high caps wet through and their aprons soaked.

Our nearly exhausted patience, as we gazed hopelessly on the dull sky of an *August* day, was at length rewarded; and the sun, which had obstinately concealed himself for several days, burst forth on the second morning of our arrival, and changed by its power the whole face of things at Falaise. We lost no time in taking advantage of the fine day which invited us, and sallied forth, all expectation, into the streets, which we found, as well as the walks, as dry as if no rain had fallen for months; so fresh and bright is the atmosphere in this beautiful place.

The town is clean and neat; most of the ruinous, striped houses, with projecting stories, such as deform the streets of Lisieux, being cleared away; leaving wide spaces [8] and pure air, at least in the centre-town, where the best habitations are situated. There are other divisions, less airy and more picturesque, called the fauxbourgs of Guibray and St. Laurent, and le Val d'Ante; where many antique houses are still standing, fit to engage the pencil of the antiquarian artist.

The churches of Falaise are sadly defaced, but, from their remains, must have been of great beauty. The Cathedral, or Eglise de St. Laurent, is partly of the twelfth century; the exterior is adorned with carving, and gargouilles, and flying-buttresses, of singular grace; but the whole fabric is so built in with ugly little shops, that all fine effect is destroyed. The galleries in the church of La Trinité are elaborately ornamented, as are some of the chapels, whose roofs are studded with pendants. Much of this adornment is due to the English, under Henry V., and a good deal is of the period of the *renaissance*.

The church of Guibray was founded by Duke William, as the Norman windows and arches testify; but a great deal of bad taste has been expanded in endeavouring to turn the venerable structure into a Grecian temple, according to the approved method of the time of Louis XIV. A statue of the wife of Cœur de Lion was once to be seen here, but has long disappeared. That princess resided in this part of Falaise, at one [9] period of her widowhood, and contributed greatly to the embellishment of the church.

There are many columns and capitals, and arches and ornaments of interest in the church of St. Gervais, defaced and altered as it is; but it is impossible to give all the attention they deserve to these buildings, when the towers of the splendid old castle are wooing you to delay no longer, but mount at once the steep ascent which leads to its walls.

Rising suddenly from the banks of a brawling crystal stream, a huge mass of grey rocks, thrown in wild confusion one on the other, sustains on its summit the imposing remains of the castle, whose high white tower, alone and in perfect preservation, commands an immense tract of smiling country, and seems to have defied the attacks of ages, as it gleams in the sun, the smooth surface of its walls apparently uninjured and unstained. This mighty donjon is planted in a lower part of the height; consequently, high as it appears, scarcely half of its real elevation is visible. Its walls are of prodigious thickness, and seem to have proved their power through centuries of attack and defence to which it has been exposed; careless alike of the violence of man and the fury of the elements. Adjoining the keep are ranges of ruined walls, pierced with fine windows, whose circular arches, still quite entire, show their early Norman [10] construction. Close to the last of these, whose pillars, with wreathed capitals, are as sharp as if just restored, is a low door, leading to a small chamber in the thickness of the wall. There is a little recess in one corner, and a narrow window, through whose minute opening a fine prospect may be seen.

This small chamber, tradition says, was once adorned with "azure and vermilion;" though it could scarcely have ever presented a very gay appearance, even when used as the private retreat of the luxurious master of the castle. However, such as it is, we are bound to look upon this spot with veneration; for it is asserted, that here a child was born in secrecy and mystery, and that here, by this imperfect light, his beautiful mother gazed upon the features of the future hero of Normandy.

However unlike a bower fitted for beauty and love, it is said that here Arlette, the skinner's daughter, was confined of William the Conqueror. It is said, too, that from this height, the sharp-sighted Duke his father, gazing from his towers, first beheld the lovely peasant girl bathing in the fountain which still bears her name. In this retreat, concealed from prying eyes, and where inquisitive ears found it difficult to catch a sound, the shrill cry of the wondrous infant was first uttered,—a sound often to be [11] repeated by every echo of the land, when changed to the war note which led to victory.

Little, perhaps, did his poor mother exult in his birth, for she was of lowly lineage, and had never raised her eyes to the castle but with awe, nor thought of its master but with fear; her pleasures were to dance, on holidays, under the shade of trees with the simple villagers, her companions; her duties, to wash her linen on the stones of the silver stream, as her townswomen do still at the present day—that silver stream which probably flowed past her father's cottage, as it still flows, bathing the base of cottages as humble and as rudely built as his could have been. There might, perchance, have been one, amongst the youths who admired her beauty, whom she preferred to the rest; her ambition might have been to become his bride, her dreams might have imaged his asking her of her father, whose gracious consent made them both happy: in her ears might have rung the pealing bells of St. Gervais—the vision of maidens, in bridal costumes, strewing flowers in her path, might have risen before her view—her lover with his soft words and smiles—his cottage amongst the heath-covered rocks of Noron—all this might have flitted across her mind, as she stood beside the fountain, beneath the castle walls, unconscious that eyes were gazing on her whose influence [12] was to fix her destiny. A mail-clad warrior, terrible and powerful, whose will may not be resisted, whose gold glitters in her father's eyes, or whose chains clank in his ears, has seen and coveted her for his own, and her simple dream must be dispersed in air to make way for waking terrors. The unfortunate father trembles while he feebly resists, he listens to the duke's proposal, he has yet a few words of entreaty for his child: he dares not tell her what her fate must be, he hopes that time and new adventures will efface Arlette from the mind of her dangerous lover; but, again, he is urged, heaps of gold shine before him, how shall he turn from their tempting lustre? Is there not in yonder tower an *oubliette* that yawns for the disobedient vassal? He appeals to Arlette, she has no reply but tears; men at arms appear in the night, they knock at the skinner's door and demand his daughter, they promise fair in the name of their master; they mount her on a steed before the gentlest of their band, his horse's hoofs clatter along the rocky way—the father hears the sobs of his child for a little

space, and his heart sinks,—he hides his eyes with his clenched hand, but suddenly he starts up—his floor is strewn with glittering pieces—he stoops down and counts them, and Arlette's sorrows are forgotten.

Arlette returns no more to her father's cottage. She remains in a turret of the castle, but not as a handmaiden of the duchess; her existence is not supposed to be known, [13] though the childless wife of Duke Robert weeps in secret, over her wrongs.

All this is pure fancy, and may have no foundation in reality.

"Look here upon this picture and on that."

Perhaps Arlette did not repine at her fate; she might have been ambitious and worldly, vain and presuming, have possessed cunning and resolve, and have used every artifice to secure her triumph. Some of the stories extant of her would seem to prove this, and some to exculpate her from blame, inasmuch as she believed herself to have fulfilled a sacred duty in conforming to her master's will. When she told her lover that she had dreamt "a tree sprang from her bosom which overshadowed all Normandy," there was more evidence of policy than simplicity in the communication which was so well calculated to raise the hopes of a great man without an heir; and perhaps it was she herself who dictated the saying of the *sage femme* at her son's birth, who, having placed him *on straw* by her side, and observing that the robust infant grasped in his tiny hands as much as he could hold, cried out—"*Par Dieu*! this child begins early to grasp and make all his own!" At all events the little hero was [14] "honourably brought up," and treated as if legitimate.

Another version of the story of Arlette is given by an ancient chronicler, (Benoit de S^{t} Maur,) which is certainly a sufficient contrast to the view I ventured to take of the affair, probably with but little correctness, considering the manners of the period.

It appears that the scruples of the fair daughter of *Vertprès*, the skinner, for his name seems to be known, were dispersed by the advice and injunction of her uncle, a holy personage, of *singular* piety, who dwelt in a hermitage in the wood of Gouffern. Convinced, by his arguments, that Heaven had directed the affection of the duke towards her, she no longer resisted her father's wish, and made preparations as if for a bridal, providing herself with rich habiliments calculated to enhance her beauty. When the messengers of the duke came to fetch her, they requested that she would put on a cloak and cape, and conceal her rich dress, for fear of the jeers of the common people, who would perhaps insult her if she appeared publicly with them; but she replied boldly and proudly, "Does the duke send for me after this manner, as if I were not the daughter of an honourable man? Shall I go secretly, as if I were but a disgraced woman? That which I do is in all honour and respectability, not from [15] wickedness or weakness, and I am not ashamed that men should see me pass. If I am to be taken to the duke, it shall not be on foot and hidden—fetch, therefore, your palfrey, and let me go as it becomes me." Her dress is thus described:—"She had clothed her gentle body in a fine shift, over which was a grey pelisse, wide and without lacings, but setting close to her shape and her arms: over this she wore a short mantle conformable and of good taste; her long hair was slightly bound with a fillet of fine silver. It was in this guise, beautiful to behold, that she mounted the courser which was brought for her, and saluted her *father and mother* as she rode away; but at *the last moment she was seized with a trembling, and burst into weeping, covering her fair bosom with her tears*."

When she arrived, "by a fine moon-light," at the castle gate, her attendants made her alight, and opened a wicket for her to enter, but she drew back, saying, "The duke has sent for me, and it would seem that he esteems me little if his gates are not to be opened for my passage. Let him order them to give me entrance, or send me back at once. *Beaux amis, ouvrez-moi la porte*."

The messengers, awed by her dignity, hesitated not to obey her, and she was presently conducted into the presence of Duke Robert, who awaited her coming in a [16] vaulted chamber, adorned with gilding, where "fine images were represented in enamel and colours." There he received her with great joy and honour, and from that time she possessed all his love. [17]

CHAPTER II.

PRINCE ARTHUR—WANT OF GALLANTRY PUNISHED—THE RECREANT SOW—THE ROCKS OF NORON—LA GRANDE EPERONNIÈRE—LE CAMP-FERME—ANTIQUITIES OF FALAISE—ALENÇON—NORMAN CAPS—GEESE—LE MANS—TOMB OF BÉRANGÈRE—CATHEDRAL—ANCIENT REMAINS—STREETS—THE VEILED FIGURE.

CLOSE to the natal chamber of Duke William may be seen another recess in the thick walls, still smaller and more dismal, to which a ruined window now gives more light than in the days when poor young Arthur of Brittany looked sadly through its loop-holes over a wide extent of country, now all cultivation and beauty, but probably then bristling with forts and towers, all in the hands of his hard-hearted uncle John. After having made his nephew prisoner in Anjou, John sent him to Falaise, and had him placed in this dungeon in the custody of some severe but not cruel knights, who treated him with all the respect they dared to show. An order from their treacherous master soon arrived, directing that he should be put to death; but they refused obedience, and indignantly exclaimed, that the walls of the castle of Falaise should not be sullied by such a crime. Arthur was therefore removed to Rouen, and there less [18] conscientious men were found to execute the tyrant's will, if tradition, so varied on the point, speak true.

Stephen maintained himself in the castle of Falaise against the father of Henry II., and these walls have probably echoed to the lays of minstrels, whose harps were tuned in praise of the beautiful and haughty heiress of Aquitaine. The fair wife of Cœur de Lion had this castle for her dower, and, for some time, is said to have lived here. Philip Augustus accorded some singular privileges to Falaise, two of which deserve to be recorded.

If a woman were convicted of *being fond of scandal*, and known to backbite her neighbours, they had the right of placing cords under her arms and ducking her three times in the water: after this, if a man took the liberty of reproaching her with the circumstance, he was compelled to pay a fine of ten sous, or else he was plunged into the stream in a similar manner.

If a man were so ungallant as to call a woman *ugly*, he was obliged to pay a fine. This offence was indeed worthy of condign punishment, if the women of Falaise were as pretty formerly as they are now: with their neat petticoats, smart feet in sabots, high butterfly or mushroom caps, as white as snow, scarlet handkerchiefs and bright-coloured aprons, with their round healthy cheeks, lively eyes, and good-humoured [19] expression of countenance, the Falaisiennes are as agreeable a looking race as one would wish to see, and more likely to elicit compliment than insult.

Many curious customs prevailed in the middle ages in this old town; and one was formerly portrayed on the walls of a chapel in the church of the Holy Trinity. It was the representation of an execution: the delinquent had injured a child, by disfiguring its face and arms, and suffered in consequence. The culprit was no other than a sow; and when the crime committed was brought home to her, the learned judges assembled on the occasion pronounced her as guilty of malice prepense; and in order to hold her up as an example to all sows in time to come, her *face* and *fore legs* were mutilated in a similar manner to those of her victim. The spectacle of her punishment took place in a public square, amidst a great concourse of spectators, the father of the child being brought as a witness, and condemned to stand by during the infliction, as a due reward for not having sufficiently watched his infant. The "viscount-judge" of Falaise appeared on the solemn occasion "on horseback, with a plume of feathers on his head, and *his hand on his side*." The sow was dragged forth dressed in the costume of a citizen, in a vest and breeches, and "*with gloves on*, wearing a mask representing the face of a man." [20]

What effect this wise judgment had is not related; probably it produced as salutary a result as most of those exhibitions designed for the amusement or instruction of an enlightened multitude.

The chain of the rocks of Noron, on part of which the castle is situated, is singularly picturesque; and from those opposite, rising from the side of Arlette's fountain, the fine ruins have a most majestic effect; and the prospect for leagues round is extremely beautiful. A soft turf, covered with wild thyme, heath, and fern, makes the meandering walks amongst the huge blocks of moss-mantled stone, tempting and delightful, in

spite of their steepness; and the delicious perfume of the fragrant herbs, growing in great luxuriance everywhere, is refreshing in the extreme. The snowy tower of strength, rising from its bed of piled up rock—the broad high walls, and their firm buttresses and circular windows, through which the blue sky gleams—the nodding foliage and garlands of ivy which adorn the huge towers—and, far beyond, a rich and glowing country, altogether present a scene of beauty, difficult to be equalled in any part of Normandy, rich as that charming province is in animated landscape.

We spent many hours of a brilliant summer's day, climbing amongst the rocks, and making sketches of the castle in its different phases, all of which offer studies to an artist: here the majestic donjon forms a fine object; there the ruined arsenal; and [21] farther off the battered walls, separated and hurled down by the cannon of Henri IV. when through this breach his white plume was seen triumphantly waving as he cheered his warriors on to the attack, changing the *six months* proposed by Brissac into *six days*, during which he took the fortress and the town.

An anecdote is related of a heroine of Falaise, whose exploits are recorded with pride by her countrymen, by whom she is called *La Grande Eperonnière*. She had headed a party of valiant citizens, who defended one of their gates, and fought with such determination, as to keep her position for a long time against the soldiers of Le Vert Galant.

The king, when the town was in his power, summoned her before him: she came, and approaching with the same undaunted air, interrupted him, as he was about to propose terms to her, and demanded at once the safety of all the women and aged men of the town of Falaise. Henry was struck with her courage, and desired her to shut herself up in a street with the persons she wished to save, together with all their most precious possessions, and gave her his word that no soldier should penetrate that retreat. He, of course, kept his promise; and she assembled her friends, took charge of most of the riches of the town, closed the two ends of the street in which she [22] lived, and, while all the rest of Falaise was given up to pillage, no one ventured to enter the sacred precincts. The street is still pointed out, and is called *Le Camp-fermant*, or *Camp-ferme*, in memory of the event. The heroic Eperonnière was fortunate in having a chief to deal with, who gladly took advantage of every opportunity to exercise mercy.

The town of Falaise is well provided with water, and its fountains stand in fine open squares: a pretty rivulet runs through the greatest part, and turns several mills for corn, oil, cotton and tan; it is called the Ante, and gives name to the valley it embellishes as it runs glittering along amongst the rugged stones which impede its way with a gentle murmur, making a chorus to the voices of the numerous Arlettes, who, kneeling at their cottage doors, may be seen rubbing their linen against the flat stones over which the stream flows, bending down their heads which, except on grand occasions, are no longer adorned with the high fly-caps which are so becoming to their faces, but are covered with a somewhat unsightly cotton nightcap, a species of head-gear much in vogue in this part of lower Normandy, and a manufacture for which Falaise is celebrated, and has consequently obtained the name of *the city of cotton nightcaps*. However, there is one advantage in this usage—the women have better [23] teeth than in most cider countries, owing perhaps to their heads being kept warm, and, ugly as the cotton caps are, they deserve admiration accordingly.

A house is shown in one of the streets, called the House of the Conqueror, and a rudely sculptured bust is exhibited there, dignified with his name. Some few tottering antique houses still contrive to keep together in the oldest parts of the town, but none are by any means worthy of note; one is singular, being covered with a sort of coat of mail formed of little scales of wood lapping one over the other, and preserving the remains of some carved pillars, apparently once of great delicacy. One pretty tower is still to be seen at the corner of the Rue du Camp-ferme, which seems to have formed part of a very elegant building, to judge by its lightness and grace; it has sunk considerably in the earth, but from its height a fine prospect may be obtained. There is a public library at Falaise, that great resource of all French towns, and several fine buildings dedicated to general utility; but the boys of the college the most excite the envy of the stranger, for their abode is on the broad ramparts, and their playground and promenades are along the beautiful walks formed on the ancient defences of the castle.

Our way to Alençon, where we proposed to stop a day, lay through Argentan on the [24]

Orne, a pretty town on a height commanding a fine view of plain and forest; the country is little remarkable the whole way, but cultivated and pretty. At Seez the fine, delicate, elevated spires of the Cathedral mark the situation of the town long before and after it is reached; but, besides that, it possesses no attractions sufficient to detain the traveller.

Alençon, the capital of the department of Orne, is a clean, open, well-built town, situated in a plain with woods in all directions, which entirely bound its prospects. The public promenades are remarkably fine, laid out with taste, and a great resource to the inhabitants, who consider them equal to those of Paris, comparing them to the gardens of the Luxembourg. The cathedral, once fine, is dreadfully defaced, and the boasted altars and adornments of the chapels are in the usual bad taste so remarkable at the present day.

A few fine round towers remain of the ancient château, now a prison, which is the only vestige of antiquity remaining. There was an exhibition of works of industry and art going on, which we went to see, and were much struck with the extreme beauty of some specimens of the lace called Point d'Alençon. The patterns and delicate execution of this manufacture are exquisite, equalling ancient point lace and Brussels. Some very fine stuffs in wool, transparent as gossamer and of the softest colours, [25]
attracted us, but the severity of an official prevented our examining them as closely as we wished, and as there was no indication of the place where they could be beheld at liberty, we were obliged to content ourselves with the supposition that they were the produce of the workshops of Alençon. As the large gallery in which the exhibition took place was principally filled with peasants in blouses and women with children, perhaps the vigilance of the attendants might not be useless; but whether their proceeding was judicious in refusing information to strangers or persons who might be able to purchase goods which pleased them, is questionable.

Amongst the customary Norman caps to be seen here, we remarked one which we recognised at once as Breton. The girl who wore it was very pretty, and in spite of the [26]
grave demeanour peculiar to her country and a distinguishing trait, was pleased at my wishing to sketch her singular-shaped head-dress, *en crète de coq*: she was from St. Malo, as I had no difficulty in guessing.

Through alleys of crimson-apple trees our road continued, and we were forcibly, and not very agreeably reminded, at almost every step, that there is a large trade carried on in this part of the country in goose down, for flocks of these unfortunate animals were scattered along the road, their breasts entirely despoiled of their downy beauties, offering a frightful spectacle; the immense numbers exceed belief, and all appear of a fine species. At every cabaret we passed, notices were stuck up informing those whom it might concern, that accommodation for four or five hundred oxen was to be had within; but we met no private carriages, nor, even in the neighbourhood of large towns, horsemen or pedestrians above the rank of peasants. This is a circumstance so universal in every part of France, that it becomes a mystery where the other classes of society conceal themselves—on the promenades, in the streets and shops, to see a well-dressed person is a prodigy, and the wonder is to whom the goods are sold, which are certainly sparingly enough exhibited.

We had looked forward to much pleasure in a visit to the ancient town of Le Mans, [27]

and its treasure, the tomb of Bérangère, for the discovery of which, although a benefit unacknowledged, France and the curious are indebted to the zeal and perseverance of the late lamented Stothard, who sought for and found one of the most beautiful statues of the time under a heap of corn in an old church formerly belonging to the convent of Epau, but converted into a granary in 1820, when, by his entreaties and resolution, the lost beauty was restored to daylight and honour. Not a word of all this is, however, named by any French chronicler, although Bérangère is now the heroine and the boast of Le Mans, the object of interest to travellers, the gem of the cathedral, and the pride of Le Maine.

Nothing can be more majestic, more imposing, or more magnificent than the huge and massive building which towers above the town of Le Mans, and now adorns one side of a wide handsome square, where convents, churches, houses, and streets have been cleared away, without remorse, to leave a free opening in front of this fine cathedral. The *place* is named *des Jacobins*, from one of the vanished monasteries, which a beautiful theatre now replaces, one of the most elegant I ever saw in France, and yet unopened, at the back of which spreads out a promenade in terraces, the site of a Roman amphitheatre. All the houses round this square are handsome, and a broad [28] terrace before the arcades of the theatre completes its good effect. Numerous flying buttresses and galleries and figures combine to give lightness to the enormous bulk of the cathedral, which, being without spires, would otherwise be heavy; but the want of these graceful accessories is scarcely felt, so grand is the general character given to it by the enormous square tower, which appears to protect it, and the smaller ones, its satellites. Statues of the countesses of Maine, of nuns, and queens, may still be seen in niches at different heights of the tower, and the portals are enriched with saints and bishops, angels and foliage astonishing the eye with their elaborate grace and beauty. There are thirteen chapels projecting from the main building, that which forms the termination towards the square being the largest. One rose window is remarkable for the elegance of its stone-work, and the form of all the windows is grand and imposing.

This glorious fabric, equal to that of Beauvais, which it resembles, and more extensive, is sufficient of itself to render Le Mans interesting, but it is a town full of objects that delight and please. The streets are all wide, clean, and well-paved; there are good squares and handsome houses; and its position on the pretty, clear river Sarthe, from which the banks rise gracefully, crowned with foliage and adorned with [29] towers and churches, makes the place really charming. There is a promenade, called Du Greffier, formed evidently on the ramparts of an old castle, part of whose massive walls may still be traced among the trees, which are planted in terraces above the river, whose water is as bright and glittering as those of the Loire itself: green meadows and pretty *aits* adorn the stream, and the usual picturesque idleness of fishing is carried on by its banks, while groups of wading washerwomen, in high-coloured petticoats and white caps, enliven the little quays.

The weather was very propitious while we were at Le Mans, and all appeared attractive and agreeable, and we enjoyed our unwearied walks, both in the environs, and in the town, extremely. Although there is a great deal that is entirely new in the principal quarter of the town, where our Hotel du Dauphin, in the spacious Place aux Halles, was situated, yet, to the antiquarian, there is no lack of interest in the antique parts, where much of the original city remains even as it might have been in the earliest times. Roman walls and towers extend in every direction between the three bridges of Ysoir, St. Jean, and Napoleon; and, in the old quartiers of Gourdaine and du Pré, arches, pillars, and ruins, attest the antiquity of the spot. We hesitated not to enter these singular old streets, where the lowest of the population reside, and, as is [30] almost invariable in France, we always found civility and a cheerful readiness to afford us information. The inquisitive stranger is generally, however, obliged, after going through several of the narrow ways which excite his curiosity, to abandon his search after uncertain antiquities, from the inodorous accompaniments which are sure to assail him; and so it was with us when we had visited the Rue *Danse Renard*, Rue *de la Truie qui File*, *Vert Galant*, the *Grande* and *Petite Poterne*, &c. We found ourselves wandering in circles, amongst dwellings that looked as if they must be the same inhabited by the original Gaulish inhabitants, and at length, anxious to pay our daily devotions at the shrine of Bérangère, we ventured on the ascent of an apparently interminable flight of stone steps, between immensely high massive walls, called *Les Pans de Gorron*.

We paused every now and then, on our ascent, to wonder at the appearance of the

town, of which, and the river, we caught glimpses at intervals, and to gaze upwards at the strange old Roman walls above us, and the high houses, some with five and six rows of windows in their shelving roofs. At length, after considerable toil, we reached the platform where once stood the château, and where still stands a curious building, all towers and tourelles, some ugly, and some of graceful form, the latter apparently of [31] the period of Charles VI. Immediately before the steps in the square above us rose the cathedral, which we came upon unawares; and, exactly in front of us, in an angle, partly concealed by the broad shadow, we perceived a figure so mysterious, so remarkable, that it was impossible not to create in the mind of a beholder the most interesting speculations. This extraordinary figure deserves particular description, and I hope it may be viewed by some person more able than myself to explain it, or one more fortunate than I was in obtaining information respecting it. To all the questions I asked of the dwellers in Le Mans, the answers were exclamations of surprise at a stranger having noticed that which had never been remarked at all by any one of the passers by, who classed it with the stones of the church or the posts of the square. Yet surely the antiquarian will not be indifferent to the treasure which, it appears to me, he should hail with as much delight as the discovery of a Druidical monument or a Roman pavement.

Seated in an angle of the exterior walls of the cathedral, on a rude stone, is a reddish looking block, which has all the appearance of a veiled priest, covered with a large mantle, which conceals his hands and face. The height of the figure is about eight feet as it sits; the feet, huge unformed masses, covered with what seems drapery, are [32] supported on a square pedestal, which is again sustained by one larger, which projects from the angle of the building. The veil, the ample mantle, and two under-garments, all flowing in graceful folds, and defining the shape, may be clearly distinguished. No features are visible, nor are the limbs actually apparent, except through the uninterrupted waving lines of the drapery, or what may be called so. A part of the side of what seems the head has been sliced off, otherwise the block is entire. It would scarcely appear to have been sculptured, but has the effect of one of those sports of Nature in which she delights to offer representations of forms which the fancy can shape into symmetry.

There is something singularly Egyptian about the form of this swathed figure, or it is like those Indian idols, whose contours are scarcely defined to the eye; it is so wrapped up in mystery, and is so surrounded with oblivion, that the mind is lost in amazement in contemplating it. Did it belong to a worship long since swept away?—was it a god of the Gauls, or a veiled [33] Jupiter?—how came it squeezed in between two walls of the great church, close to the ground, yet supported by steps?—why was it not removed on the introduction of a purer worship?—how came it to escape destruction when saints and angels fell around?—who placed it there, and for what purpose?—will no zealous antiquarian, on his way from a visit to the wondrous circle of Carnac and the gigantic Dolmens of Saumur, pause at Le Mans, at this obscure corner of the cathedral, opposite the huge Pans de Gorron, and tell the world the meaning of this figure with the stone veil?

Since I left Le Mans, a friend, who resided there some years, informs me the tradition respecting this stone is, that an *English Giant* brought the block from the banks of the river, up the steep ascent of the Pans de Gorron, and cast it from his shoulders against the wall of the cathedral, where it now stands.

Imagination may easily, here in the country, where the sage bard, the great Merlin, or Myrdhyn, lived, induce the belief that this mysterious stone represents the Druid lover of the fatal Viviana;—may this not be the very stone brought from Brociliande, within, or under, which he is in durance; or rather is not this himself transformed to [34] stone? Thus runs the tradition:—

THE DRUID LOVER.

"Myrdhyn the Druid still sleeps under a stone in a forest in Brittany; his Viviana is the cause; she wished to prove his power, and asked the sage the fatal word which could enchain him; he, who knew all things, was aware of the consequences, yet he could not resist her entreaties; he told her the spell, and, to gratify her, condemned himself to eternal oblivion."

I know to tell the fatal word
Is sorrow evermore—
I know that I that boon accord
Whole ages will deplore.
Though I be more than mortal wise,
And all is clear to gifted eyes;
And endless pain and worlds of woe
May from my heedless passion flow,
Yet thou hast power all else above,—
Sense, reason, wisdom, yield to love.

I look upon thine eyes of light,
And feel that all besides is night;
I press that snowy hand in mine,
And but contemn my art divine.
Oh Viviana! I am lost;
A life's renown thy smile hath cost.
A stone no ages can remove
Will be my monument of love;
A nation's wail shall mourn my fate,
My country will be desolate:

Heav'n has no pardon left for me, [35]
Condemn'd—undone—destroy'd—by thee!
Thy tears subdue my soul, thy sighs
Efface all other memories.
I have no being but in thee;
My thirst for knowledge is forgot,
And life immortal would but be
A load of care, where thou wert not.

Wouldst thou but turn away those eyes
I might be saved—I might be wise.
I might recal my reason still
But for that tongue's melodious thrill!
Oh! wherefore was my soul replete
With wisdom, knowledge, sense, and power,
Thus to lie prostrate at thy feet,
And lose them all in one weak hour!
But no—I argue not—'tis past—
Thus to be thine, belov'd by thee,
I seek but this, even to the last,
For all besides is vain to me.
I gaze upon thy radiant brow,
And do not ask a future now.

Thou hast the secret! speak not yet!
Soon shall I gaze myself to stone,
Soon shall I all but thee forget,
And perish to be thine alone.
Ages on ages shall decline,
But Myrdhyn shall be ever thine!

[36]

CHAPTER III.

TOMB OF BÉRANGÈRE—WIVES OF CŒUR DE LION—TOMBS—ABBEY CHURCHES—CHÂTEAU OF LE MANS—DE CRAON—THE SPECTRE OF LE MANS—THE VENDÉEANS—MADAME DE LA ROCHE-JAQUELIN—A WOMAN'S PERILS—DISASTERS OF THE VENDÉEANS—HENRI—CHOUANS.

HOWEVER interesting the exterior of the Cathedral of St. Julien may be, the interior entirely corresponds with it. The windows of painted glass are of the very first order, and of surpassing beauty, nearly entire, and attributed to Cimabue. The double range in the choir, seen through the *grille*, or from the exterior aisle—for there are two on each side—present a magnificent *coup d'œil*. The architecture is of different periods; specimens may be observed belonging to the 12th century and reaching to the 17th; but some of the finest is that of the Norman era; the zigzags of the portals, and the [37]
billets, rose mouldings, &c., being of peculiar delicacy and boldness. There is a great deal of ornament composed of those extravagant forms of animals which, at a distance, are confounded with the foliage to which they are attached, but which, viewed nearly, are mysteriously extraordinary. The circular arch reigns throughout, but many in *ogive* also occur in different parts. The arcades and galleries of the choir are of the utmost delicacy and elegance of form; but the chief attraction is the tomb of the widow of Richard Cœur de Lion, placed in one of the wings of the cross. The Lady Chapel is undergoing repair, and is being restored in the very best style. The new screen is beautiful, and the figures of the Virgin and Child in very good taste, as are all the ornaments, which exactly follow the fine originals. The exterior repairs are carried on with equal skill; and this precious monument will soon be in perfect order.

As I looked at the pure, dignified, and commanding outline of the face of Bérangère, she appeared to me to have been a fitting wife for the hero whose effigy had inspired me with so much admiration when I visited it a few years since, at Fontevraud. Her nose is slightly aquiline, her upper lip short and gracefully curved, her chin beautifully rounded, as are her cheeks; her eyebrows are clearly marked, and her eye full though not large; but, even in stone, it has a tender, soft expression, extremely pleasing, and [38]
there is a sadness about the mouth which answers well to the tenderness of the eye. The forehead is of just proportion, and shaded by a frill which passes across, over which an ample veil is drawn: the whole confined by a diadem, the only part of the statue rather indistinct. Round her fine majestic throat is a band, to which a large ornament is attached, which rests on her chest; her head reclines on an embroidered pillow; her drapery falls over her figure and round her clasped hands in graceful folds, and the dog and lion at her feet complete the whole of this charming statue, which is of workmanship equal to that of the exquisite *four* in the little vault at Fontevraud.[1]

Bérangère was daughter of Sancho VI., king of Navarre—not, as some historians say, a princess of Castile or Arragon. After Richard's death, Philip-Augustus confirmed to her the dominion of Maine, in exchange for part of Normandy, which had been settled on her as her dower. She lived for more than twenty years in the town of Le Mans, where her memory was long preserved as *La Bonne Reine Bérangère*. She founded the monastery of Epau, near Le Mans, where the mausoleum was erected which now adorns the Cathedral of St. Julien.

Two houses are pointed out in the Grande Rue, said to have formed part of her [39]
palace; and the singularity of the ornaments which can be traced amidst their architecture, makes it probable that the tradition is not incorrect.

The abbey of Epau formerly stood about half a league from Le Mans, on the banks of the river Huisne, in the midst of a fertile plain; the widow of Richard founded it, in

1230, for Bernardins of the order of Citeaux.

The inhabitants of Le Mans destroyed the monastery, after the battle of Poitiers, in 1365, fearing that the English would take possession of it and render it a place of defence; and it was reconstructed early in the fifteenth century. The church alone remains, which, after the Revolution, was desecrated, as has been related, and the tomb of the foundress treated so unceremoniously.

There seems a question, which has not yet been fully resolved, as to the identity of the wives of Richard; by some authors a certain Rothilde, otherwise called Bérangère of Arragon, is described as his queen; who, "owing to some misunderstanding, caused a part of the city of Limoges to be destroyed, and salt strewn amongst the ruins; three days after which she died, and was buried under the belfry of the abbey of St. Augustine, in 1189 or 1190. Her mausoleum and statue were afterwards placed there." [40]

This could scarcely be *our* Bérangère of Navarre, since mention is made of her in public acts as late as 1234. In the annals of Aquitaine, by Bouchet, it is set forth, that, "in 1160, Henry, Duke of Aquitaine, and Raimond, Count of Barcelona, being at Blaye, on the Gironde, made and swore an alliance, by which Richard, surnamed Cœur de Lion, second son of the said Henry, was to marry the daughter of the said Raimond, when she should be old enough, and Henry promised to give, on the occasion of the said marriage, the duchy of Aquitaine to his son. This Raimond was rich and powerful, being Count of Barcelona in his own right, and King of Arragon in right of his wife." The Princess Alix of France—about whose detention from him, Richard afterwards quarrelled with his father—never became his wife; but whether it is she who is meant by the queen buried at Limoges, in 1190, does not appear.

That he married Bérangère in 1191, in the island of Cyprus, seems an ascertained fact; and that she died at Le Mans appears also certain; but whether Richard really had two wedded wives it is difficult to determine.

On the Monday of Pentecost, the Abbey of Epau was for centuries the scene of a grand festival, in honour of the patron saint, and the ceremony was continued, to a late period, of passing the day there in gaiety and amusement. All the families of the [41] neighbourhood sought the spot on foot, and every kind of country entertainment was resorted to. Although the object is now changed, an expedition to the remains of the Abbey of Epau is still a favourite one with the inhabitants of Le Mans; it is a kind of *Longchamps*, where all the fashion and gaiety of the town is displayed.

The only tombs, besides that of Bérangère, remaining in the cathedral of Le Mans, are those in white marble, of Charles of Anjou, Count of Maine and King of Jerusalem and Sicily, who died in 1472. Opposite this, is a finely-sculptured tomb, worthy of the school of Jean Goujon, of Langey du Bellay; the carving of the fruits and flowers which adorn it is attributed to Germain Pilon. There is some good carving, also, in a neighbouring chapel, by Labarre, done in 1610; but little else of this kind remarkable in the church; all the other tombs of countesses, dukes, and princes, having long since disappeared. However, Bérangère, perhaps, appears to the greater advantage, reigning, as she does, in solitary grandeur in this magnificent retreat.

The abbey churches of La Couture and Du Pré, are fine specimens of early architecture. In the chapel of the former, an inscription was once to be found on the walls, to the memory of a certain innkeeper and postilion, who, wishing that his name should be handed down to posterity, had set forth the fact of his having conducted the carriages of four kings of France, and after passing sixty-four years as a married man, [42] died in 1509: he adds a prayer to this important record, that Heaven would provide a second husband for his widow, whose age appears to have reached not less than *sixteen lustres*. The subterranean church of La Couture is very remarkable, and is, no doubt, of Roman construction; the capitals of the pillars are extremely curious, and its height and dryness are peculiar. The famous warrior, Hélie de la Flèche, so often named in the wars of the eleventh century, was here buried; and here, it is said, was deposited the body of the blessed St. Bertrand. It is a very grand and interesting church in all its parts, and preserves some curious memorials of Roman and early Norman architecture.

The abbey church of Du Pré is equally curious, and its circular arches, strange capitals, niches and ornaments, prove its extraordinary antiquity.

There are a great many houses still existing in the oldest part of Le Mans which retain part of their original sculpture, and are of great antiquity, though it is not likely that they reach so far back as the time of Bérangère, or La Reine Blanche, as she is traditionally called—a designation always given to the widowed queens of France.

The house in the Grande Rue—one of the most dilapidated streets in the town—said to have formed part of her palace, is now divided into two poulterers' shops; and when [43] we visited it, the chamber called that of the widow of Cœur de Lion, was occupied by seven women, not employed in weaving tapestry or stringing pearls, but in plucking fowls. The chimney-piece is curious, adorned with two fine medallions of male heads, in high relief, very boldly executed. The outside of the house has some curious carving of eagles with expanded wings, strange monkey-shaped figures, lions *couchant*, crosslets and scrolls; but the façade is so much destroyed, that it is difficult to connect any of these ornaments. The crosslets were the arms of Jerusalem, of which the counts of Anjou called themselves kings; but to what period all these sculptures belong it is difficult to say.

The Grande Rue is full of these remains; in the Rue des Chanoines, some circular-arched windows, ornamented with roses, stars, and *toothed* carving, indicate that here once stood the church founded by St. Aldric, in the ninth century; and some pieces of wall and brick still prove its original Roman construction.

In the Place St. Michel, a stone house of ancient date is shown as having been inhabited by Scarron; and in almost every street of the old town, some curious bits, worthy of an artist's attention, may be found; but the search after them is somewhat fatiguing, and involves a visit to not the most agreeable part of the pretty city: all of which is interesting, whether new or old. [44]

Of the once famous Château of Le Mans, erected long before the time of William the Conqueror, who destroyed it in part, nothing now remains but the Pans de Gorron, and a few *tourelles*. Yet it was, in the turbulent times when such fortresses were required, a place of enormous strength; and its two forts, one called Mont Barbet, and one Motte Barbet, defied many an attack.

It appears that the Manceaux were impatient of the yoke of the *conquering hero*, who endeavoured to make all the territory his own which approached his domains; and three times they gave him the trouble of besieging their town; he, at length, having raised fortifications sufficient to intimidate them, placed in command in the château a female, whose warlike attainments had rendered her famous even in those days of prowess. She was an English woman by birth, the widow of a Norman knight, and called Orbrindelle. The fort in which she took up her head quarters, and from whence she sent forth the terror of her power, was called after her; but, by corruption, was afterwards named Ribaudelle.

This castle was destroyed by royal order in 1617, and at its demolition several Roman monuments and inscriptions were found on the walls and beneath the foundations.

King John of France was born in the Château of Le Mans, and several monarchs made it their temporary abode. The Black Prince sojourned within its walls till [45] Duguesclin, the great captain, disturbed his repose. The unfortunate Charles VI., whom fate persecuted to the ruin of France, was at Le Mans when that fearful event occurred to him, which decided his future destiny. From the alleys of a great forest, now no longer existing, issued forth that mysterious vision which no sage has yet entirely explained. It is impossible to be at Le Mans, without recollecting the curious story connected with the poor young king, though the town is too light and cheerful-looking at the present day, to allow of its being a fitting scene either for so gloomy a legend, or for the sad events which modern days brought forth within its precincts.

The circumstances which caused the madness of the son of Charles the Wise, may not, perhaps, be immediately present to the reader's mind: they were as follows:—

Pierre de Craon, lord of Sablé and Ferté Bernard, an intriguing man, who held a high place in the consideration of Mary of Brittany, the regent of Anjou and Maine in the absence of her husband, who was prosecuting his designs against Naples and Sicily, had proved himself a faithless treasurer of large sums of money confided to him by his mistress; which sums had been wrung from the two provinces of Maine and Anjou. De Craon had dissipated this money in extravagance, instead of supplying the army of [46]

Prince Louis, who died in consequence of disappointed hope and his unsuccessful struggles. The traitor made his appearance in Paris without fear; for he was protected by the powerful duke of Orleans, brother of the king.

Shortly afterwards, however, having had a dispute with the Constable, Olivier de Clisson, he laid wait for him, accompanied by a set of wretches in his pay, and fell upon the great captain unawares, wounding him in the head, and leaving him for dead. After this cowardly exploit, De Craon fled, and threw himself under the protection of the Duke of Brittany, who, although not his accomplice, was weak enough to take his part.

Pierre de Craon was condemned for contumacy; several of his people were punished with death, in particular a poor curate of Chartres, who was entirely innocent: his dwelling was razed to the ground, and its site given to a neighbouring church for a cemetery: and the Duke of Brittany was summoned by King Charles to deliver up the craven knight to justice.

This command, however, was treated with contempt, and the king accordingly put himself at the head of his troops, and set forth to attack the duke: it was at Le Mans that he arrived with his army.

Charles was greatly excited, and his nerves appear to have been agitated at this time, owing to various causes. The weather was intensely hot, and the sun struck full [47] upon him as he rode in advance of his army, surrounded by his guard of honour. He entered the Forest of Le Mans, and was proceeding down one of its glades, when suddenly a gigantic black figure, wild, haggard, and with hair floating in dishevelled masses over his face, darted suddenly from a deep recess, and, seizing the bridle of the king's horse, cried out, in a sepulchral voice, "Hold, king!—whither ride you?—go no further!—you are betrayed!" and instantly disappeared amidst the gloomy shades of the wood, before any one had time to lay hands on him.

Charles did not turn back, but continued his way in silence; he emerged from the forest on to a wide sandy plain, where the heat was almost intolerable, and where there was nothing to shelter him from the burning rays. A page was riding near him, who, overcome with fatigue, slept in his saddle, and let the lance he held fall violently on the helmet of one of his companions. The sharp sound this occasioned roused the king from his gloomy reverie: he started in sudden terror; his brain was confused and heated; he imagined that the accomplishment of the spectre's denunciation was at hand, and, losing his senses altogether, he drew his sword, and, with a wild cry, rushed forward, hewing down all before him, and galloping distractedly across the [48] plain, till, exhausted by fatigue and excitement, he fell from his horse in a swoon.

He was instantly surrounded by his people, raised from the ground, and conveyed with all care to Le Mans, where he remained till he was thought sufficiently recovered to be removed to Paris.

The storm about to fall on the head of the Duke of Brittany was thus turned aside, and the troops who had received orders to attack him were withdrawn. Whether this was a scene got up by the Duke of Brittany, in order to work on the diseased mind of the unfortunate monarch, or was merely the effect of an accidental meeting with a maniac, or whether the king's uncles, who disapproved of his just indignation at De Craon's conduct, had arranged the whole, it is impossible to say: but poor Charles was surrounded by traitors, foreign and domestic, and evidently had no good physician at hand, whose timely skill might have saved years of misery and bloodshed to France.

Throughout the deadly wars of the League, and the contentions between Catholic and Protestant, which desolated France, Le Mans and the whole of the department of Maine took a prominent part, and its streets, houses, churches, and villages were burnt and destroyed over and over again. The last stand of the unfortunate Vendéeans was at Le Mans. "Sad and fearful is the story" of the fight there, as it is told by [49] Madame de la Roche-Jaquelin, whose pictures draw tears from every eye, and whose narrative, read at Le Mans, is melancholy indeed.

After dreadful fatigues and varying fortune, during which the devoted town was taken and retaken several times, the harassed Vendéeans, more remarkable for their valour than their prudence, remained in possession of the town on the night of the 10th of December, 1793, and gave themselves up to the repose which they so much needed, but without arranging any means of security, though a vigilant enemy was on

the watch to take advantage of their state. They abandoned themselves, with characteristic superstition, to the care of Heaven alone; placing no sentinels, no out-posts, no guard whatever: and, although the next day the chiefs visited the town and its issues, no precaution was taken against the possibility of an attack,—no measures to secure a retreat, nor council held as to whither their course should be directed in case of such a necessity. The time was consumed in disputes, as to whether the wearied Vendéean army should pursue its transient success, and go on to Paris, or yield to the desire of the generality of the soldiers, and return to their beloved home, by crossing the Loire, which so many regretted ever to have passed. It appears that there were from sixty to seventy thousand persons in Le Mans, of the royalist party; [50] including women, children, and servants, with baggage and money to a large amount.

The republican army, commanded by Marceau and Westermann, surprised the town at night. In spite of the active bravery of La Roche-Jaquelin, and the energy he displayed when the danger was so apparent, a fearful slaughter ensued. Street by street, and square by square, the Vendéeans disputed every inch of ground, till the corpses of the slain lay in heaps in the narrow ways; every house was a fortress,—every lane a pass desperately defended. The intrepid young leader had two horses killed under him, and was obliged to absent himself a moment to seek for others. No sooner did his people lose sight of him than a panic took possession of them; they thought all lost,—became confused and disordered. Many of them, waked from sleep, or from a state of inebriety, in which the Britons are too apt to indulge, horrified at the shrieks of their women, stunned by the sound of the cannon, which roared through the dark streets, and startled at the glare of artillery suddenly blazing around them,—entirely lost all presence of mind, and fled in every direction; killing and wounding friends and foes in their precipitous retreat. Horses, waggons, and dead bodies impeded their flight, and Le Mans was one scene of carnage and terror. Their leaders [51] stood their ground, and kept the great square of Le Mans for more than four hours, performing prodigies of valour. But the republicans at last were victors: and horribly did they pursue their advantage; sparing neither age nor sex, and exulting in the most atrocious cruelties. The peasants of Le Mans and its environs, taking part with the stronger side, pursued the vanquished with disgraceful energy, and murdered the unfortunate Vendéeans in the woods and fields, and in every retreat where those devoted people sought shelter and safety.

The state of the unfortunate women, whose husbands, sons, and fathers were being slaughtered with every volley which rung in their ears, is horrible to imagine. Madame de la Roche-Jaquelin thus describes her own position in moving language:

"From the beginning, we foresaw the result of the struggle. I was lodged at the house of a lady who was very rich, very refined, but a great republican. She had a large family, whom she tenderly loved, and whom she carefully attended. I resolved to confide my daughter to her, as one of her relations had already taken charge of little Jagault. I entreated her to protect her,—to bring her up as a mere peasant only,—to instil into her mind sentiments of honour and virtue. I said that, should she be destined to resume the position in which she was born, I should thank Heaven for its [52] mercy; but I resigned myself to all, provided she was virtuously brought up. She assured me that, if she took my child, she would educate her with her own. I used all the arguments a mother could in such circumstances, and was interrupted by the cry that announced retreat. She quitted me instantly; and I, losing at once all hope, but trusting at least to save my daughter's life, placed her secretly in the bed of the mistress of the family, certain that she could not have the cruelty to abandon the innocent little creature. I then descended the stairs: I was placed on horseback; the gate was opened; I saw the square filled with a flying, pressing crowd, and in an instant I was separated from every one I knew. I perceived M. Stofflet, who was carrying the colours: I took advantage of his presence to try to find the road; I followed him across the square, which I supposed was the way; I kept close to the houses; and at length reached the street which led in the direction I sought, towards the road of Laval. But I found it impossible to advance; the concourse was too great,—it was stifling: carts, waggons, cannon, were overturned; bullocks lay struggling on the ground, unable to rise, and striking out at all who approached them. The cries of persons trodden underfoot echoed everywhere. I was fainting with hunger and terror: I could scarcely see; for daylight was nearly closed. At the corner of a street I [53] perceived two horses tied to a stake, and they completely barred my passage; the crowd pressed them against me; and I was squeezed between them and the wall: I

screamed to the soldiers to take and ride off with them; but my voice was not heard or attended to. A young man on horseback passed by me, with a mild and sad countenance: I cried out to him, catching his hand, 'Oh! sir, have pity on a poor woman, near her confinement, and perishing with want and fatigue: I can go no further.' The stranger burst into tears, and replied: 'I am a woman, too: we shall perish together; for nothing can penetrate into yonder street.' We both remained expecting our fate.

"In the meantime, the faithful Bontemps, servant of M. de Lescure, not seeing my daughter, sought for her everywhere,—found her at length, and carried her off in his arms. He followed me, perceived me in the crowd, and called out, 'I have saved my master's child!' I hung down my head, and resigned myself to the worst. In a moment after I saw another of my servants: I called to him; he caught my horse by the bridle; and, cutting his way with his sabre, we entered the street. With incredible trouble, we reached a little bridge in the faubourg, on the road to Laval: a cannon was overturned upon it, and stopped up the way: at length we got by, and I found myself in the road; [54] where I paused, with many others. Some officers were there, trying to rally their soldiers; but all their efforts were useless.

"The republicans, hearing a noise where we were, turned their cannon upon us from the height of the houses. A bullet whizzed past my head: a moment afterwards a fresh discharge startled me; and, involuntarily, I bent myself low upon my horse. An officer near reproached me bitterly for my cowardice. 'Alas!' replied I, 'it is excusable in a wretched woman to crouch down when a whole army has taken to flight!' In fact, the firing continued so violently that all of our people who had paused recommenced flying for their lives. Had it been daylight, perhaps they might have been recalled.

"A few leagues from Le Mans, I beheld the arrival of my father. He and Henri had been for a long time vainly endeavouring to reanimate the soldiers. Henri hurried towards me, exclaiming, 'You are saved!'—'I thought you were lost," cried I, 'since we are beaten.' He wrung my hand, saying, 'I would I were dead!'

"About twelve leagues from Le Mans, I stopped in a village: a great part of the army had also halted there. There was scarcely any one in the cottages: the road was covered with poor wretches, who, fainting with fatigue, were sleeping in the mud, [55] without heeding the pelting rain. The rout of Le Mans cost the lives of fifteen thousand persons. The greatest part were not killed in the battle; many were crushed to death in the streets of Le Mans; others, wounded and sick, remained in the houses, and were massacred. They died in the ditches and the fields: a great number fled on the road to Alençon, were there taken, and conducted to the scaffold.

"Such was the deplorable defeat of Le Mans, where the Vendéean army received a mortal blow: it was an inevitable fatality. The day that they quitted the left bank of the Loire, with a nation of women, children, and old people, to seek an asylum in a country unknown, without being aware what route they should take, at the beginning of winter, it was easy to foretell that we should conclude by this terrible catastrophe. The greatest glory that our generals and soldiers can claim is that they retarded its accomplishment so long.

"The unfortunate and intrepid Henri did not abandon his cause till not a hope was left; and even at the last he lingered at Le Mans, and fought desperately in the Place de l'Eperon, establishing a battery of cannon which long kept the enemy at bay. But all was unavailing, and he yielded to necessity. He arrived at Laval at the close of day, [56] spent and exhausted, and entered a house where he entreated to be allowed to rest. He was warned that he might run the risk of being surprised by Westermann,—'My greatest want,' said he, 'is not to live, but to sleep.'"

The Vendéeans had left behind them so much gold and merchandize, so much furniture, and such precious possessions, that, far from these sad events being a cause of ruin to the inhabitants of Le Mans, they were the means of establishing prosperity in the town in many instances, and its commercial influence increased very sensibly from that period. It is at this moment a town which appears in a very flourishing state, and is on the whole one of the most agreeable and interesting in this part of France.

The misfortunes and troubles which the ill-fated army of royalists experienced, did

not prevent their renewal a few years after, when the sad events of the wars of the Chouans brought back all the miseries which the desolated country was but little able to contend with.

However high-sounding the supposed motives might be which re-illumed the war, it is now generally acknowledged that only a few enthusiastic men acted from a sense of honour and patriotism: the greatest part being influenced by less worthy ideas. Had it not been so, the excesses committed by the Chouans would never have disgraced the [57] annals of warfare: wretches without religion, morality, or feeling, mere brigands and marauders, under the sacred banner of patriotism, ravaged the country, burning, torturing, and destroying, pillaging, and committing every crime, dignified meantime by the appellation of heroes, which one or two amongst them might have deserved if they had fought in better company, and been better directed. It is strange that any one, particularly at the present day, can be found to magnify into heroism the misguided efforts of a set of turbulent school-boys, who, again, at a later period, were made the tools of villains for their own purposes of plunder; yet, very recently, works have appeared in which the *petite Chouannerie* is exalted into a praiseworthy community. Pity for the sacrificed children who were betrayed, and the bereaved mothers who wept over the disobedience of their sons, is all that belongs to those concerned in the useless revolt which caused ruin to so many.

"The intention of the Chouans in taking arms," says M. de Scépeaux, in his letters on the Chouans of Bas-Maine, "was to *defend and preserve*, not *to attack and destroy*; and, like the soldiers of Pelayo, who kept the rocks of Asturias as a last stronghold against their besiegers, the Chouans made their Bocages a last asylum for the French monarchy." This is a fine *phrase*, but the facts are very far removed from this [58] assertion. The Chouans were a terror and a scourge to their fellow-citizens: farms burnt, unoffending citizens robbed and murdered, all their possessions seized on and appropriated, stabbing in the dark, and cowardly cruelties of all kinds characterized these "honourable men," who were *guerillas* and nothing more. They took names such as in former times distinguished the bands of brigands who were the terror of the middle ages, and their acts rendered the similitude more striking. Some of these chiefs signed themselves, Joli-cœur, Sans-peur, Monte-à-l'assaut, Bataillon, &c.

It was a fearful time, and violence and cruelty reigned triumphant whichever party took the field. The province of Le Maine suffered severely in the struggle. Le Mans was again the scene of contention, and the streets of the town the theatre of slaughter.

Who, to look at the quiet, tranquil town now, would think how much it has suffered! and who but must feel indignant at the pretended patriot who is not grateful to the existing government, under whose wise sway the cities of France are recovering their beauty and importance after long years of torture and desolation! [59]

CHAPTER IV.

THE MUSEUM OF LE MANS—VENUS—MUMMY—GEOFFREY LE BEL—HIS COSTUME —MATILDA—SCARRON—HÉLIE DE LA FLÈCHE—RUFUS—THE WHITE KNIGHT.

The Museum of Le Mans is in the Hôtel de la Prefecture, and as we heard that the famous enamel of Geoffrey Plantagenet, formerly on his tomb in the cathedral, was preserved there, we hastened to behold so interesting a remain of early art. A remarkably obtuse female was the exhibitor on the occasion, and, on my asking her to point out the treasure, she took me to a collection of Roman coins and medals, assuring me they were very old and very curious. It was impossible not to agree with her, and to regard these coins with interest, particularly as they were all found in the immediate neighbourhood of Le Mans; however, as a glance at them was sufficient, we proceeded to examine all the cases, hoping to discover the object of our search. [60]

We were arrested before a case filled with objects of art found principally at the ruins of Alonnes, near Le Mans, which commune is a perfect emporium of Roman curiosities, where no labourer directs his plough across a field, or digs a foot deep in his garden, without finding statues, pillars, baths, medals, &c., in heaps. All these things are of fine workmanship, and thence, lately, two little wonders have been rescued from oblivion, which are really gems. One is a small female bust of white

marble, perfect, and of singular grace; the other the entire figure, having only one arm wanting, of a Venus twenty-one inches high, and of exquisite proportion; she sits on the trunk of a tree; her beauty is incomparable, and she must owe her birth to an artist of very superior genius.

As if to prove how worthless is that beauty which attracts and rivets the attention, even in stone, close by is one of the finest and most perfectly-preserved female mummies I ever beheld,—hideous in its uninjured state, grinning fearfully with its rows of fine ivory teeth a little broken, glaring with its still prominent eyes, and appalling with its blackened skin drawn over the high cheekbones. Why might not this carefully-attended and richly-adorned queen be the beautiful and fatal "serpent of old Nile"—the fascinating Cleopatra herself?

The features are fine and delicate in spite of the horrible hue of the skin, and though [61] it revolts the mind at first, one can even fancy that mass of horror might, in life, have been beautiful. This valuable specimen was brought from Egypt by M. Edouard de Montulé, a zealous and enterprising young traveller, too early snatched from science and the world at the age of thirty-six.

A gentleman, drawing in the museum, who had arrived after us, hearing our questions to our guide, very politely stepped forward and offered to show us the objects of interest which he saw we might otherwise miss. He led us at once to the enamel we so much desired to see, and we had ample time to contemplate one of the most remarkable curiosities of art which perhaps exists anywhere.

Geoffrey le Bel, surnamed Plantagenet, the second husband of the haughty Empress Matilda, who considered her dignity compromised in being obliged to marry a simple Count of Anjou, was, nevertheless, the handsomest man of his day, and apparently one of the most distinguished *dandies*. Jean, the monk of Marmontier, in his description of the fêtes given by the count at Rouen, speaks of the splendid habiliments of this prince —of his *Spanish barb*, his helmet, his buckler, his lance of *Poitou steel*, and his celebrated sword taken from the treasury of his father, and renowned as the work of "the great *Galannus*, the most expert of armourers." Even in this very guise does [62] Geoffrey appear.

He holds the sword, considered as magical, unsheathed in his right hand; his shield or target covers his shoulders, and descends in a point to his feet. It is charged azure, with four rampant golden leopards; only the half of the shield appears, consequently all its blazonry is not visible. He wears a sort of Phrygian cap ornamented with a golden leopard; he has a dalmatic robe, and a capacious mantle edged with ermine, his scarf and waistband are of the same form, and all are of rich colours—red, green, and purple—such as appear in stained glass. It is painted with great detail, and the features are very distinct; they convey very little idea of beauty, but have sufficient character to indicate likeness. The copy, which Stothard made with great care, is extremely correct, much more so than the drawing he gave of Bérangère, whose beauty he entirely failed to represent: none but an accomplished artist, indeed, could do so, and the indefatigable antiquarian, who lost his life in his zeal for his pursuit, was more accustomed to the quaint forms exhibited on windows and brasses. The inscription formerly to be read beneath the effigy of Geoffrey, on the tomb, was as follows:—

"Thy sword, oh! Prince, has delivered our country from the hordes of brigands who infested it, and given to the Church entire security under the shadow of peace." [63]

There is something of melancholy and quiet about this portrait, which accord with the character given of the prince by historians, who represent him mild and good, generous, brave, and magnanimous; an encourager of the arts and poetry, and a lover of order; but forced into wars by the haughty temper of his wife, and obliged to distress his subjects for supplies in consequence. His marriage with Matilda took place in 1127, with great pomp, at Le Mans, in the palace of the Counts of Anjou; and the solemnities attending it lasted for three weeks. All the vassals of Henry I. of England, father of the bride, and of Foulques, father of Geoffrey, were summoned to attend under pain of being considered enemies of the public good. As Henry delayed putting his son-in-law in possession of Normandy, as had been agreed on, Matilda excited her husband to go to war with him, and a series of conflicts ensued which entailed much misery on the country.

Geoffrey le Bel died in 1151, of pleurisy, in consequence of bathing imprudently in the Loire. His body was brought to Le Mans and buried in the cathedral, and his son, the illustrious Henry II. of England, succeeded him; a prince superior to his time, but destined to continued vexations from his family and his friends. The proud Matilda, too,—so like the haughty heiress of Aquitaine,—need not have murmured at the lot [64] which made her mother and grandmother of such kings as Henry and Cœur de Lion.

The pictures in the museum of Le Mans possess no sort of merit: there is a series of paintings coarsely done from the "Roman Comique" of Scarron, representing the principal scenes in his strange work; but they have no other value than that of having been painted at the period when he was popular, and being placed there in consequence of his having resided at Le Mans, though I believe it was not the place of his birth. It was here, at all events, that his imprudence caused his own misfortune; for in the exuberance of his gaiety, he resolved, on occasion of a fête, which annually takes place on the route of Pontlieue, to amuse himself and the Manceaux, by a childish exhibition of himself *as a bird*. To this end, he actually smeared himself with honey, and then having rolled in feathers, and assumed as much as possible the plumed character he wished to represent, he sallied forth and joined the procession astonishing all beholders; but he had not reckoned on the effect his appearance would produce on the boys of the parish, ever ready for mischief. Delighted at such an opportunity, they pursued the unfortunate wit without mercy, pelting and chasing him. His fear of being recognised, and his anxiety to escape them, caused him to fly for [65] refuge, heated as he was with his extraordinary exertions, under an arch of the old bridge, where he was exposed to a severe draught. The cold struck to his limbs, and the consequence was that he became paralysed for the rest of his life, an affliction which he names at the beginning of his famous romance.

The commune of Alonnes, from whence so many antique treasures are derived, is about a league from Le Mans, and is looked upon with much superstitious veneration by the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages. Not only are fine Roman remains discovered there, but, by the rude pottery continually turned up, it appears to have been a considerable city of the Gauls; for the singular forms exhibited on their vases and stones are altogether different from those of a more refined people. To neither of these nations, however, was Alonnes supposed to belong, but to one more powerful and mysterious still: no other than the fairies, who may, even now, on moon-light nights, be seen hovering round their *Tour aux fées*, of which a few stones alone remain. A subterranean way (aqueduct) is supposed to have communicated with the ancient castle; and no doubt its recesses are the scene of many a midnight revel carried on by those unseen visitants of ruins.

Numerous baths of Roman construction have been found, and more yet remains to be discovered. About fifty years since, some workmen making excavations observed [66] the opening of a covered way which they followed for some distance, expecting to find treasure. They had not gone far, when they were surprised by suddenly entering vast chambers, covered with the remains of columns, vases, and ornamental architecture: instead of continuing their search, they were seized with a panic, and fled from the spot without attempting to penetrate further. If more valorous seekers were to prosecute the adventure, at the spot where they left it, no doubt very interesting discoveries might be made, which would repay the attempt.

One of the chief heroes of Le Mans and Maine, and he who is the most continually spoken of in its history, is Hélie de la Flèche. He was one of the most generous and valiant knights of his time, and to him his supine and cowardly cousin, Hugues, tired of the frequent struggles which he found it necessary to sustain in order to keep in possession of his rights, resigned the dominion of Maine, much to the delight of the Manceaux, who received their young lord with open arms. Hélie showed himself a friend to his new people, and entered into an alliance with Geoffrey IV. Count of Anjou. After which, being ready to set out for the crusades, according to the fashion of the times, and finding that Robert of Normandy had already departed, he went to Rouen, to William Rufus, in the hope of obtaining his acknowledgment of his rights to [67] the county of Maine. He, however, failed in this expectation, and put himself in array to contend with this formidable adversary, in whose alliance was a very unpleasant and dangerous neighbour, the perfidious Count of Belesme and Baron du Saosnois, Robert II., called Talvas, generally known as *Robert le Diable*. This treacherous prince laid a snare for Hélie, into which he fell, and he delivered him up to William Rufus.

Kept prisoner at Rouen, and fearing that the Count of Anjou would enter into an accommodation with William Rufus, which would compromise the interests of his patrimony of La Flèche, which he knew had long been coveted by those of Anjou, Hélie made up his mind to treat for his ransom, by which he consented to give up the province of Maine to the King of England, and to do him homage for his lordship of La Flèche, as his father had done before. He obtained his liberty at this price, and was brought before William, who ordered the chains with which he was bound to be removed, as Wace relates—

"Dunc le fist li Reis amener
Et des *buies* le fist oster."

He then offered to attach himself to William, as one of his most faithful officers; but this being declined, murmurs escaped him, which roused the king's anger, as the old chronicler has recounted. [68]

"Count Hélie's steed he ordered forth,
With housings dight of regal worth;
'Mount straight, sir knight, and go,' he cried;
'Wherever it may list you ride,
But guard you well another tide.
My prison shall be deep and strong
    If you again my thrall should be,
And trust me 'twill be late and long
    Ere, once my captive, you are free.
In future, Count, I bid you know
I am your ever-ready foe;
Where'er you go, it shall not lack,
But William shall be on your back!'

I know not if Count Hélie found
Words to reply. He turned him round,
And little he delayed, I ween,
To make their distance great between!"

As might be anticipated, Hélie was not content to sit down patiently with so bad a bargain as he had made. He had yielded his right in Le Maine, and by resisting he placed himself in the position of a rebel to his liege lord; nevertheless, scarcely had William returned to England, thinking himself secure, than Hélie began to make a struggle to recover what he had lost. No sooner, however, did William hear of his proceeding than he hurried back from England, and in an incredibly short space of time was at Le Mans: he found his vassal more powerful than he expected, and much violence ensued. Obliged to return to England, not long after this his sudden death ensued. Hélie, aided by the Count of Angers, attacked and took possession of Le Mans, [69] and besieged the castle: two Norman officers in command had, in the meantime, received orders from the new King of England to treat with Hélie; and when he presented himself before the walls, they requested him to clothe himself in his white tunic, which had gained him the surname of the White Knight. With this he complied; and on his re-appearance before them, they received him with smiles, saying,—

"Sir White Knight, you may now rejoice to good purpose, for we have reached the term so long desired by you; and if you have a good sum of money for us, we will make a good bargain. If we chose to resist we have still arms, provisions, and valour; but the truth is, we want a legitimate master to whom we can dedicate our service. For which reason, noble warrior, knowing your merit, we elect and constitute you henceforth Count of Le Mans."

Hélie, after this, took part against Robert and the Count of Mortain at the battle of Tinchebray, where he commanded an army composed of Bretons and Manceaux. He distinguished himself wherever he appeared in battle, and died in 1110, and was buried in the abbey church of La Couture, where his tomb was formerly seen. He was the hero of his age. Pious, loyal, and valiant, his device expressed his qualities:—"No glory without honour, and no honour without glory." He was active, vigilant, and just, [70] says one of his biographers, as great in his reverses as in his successes; he added to the merit of a great captain the talents of a sound politician, and the enlightened mind of a statesman; but his highest praise is that he merited and obtained the affection of

his vassals.

His memory was long cherished in Le Mans, even till the events of the great Revolution swept away all records but that of the crimes then committed. [71]

CHAPTER V.

LUDE—SAUMUR REVISITED—THE GARDEN—LA PETITE VOISINE—THE RETIRED MILITAIRE—LES PIERRES COUVERTES—LES PETITES PIERRES—LOUDUN—URBAIN GRANDIER—RICHELIEU—THE NUNS—THE VICTIM—THE FLY—THE MALLE POSTE—THE DISLODGED SERPENTS.

LEAVING Le Mans, and all its recollections, we continued our way towards the Loire, which we proposed crossing at Saumur, not only with a pleasing memory of our former visit there, when the sight of Fontevraud and its treasured tombs of our English kings first delighted us, but because, with all my wish to leave nothing unnoticed in the interesting towns of France, I had quitted Saumur without having [72] made a *pilgrimage* to some of its most singular and important monuments. It was only on reading a passage in Michelet's History of France, when he alludes to the "*prodigious Dolmen*" of Saumur, that I found there was still something of interest which I had neglected. Doubtless this has often been the case in my wanderings; and, probably, there is scarcely a town where some new treasure may not be discovered by some fresh traveller, where there is so much to excite attention.

I determined, therefore, to pause at Saumur, to enjoy its beauties once more, and pass a day with its Druids.

Lude was in our way, where, on the banks of the Loire, stands a magnificent castle; now a private residence, kept up in great style, and surrounded with beautiful gardens, better attended to than any I ever saw in France, where the name of *Jardin Anglais* is, usually, another term for a wilderness. Lude belonged to a Breton nobleman, M. de Faltröet, and now to his son, for the inhabitants were just deploring his recent death, and, what is sufficiently unusual in France, naming a man of rank with respect and affection. He appears to have been one of the most amiable and considerate of men, and to be sincerely lamented. The young woman from the inn, who was our guide there, spoke of his death with great sorrow, and was eloquent in his [73] commendation, as the friend of the people and the poor.

The castle is very extensive and in high preservation: we could not see the interior, which I am told is very interesting: rooms being named after Francis I. and Henry IV., who are both said to have visited here; and the furniture of their time is preserved or introduced. The exterior walls are adorned with medallions of extraordinary size, in the style peculiar to Francis I., and the huge round towers are similarly decorated: much of the building between these towers is of more modern date, but all is in good keeping and handsome. Several fine willows dip their boughs into the river, which bathes one side—but what was the moat on all the others, is now filled up with flowering trees and shrubs, and the ramparts laid out in terraces, covered with a luxuriant growth of every kind of rare and graceful plant. There is a charming view from the gardens, and the abode altogether is delightful.

The country is rich and fertile, covered with fields of Indian corn, flax, and hemp; here and there are large plantations of fir-trees; the chestnut-trees we observed were very luxuriant, loaded with fruit; the apples thickly clustered in the numerous orchards, and everything abundant and smiling.

We rejoiced at once more beholding the Loire at the spot where, on our former visit, we most admired it. Saumur is, however, greatly increased and improved during the [74] three years which had elapsed since we first made its acquaintance. New houses are built, old ones pulled down, and active measures taken to beautify and adorn the town. The same slovenliness struck us as before on the promenade by the river, where the idea of sweeping up fallen leaves, or cleaning steps, never seems to have occurred, and the theatre walls look as desolate and ill-conditioned as formerly. The baths, which attracted my admiration before, seated on an islet amidst flowering shrubs, had lost the brightness of their then newly-painted outside, and had rather a forlorn effect;

the old Hôtel de Ville and its towers and turrets looked as venerable as ever, and the Loire showed much less sand and more of its crystal water. The magnificent Donjon towered majestically on its height, and all the caves of the chain of rocks beneath showed their mysterious openings as when they first excited my surprise.

We visited almost all our old friends—the venerable monuments of times gone by—in the town, and discovered several towers which the removal of houses have rendered evident. We were remarking a building of this kind, whose turrets could have been erected only by Foulques Nera himself, when we were invited into a garden opposite by the proprietors, who took an interest in our curiosity. This garden, and the family that owned it, were quite *unique* in their way; the master was a retired *militaire*, the [75] mistress a smart, managing woman; and their delight and treasure a little boy of about ten, and a tiny garden enclosed between two walls, with a pavilion at each end, and filled with shrubs and flowers exquisitely beautiful, and tended as garden never was tended since Eve herself spent all her time in restraining the growth of her garlands. Tea-scented roses, roses of all hues and perfumes, rare plants, seldom seen but in hot-houses, all fresh and flourishing, occupied every nook of this little retreat, the *délices*, as they assured us, of this couple, whose content and satisfaction at the perfection of their dwelling overflowed at every word. "You see," said the hostess, as she led us through the little alleys, and made us pause at the minute alcoves—"nothing can be more complete; we have a perfect little paradise of flowers, and a little world of our own; we have no occasion to go out to be amused, for, let us throw open our *jalousies* in our *salon* at the corner of this tower, and we see all the world without being seen; when we shut it we are in solitude, and what can we require beyond? My little son," she continued, pointing to the other object of her care, who was seated beside a pretty little girl, tuning a small instrument, "occupies himself with his violin, and he can touch the guitar prettily, also; he is now playing to a *petite voisine* who often comes to keep him company: he has considerable parts, and is well advanced in his Latin. We [76] let our large house to M. le Curé, and live in the small one at the other end of our garden; it is large enough for us, and nothing can be so convenient."

While she continued to converse, setting forth the advantages of her position, the *bon garçon* of a husband, who seemed second in command, followed with assenting smiles. I asked if he smoked in his little summer-house sometimes, but saw that my question was *mal-à-propos*, for his wife replied quickly, that he had not that bad habit, and, indeed, would not endure smoking any more than herself. He looked somewhat slily as he remarked, that since he had left the army he had never *indulged* in it.

We returned to our inn laden with bouquets, forced upon us by these happy, hospitable people, whose content, and the beauty of their little garden, so like numerous others in charming Saumur, confirmed our notion of its being the most agreeable place in France to live at.

The evening was oppressively hot, and we walked on the fine bridge, hoping to meet a breeze. The shallow river was like glass, so transparent, that every pebble seemed clearly defined at the bottom. Sunset made the sky one sheet of ruby colour, and the stars, rising in great splendour, shone with dazzling brilliancy; the deep purple of the glowing night which succeeded was like sapphire, every building, every tower, every [77] hill, was mirrored in the waters, and the spires of every church threw their delicate lines along the still expanse. The gigantic castle looked down from its height as if protecting all; and the few white motionless sails at a distance, pausing near the willowy islands, where not a leaf moved, made the whole like enchantment. I never beheld a more exquisite night, nor saw a more beautiful scene.

The next day was brilliant; but the stillness of the air had given place to a fresh wind, which made our long walk across the Roman arched bridge, towards the famous *Pierres Couvertes*, less fatiguing. Though the way to it is by nearly a league of hot dusty road, yet the surprise and pleasure of the sight on arriving at this extraordinary monument quite repays all toil.

In a woody dell, not far from the main road, stand these wonderful stones, in all their mysterious concealment, puzzling the mind and exciting the imagination with their rude forms and simple contrivances. Before we left England we had made an excursion to Stonehenge, that most gigantic of all Druidical remains, and had carried with us a perfect recollection of all its proportions. The temple of Saumur is not a quarter its height, but is *entirely covered* in, and apparently of *ruder* construction, there being no art whatever used to keep the stones together except that of placing

them one over the other. We measured the length and height in the best way we could, and found it to be eighteen yards long, from the entrance to the back, which is closed in by a broad flat stone, five yards and a-half in length within and eight yards without. The height is not more than three yards from the ground; but it has evidently sunk in the earth considerably. The sides incline inwards, leaving the covering stones projecting like a cottage roof, and the great stone at the back has also lost its perpendicular; nevertheless, there are none displaced of this chamber. It appears, by several broad slabs which lie scattered about, that there must have been more compartments of the temple: an outer court existed, and a narrower part at the entrance, the stones of which are still upright. [78]

This treasure is preserved from injury by a palisade round the piece of ground on which it stands, in its little grove, and a wooden door shuts it in, which is in the custody of an old woman who keeps a school close by and receives the offerings of the curious. Her pupils, of tender age, pursue some of their studies in a small hall where she presides; but their chief pursuit seems to be amusement, to judge by the laughter and general hilarity which prevailed, as they ran gambolling amongst the venerable shades, peeping slily at the strangers, whose contemplations they were commanded not to interrupt. [79]

From the *Grandes Pierres Couvertes*, we continued our way, through vines and fields, to the top of a neighbouring hill, which commanded a charming view of the town and castle, and fine country round. There, in the midst of heath and wild thyme and nodding harebells, at the extremity of a ploughed field, overhanging a deep rocky road, stands another temple of the Gauls. It is called *Les Petites Pierres Couvertes*, and is similar in construction to the large one, but not a quarter its size. Its position is most picturesque, and the landscape spread out before its rugged arch exquisite. It is covered in, and its walls are firm and close; though, from its exposed situation, one would expect that it must long ago have fallen. Remains of large stones lie around, partly covered with vegetation, and many, no doubt, are embedded in the earth. Perhaps the two temples communicated once on a time, and covered the whole space between; where probably waved a gigantic forest. The wind had risen violently as we sat, in the sun, beside the *Petites Pierres*, and our walk back to Saumur promised us a great deal of dust, for we saw it eddying in the valleys beneath, like wreaths of mist. We, however, contrived to avoid the high road, and found our way, by a very pleasant path, to the town, before the threatened storm arrived which night brought.

By a fine star-light evening of the following day, which we had spent amongst the hills and in visiting the fortifications of the castle, we took our departure for Poitiers—the next great object of our interest. [80]

We reached Loudun in the dark, consequently had no opportunity of judging of its appearance; but, as far as we could observe, there seemed little to please the eye. The place itself is no further interesting than as having been the scene of that frightful tragedy which disgraced the seventeenth century, and which, though a story often told, may not be familiar to every reader; at least, its particulars may not immediately recur to all who hear the name of Loudun. The revolution which destroyed so much, has left scarcely any traces of the famous convent of Ursulines, where the scenes took place which cast a disgraceful celebrity on its community.

The curé and canon of St. Peter of Loudun, was a young man, named Urbain Grandier, remarkable not only for his learning and accomplishments, but for his great beauty, and the grace of his manners, together with a certain air of the world, which was, perhaps, an unfortunate distinction for one in his position. His gallantry and elegance would have graced a Court, but his lot had cast him where such *agrémens* were not only unnecessary, but misplaced. Urbain had, besides, been favoured by fortune, in having obtained two benefices; a circumstance witnessed with envy by several of the ecclesiastics, his contemporaries; who felt themselves thrown constantly into the shade by his superiority in this as in other respects. The priests, his companions, were not inclined to be indulgent to any weakness shown by their young and admired rival; the husbands of some of his fair parishioners looked on him with an evil eye, while the ladies themselves could see nothing to blame in his deportment, ever devoted and amiable as he was to them. All the learned men of the country sought his society; all the well-meaning and generous spirits of the neighbourhood found answering virtues in Urbain Grandier, and he was not aware that he had an enemy in existence. [81]

He had forgotten that he had once been so unfortunate as to offend a man who never forgave, and who, from being merely the prior of Coussay, had risen to a high rank in the church, and was now all-powerful, and able to take revenge for any petty injury long past, but carefully treasured, to be repaid with interest when occasion should serve.[2]

The Cardinal de Richelieu, from the height of his grandeur, suddenly condescended to remember his old acquaintance, the curé Grandier, and was only on the look-out for [82] a moment at which to prove to him that nothing of what had once passed between them had escaped his recollection. A means was soon presented, and, without himself appearing too prominently in the affair, the cardinal arrived at his desired end.

It happened that some young and giddy pupils of the Convent of Ursulines, bent on a frolic, resolved to terrify the bigoted and ignorant nuns of the community, by personating ghosts and goblins, and they succeeded to their utmost wishes, having acted their parts to admiration; but they were far from dreaming of the fatal consequences of their success.

The disturbed nuns, worried and frightened from their propriety, went in a body to a certain curé, named Mignon, one of the most spiteful and envious of Grandier's rivals, and related to him the fact of their convent being disturbed by ghostly visitants, who left them no peace or rest. The thought instantly occurred to Mignon, that he might turn this accident to account at the expense of the handsome young priest whom he detested.

Instead of ghosts and spirits, he changed the mystery into witchcraft and *possession by the devil*, and contrived so artfully, that he induced many of the nuns to imagine themselves a prey to the evil one, and to assume all the appearance of suffering from [83] the influence of some occult power. His pupils became quite expert in tricks of demoniacal possession, falling into convulsions and trances, and going through all the absurdities occasionally practised at the present day, by the disciples of Mesmer. These foolish, rather than wicked, women, were led to believe that, by acting thus, they were advancing the interests of religion, and they allowed themselves to fall blindly into the scheme, devised for the purpose of ruining the devoted curé. A public exorcism took place, at which scenes of absurdity, difficult to be credited, took place, and when the possessed persons were questioned as to how they became a prey to the evil spirit, they declared that the devil had entered into them by means of a bouquet of roses, the perfume of which they had inhaled; when asked by whom these flowers had been sent them, they replied that it was Urbain Grandier! This was enough to seal his doom; on the 3d of December, 1633, the Councillor Laubardemont arrived secretly at Loudun, caused the young curé to be arrested, as he was preparing to go to church, and had him carried off to the castle of Angers. The devils, supposed to possess the nuns, were severally questioned, *and replied*, they were Astaroth, of the *order of* Seraphins, the head and front of all, Easas, Celcus, Acaos, Cedon, Asmodeus, *of the order* of Thrones, Alez, Zabulon, Nephtalim, Cham, Uriel, Achas, of the order of [84] Principalities! In the following April he was brought back to Loudun, and consigned to the prison there. The farce of exorcism was now recommenced; but the fatigue of sustaining the parts they had assumed, and perhaps a conviction of the fearful nature of the deceptions they had practised, caused some of the actors in this drama to rebel, and they actually made a public retractation of what they had before advanced.

It was, however, now too late; no notice was taken of their denial of their former charges against the victim whose fate was agreed upon, and in August, 1634, a commission was duly appointed, at the head of which were Laubardemont and his satellites, who pronounced Urbain Grandier guilty, and convicted of the crime of magic. His sentence condemned him to be burned alive, but, resolved to carry vengeance to the utmost extent, he was made to undergo the torture, suffering pangs too horrible to think of. He was then conveyed to Poitiers, where he suffered at the stake, and by his unmerited fate left an indelible blot on the age in which such monstrous cruelty could be perpetrated, or such ignorant barbarity tolerated. He endured his torments with patience and resignation. While he was suffering, a large fly was observed to hover near his head. A monk, who was enjoying the spectacle of [85] his execution, and who had heard that Béelzébub, in Hebrew, signified *the God of the Flies*, cried out, much to the edification of all present, "Behold yonder, the devil, Beelzebub, flying round Grandier ready to carry off his soul to hell!"[3]

The unpleasant recollections raised by the neighbourhood of Loudun were dispelled

as we hurried on to the next post, which was at Mirebeau, where we were not a little entertained at the primitive manner in which our *malle poste* delivered and received its despatches. The coach stopped in the middle of the night in the silent streets of Mirebeau, and the conductor, stationing himself beneath the window of a dwelling, called loudly to the sleepers within; no answer was returned, nor did he repeat his summons; but waited, with a patience peculiar to *conducteurs*, who do not care to hurry their horses, till a rattling on the wall announced the approach of a basket let down by a string. Into this he put the letters he had brought, and it re-ascended; after waiting a reasonable time, the silent messenger returned, and from it a precious packet was taken; nothing was said, the *conducteur* resumed his seat on the box, the horses were urged onwards, and we rattled forward on our way to Poitiers. [86]

Mirebeau, though now an insignificant bourg, was formerly a place of some consequence. Its château was built by Foulques Nera, the redoubted Count of Anjou; and here, in 1202, Elionor of Aquitaine sustained a siege directed against her by the partisans of the Count of Bretagne, her grandson. Close by is a village, the lord of which had an hereditary privilege sufficiently ludicrous.

It appears that at Puy Taillé there must have been a remarkable number of serpents, who refused to listen to the voice of the charmer until the lord of the castle, *wiser* than any other exorciser, took them in hand. He was accustomed, at a certain period, to set forth in state, and, placing himself at a spot where he presumed he should be heard, raised his voice, and, in an authoritative tone, commanded the refractory animals to quit his estates. Not one dared to refuse; and great was the rustling, and hissing, and sliding, and coiling as the serpentine nation prepared to *déménager*, much against their inclination no doubt, but forced, by a power they could not withstand, to obey. None of these creatures interrupted our route, although there has long ceased to be a lord at Puy Taillé, and we arrived before day-break safely at the Hôtel de France, at Poitiers. [87]

St. Porchaire, Poitiers.

CHAPTER VI.

POITIERS—BATTLES—THE ARMIES—KING JOHN OF FRANCE—THE YOUNG WARRIOR —HÔTEL DU VREUX—AMPHITHEATRE—BLOSSAC—THE GREAT STONE—THE SCHOLARS—MUSEUM—THE DEMON'S STONE—GRANDE GUEULE.

Poitiers is a city of the past: it is one of those towns in which the last lingering characteristics of the middle ages still repose; although they do so in the midst of an atmosphere of innovation. Modern improvement, slowly as it shows itself, is making progress at Poitiers, as at every town in France, and quietly sweeping away all the [88]

records of generations whose very memory is wearing out. If new buildings and walks and ornamental *alentours* were as quickly erected and carried out as they are conceived, it would be a matter of rejoicing that whole cities of dirt and wretchedness should be made to disappear, and new ones to rise shining in their place; but, unfortunately, this cannot be the case. There are too many towns in France in the same position as Poitiers, all requiring to be rebuilt from the very ground to make them *presentable* at the present day; blocks of stone strew every road, brick and mortar fill every street; a great deal of money is expended, but a great deal more is required; and, in the meantime, the new and the old strive for mastery, the former growing dull and dirty by the side of the latter, and, before the intended improvements are realized, becoming as little sightly as their more venerable neighbours.

Much of *old* Poitiers has been destroyed; and *new* Poitiers is by no means beautiful. It is better, therefore, except in a few instances, to forget that modern hands have touched the sacred spot, and endeavour to enjoy the reminiscences still left, of which there are a great number full of interest and variety. [89]

When we sallied forth into the streets of Poitiers, our first impression was that of disappointment; but we had not long wandered amongst its dilapidated houses and churches before the enthusiasm we expected to feel there was awakened, and the spirit of the Black Prince was appeased by our reverence for everything we met.

Poitiers belongs to so many ages—Gaul, Roman, Visigoth, Frank, English—that it holds a place in every great event which has occurred in France during the last nineteen centuries. Four important battles were fought in its neighbourhood: those of Clovis, of Charles Martel, of Edward of England, and of Henry III. of France; all these struggles brought about results of the utmost consequence to the country. The fields where these battles were fought are still pointed out, though the site of each is violently contested by antiquarians.

That between Clovis and Alaric is now *said to be* determined as having occurred at Voulon, on the banks of the Clain, instead of Vouillé, which has long been looked upon as the scene. In the same manner, furious disputes have prevailed as to where the defeat of Abderraman, by Charles Martel, took place; but we are bound now to believe that it was neither near Tours, Amboise, nor Loches, but at Moussais-la-Bataille, close to Poitiers, in the *delta* formed by the waters of the Vienne and the Clain. [90]

The fatal fight, in which King John and all his chivalry were defeated by the Prince of Wales, is said, in like manner, to be between Beauvoir and Nouaille, and not at Beaumont, as has been asserted. There no longer exists a place called *Maupertuis*, which once indicated the spot; but it is ascertained that the part called La Cardinerie was once so designated, and, hard by, at a spot named *Champ-de-la-Bataille*, have been found bones and arms; which circumstance seems to have set the matter at rest. It matters little where these dreadful doings took place; all round Poitiers there are wide plains where armies might have encountered; but it would seem probable that the spot where the battle so fatal to France was really fought, must have been situated so as to have afforded the handful of English some signal advantage; or how was it possible for a few hundred exhausted men to conquer as many thousands! The English crossbows, which did such execution, were most likely stationed at some pass in the rocky hills of which there are many, and their sudden and unexpected onset must have sent forth the panic which caused the subsequent destruction of the whole French army.

In fact, Froissart describes their position clearly enough. He names Maupertuis as a place two leagues to the north of Poitiers, and the spot chosen by the Black Prince as a hill full of bushes and vines, impracticable to cavalry, and favourable to archers: he [91] concealed the latter in the thickets, connected the hedges, dug ditches, planted pallisades, and made barricades of waggons; in fact, formed of his camp a great redoubt, having but one narrow issue, guarded on each side by a double hedge. At the extremity of this defile was the whole English army, on foot, compact and sheltered on all sides; while, behind the hill that separated the two armies, was placed an ambuscade of six hundred knights and cross-bowmen.

The French army was divided into three parts, and disposed in an oblique line. The left and foremost wing was commanded by the king's brother, the Duke of Orleans, the centre by the king's sons, and the reserve by the unfortunate monarch himself. Already the cry of battle was heard, when two holy men rushed forward to mediate

between the foes; but in vain. The Prince of Wales,—that mighty conqueror,—knowing his weakness, and feeling his responsibility, would have even consented to give back the provinces he had taken—the captives of his valour—and agreed to remain for seven years without drawing the sword. But King John demanded that he should yield himself prisoner, with a hundred of his knights; and, confident in his strength, he had no second proposal to make.

Sixty thousand warriors, full of pride, hope, and exultation, had spread themselves [92] over the plains, confident of success, and looking forward to annihilate at a blow the harassed enemy which had so long annoyed them, but which were now hunted into the toils, and could be made an easy prey. The redoubtable Black Prince would no longer terrify France with his name: he knew his weakness, and had sent to offer terms the most advantageous, provided he and his impoverished bands might be permitted to go free; but, with victory in their hands, why should the insulted knights of France agree to his dictation? it were better to punish the haughty islanders as they deserved, and at once rid their country of a nest of hornets which allowed her no peace.

The king, his four sons, all the princes and nobles of France were in arms, and had not followed the English to listen to terms at the last moment. King John,—the very flower of chivalry, the soul of honour and valour,—rode through his glittering ranks, and surveyed his banners with delight and pride. "At Paris, at Chartres, at Rouen, at Orleans," he exclaimed, "you defied these English; you desired to encounter them hand to hand. Now they are before you: behold! I point them out to you. Now you can, if you will, take vengeance for all the ills they have done to France; for all the slaughter they have made. Now, if you will, you may combat these fatal enemies." [93]

The signal was given: the gorgeous troops rushed forth, their helmets glittering with gold and steel, their swords bright, and their adornments gay; their hearts full of resolve, and their spirits raised for conquest. A short space of time sufficed to produce a strange contrast: twenty thousand men, with the Dauphin of France at their head, flying before six hundred tattered English! Chandos and the Black Prince behold from a height the unexpected event: they follow up the advantage; the hero of so many fights rouses himself, and becomes resistless as Alexander:

"See how he puts to flight the gaudy Persians
With nothing but a rusty helmet on!"

Of all his hosts,—of all his friends, and guards, and warriors, and nobles, what remains to the French king? He stands alone amidst a heap of slain, with a child fighting by his side: their swords fall swiftly and heavily on every one that dares approach them; their armour is hacked and hewn; their plumes torn; the blood flows from their numerous wounds; but they still stand firm, and dispute their lives to the last. The boy performs prodigies of valour; he is worthy to be the son of Edward himself; but he is at last struck down, while his frantic father deals with his battle-axe blows which appal the stoutest heart. No one dares to approach the lion at bay: they hem him in; they call to and entreat him to lay down his arms; he is blinded with the [94] blood which flows from two deep wounds in his face; and, faint and staggering, he gazes round on the slaughtered heaps at his feet, and gives his weapon into the hands of an English knight.

Over and over again has the story of this defeat been told, yet is the relation always stirring, always exciting, and the remainder full of romance and glory to all parties concerned. The only blot upon the *ermine* is, that the valorous boy who so distinguished himself should, a few years later, forget the lesson of honour and magnanimity he then learnt, and, by his disgraceful breach of faith, expose the father he defended to so much sorrow and humiliation.

The *Roman* remains at Poitiers claim the first attention of the traveller; and we, therefore, soon after our arrival, walked down the rugged Rue de la Lamproie to an *auberge* which has for its sign a board on which is inscribed, "Aux *Vreux*-Antiquités Romaines." The meaning of this mysterious word, which has puzzled many people, is this: Here formerly existed a house which belonged to a bishop of Evreux; and was, consequently, called Hôtel d'Evreux. The last proprietor, imagining that the word *Evreux* meant *Roman Antiquities*, was seized with the happy thought of changing it to *Vreux*, as simpler and more expressive; and so it has remained. [95]

The *Vreux* are very curious, and give a stupendous idea of the size of the

amphitheatre which once existed on this spot. The whole of the court and large gardens of this inn offer remains of the seats, steps, temples, and vaults. One huge opening is fearful to look at, and preserves its form entire: it appears to have been an entrance for the beasts and cars and companies of gladiators, which figured in the arena.

Garlands of luxuriant vines, with white and black grapes in clusters, now adorn the ruined walls; and fruit-trees and flowering shrubs grow on the terraces. It requires some attention to trace the form of the amphitheatre; as so many houses and walls are built in, and round about its site.

The foundation is attributed to the Emperor Gallienus, and occurred probably in the third century. Medals of many kinds of metal have been frequently found in excavating, which prove the period; but the learned have not been silent on so tempting a theme, and the history of the Arènes de Poitiers has occupied the attention of all the antiquaries of France. It appears that the size was greater than that of Nismes.

It is strange that so much of the ruins should still remain of the amphitheatre in spite of so many centuries of destruction acting upon it, and, notwithstanding its having been constantly resorted to as a quarry, whenever materials were required for [96] construction. In one of the quarters of the town, the Rue des Arènes and the Bourg Cani, where the poorest people live, almost all the houses are formed of the chambers belonging to a Roman establishment. The roofs of almost all are Roman: the cellars, the stables, and the granaries. No doubt Poitiers was a place of the greatest importance under their sway, as these extensive ruins indicate.

The park of Blossac is the most attractive promenade of Poitiers: it is beautifully laid out, and well kept. An intendant of Poitou, M. de la Bourdonnaye-Blossac, established it in 1752, with the benevolent intent of giving employment, in a hard winter, to the poor. In constructing it, a great many sepulchres of the Gauls, and funereal vases, were discovered; some of which are preserved in the museum.

The view is charming from the terrace of Blossac above the Clain, and one is naturally led to pursue the agreeable walks which invite the steps at every turn. We found that, by following as they pointed, we should arrive at most of the places we desired to see; and, as the interior of the town has few attractions in itself, we resolved to skirt it, and continue our way along the ramparts. They extend a long way, and are extremely pleasant in their whole extent. Remnants of ancient towers and rampart walls appear here and there, the river runs clear and bright beneath, and [97] beyond are gently undulating hills; while, occasionally, heaps of grey rocks, of peculiar forms, some looking like temples, others like towers, rise suddenly from their green base, surprising the eye.

In the direction of the most remarkable of these, may be found a *pierre levée*, said, by veracious chroniclers, to have been raised on the spot by the great saint of Poitiers, Sainte Radegonde, who is reported to have brought the great stone on her head, and the pillars which support it in the pockets of her *muslin apron*: one of these pillars fell from its frail hold to the ground, and the devil instantly caught it up and carried it away, which satisfactorily accounts for the stone being elevated only at one end. Unfortunately the same legend is so often repeated respecting different saints, and in particular respecting *Saint* Magdalen, who has often been known to establish herself in wild places, bringing her rugged stool with her, that it would seem some or other of these holy people *plagiarised* from the other.

Rabelais attributes this stone to Pantagruel, who, "seeing that the scholars of Poitiers, having a great deal of leisure, did not know how to spend their time, was moved with compassion, and, one day, took from a great rock, which was called Passe-Lourdin, an immense block, twelve toises square, and fourteen *pans* thick, and placed it upon four pillars in the midst of a field, *quite at its ease*, in order that the said [98] scholars, when they could think of nothing else to do, might pass their time in mounting on the said stone, and there banqueting with quantities of flagons, hams, and pasties; also in cutting their names on it with a knife: this stone is now called La Pierre Levée. And in memory of this, no one can be matriculated in the said University of Poitiers who has not drunk at the cabalistic fountain of Croustelles, been to Passe-Lourdin, and mounted on La Pierre Levée."

Bouchet's opinion is, that the stone was placed by Aliénor d'Aquitaine, about 1150, to be used at a fair which was held in the field where it stands.

It is, no doubt, one of the Dolmen, whose strange and mysterious appearance may well have puzzled both the learned and unlearned in every age since they were first erected.

One of the most interesting monuments in Poitiers is the museum; for it is a Roman structure—a temple or a tomb—almost entire, and less injured than might have been expected, serving as a receptacle for all the antiquities which have been collected together at different periods, in order to form a *musée*. They are appropriately placed in this building, and are seen with much more effect in its singular walls than if looked at on the comfortable shelves of a boarded and white-washed chamber. [99]

As is usual in those cases, disputes run high respecting the original founder and the destination of this building, unique in its kind. Some insist that it is a tomb erected to Claudia Varenilla, by her husband, Marcus Censor Pavius; others see in it a pagan temple, transformed into a place of early Christian worship; others, the *first cathedral* of Poitiers.

It has undergone numerous changes of destination, at all events, having been used as a church, as a bell-foundry, as a depôt for *economical soup*, and as a manufactory. The Society of Antiquaries have at length gained possession of it, and it is to be hoped that it will know no further vicissitudes.

In this temple may be seen numerous treasures of Gaulic and Roman and Middle-age art of great interest: sepulchral stones inscribed with the names of Claudia Varenilla, Sabinus, and Lepida; Roman altars, military boundary-stones, amphoræ, vases, capitals, and pottery, all found in the neighbourhood of Poitiers: a good deal of beautiful carving from the destroyed castle of Bonnivet, fine specimens of the Renaissance, and numerous relics of ruined churches.

Among the treasures is a block of stone, said to be one on which the Maid of Orleans rested her foot when she mounted her horse, in full armour, to accompany Charles VII. on his coronation. A piece of stone from the old church of St. Hilaire is exhibited, [100] which, when struck, emits so horrible an effluvia as to render it unapproachable. The church is said to have been built of this stone; if so, the workmen must have been considerably annoyed while constructing it, and deserved *indulgences* for their perseverance in continuing their labour. It would appear that this is a calcareous[4] rock, which has been described by several French naturalists who have met with it in the Pyrenees, at the Brèche de Roland, and on the height of Mont Perdu, and whose odour of *sulphureous hydrogen* is supposed to arise from the animal matter enclosed in its recesses. Some marbles have the same exhalation, yet are employed in furniture: as the smell does not appear to be offensive unless the stone is struck with some force, it may, perhaps, be unobserved; but I could scarcely regret that the church of St. Hilaire was almost totally destroyed when I heard that such disagreeable materials entered into its construction. No doubt the presence of the arch-enemy was considered as the cause of this singular effluvia in early times, and the monks turned [101] it, as they did all accidents, to good account.

The Grand Gueule, a horrible beast, discovered in the caverns of the abbey of Sainte Croix, who had eaten up several nuns, was probably found out by the smell of sulphur which pervaded his den, and brought forth to punishment by the holy men who were guided to his retreat by this means,—their instrument being a criminal condemned to death, who combated the beast, and killed him. The dragon was usually carried in processions, following the precious relic of a piece of the true cross which had vanquished him; and his effigy in wood, with the inscription, *Gargot fecit*, 1677, exists still, though it has ceased to be used. [102]

Ste. Radagonde, Poitiers.

CHAPTER VII.

NOTRE DAME—THE KEYS—THE MIRACLE—PROCESSION—ST. RADEGONDE—TOMB OF THE SAINT—FOOT-PRINT—LITTLE LOUBETTE—THE COUNT OUTWITTED—THE CORDELIER—LATE JUSTICE—THE TEMPLARS.

POITIERS is one of the largest towns in France, but is very thinly inhabited; immense gardens, orchards, and fields, extend between the streets; the spaces are vast, but there is no beauty whatever in the architecture or the disposition of the buildings. The squares are wide and open, but surrounded by irregular, slovenly-looking houses, without an approach to beauty or elegance; the pavement is rugged, and cleanliness is not a characteristic of the place. [103]

The churches are extremely curious, although, in general, so battered and worn as to present the aspect of a heap of ruins at first sight. This is particularly the case with Notre Dame, so revered by Richard Cœur de Lion, in the great *place*, before which a market is held. I never saw a church whose appearance was so striking, not from its beauty or grace, but from the singularly devastated, ruined state in which it towers above the buildings round, as if it belonged to another world. Nothing about it has the least resemblance to anything else: its heaps of encrusted figures, arches within arches, niches, turrets covered with rugged scales, round towers with countless pillars, ornaments, saints, canopies, and medallions, confuse the mind and the eye. All polish is worn from the surface, and so crumbling does it look, that it would seem impossible that the rough and disjointed mass of stones, piled one on the other, could keep together; yet, when you examine it closely, you find that all is solid and firm, and that it would require the joint efforts of time and violence to throw it down, even now. [104]

The peculiar colour of the stone of which it is built, assists the strangeness of its effect; for it has an ancient, ivory hue, and all its elaborate carving is not unlike that on some old ivory cabinet grown yellow with age. A long series of scriptural histories, from the scene in Eden, upwards, are represented on this wonderful façade; besides much which has not yet been explained. Its original construction has been attributed to Constantine, whose equestrian statue once figured above one of the portals.

St. Hilaire, St. Martin, and all the saints in the calendar, still fill their niches, more or less defaced; row after row, sitting and standing, decorate the whole surface, in compartments; choirs of angels, troops of cherubims, surround sacred figures of larger size; and when it is recollected that all this was once covered with gilding and colours, it is difficult to imagine anything more splendid and imposing than it must have been.

The interior suffered dreadfully from the zeal of the Protestants, who destroyed

tombs and altars without mercy. One group—the Entombment of Christ—common in most churches, is remarkable for the details of costume it presents, and the excellence of its execution. It belonged formerly to the abbey of the Trinity, and has been transferred to Notre Dame. The date seems to be about the end of the fifteenth century; the figures are of the natural size, and the original colouring still remains; the [105] anatomical developments are faithful to exaggeration, and the finish of every part is admirable.

Some of the female heads are charming, with their costly ornaments, hoods, and embroidered veils; and the male figures, with the strange hats of the period, like that worn by Louis XI., have a singularly battered and torn effect, in spite of the smart fringed handkerchiefs bound round them, with ends hanging down and pieces of plate armour depending from their sides.

Several of the adornments of the altars are those formerly belonging to the church of the Carmelites, now the chapel of the *grand seminaire*. Above the crucifix which surmounts the tabernacle, is attached to the roof a bunch of keys: these are, according to tradition, the same miraculous keys taken from the traitor who proposed to deliver them to the English. The history of this transaction is as follows:—

In 1202, Poitou had risen against John Lackland, of England, Duke of Aquitaine and Count of Poitou, taking the part of young Arthur, whom he had just made prisoner at Mirebeau. The town of Poitiers had closed its gates against John, warned by the example of Tours, which he had lately sacked and burnt. The King had posted his troops in the towns of Limousin and Perigord, with orders to his captains to endeavour to take Poitiers by surprise.

The mayor of Poitiers had a secretary who was both cunning and avaricious, who, [106] bribed highly by the English, had consented to deliver the town to them. Accordingly, on Easter eve, a party of the enemy, under false colours, arrived at the Porte de la Tranchée; the secretary repaired instantly to the chamber of the mayor, to which he had access, expecting, as usual, that the keys would be found there; but, to his surprise, they were removed, nor could he find them in any other accustomed place. The traitor hastened to inform the English of the fact, by throwing a paper to them from the ramparts, requesting that they would wait till four o'clock in the morning, when he should be able to execute his purpose. At this hour he re-entered the mayor's chamber, and telling him that a gentleman wished to set out on a mission to the king of France at that early hour, begged that the keys might be delivered to him. The mayor sought for the keys, but they were nowhere to be found: he suspected some treason; and without loss of time assembled the inhabitants, and required that they should go at once to the Porte de la Tranchée, in arms, to be ready in case of surprise.

The report soon spread that the English were at the Tranchée, and the belfry sent forth its peals to summon all men to arms: in a very short space the whole town was roused, and every one hurried to the gates, where a strange spectacle met their view [107] from the turrets. They beheld upwards of fifteen hundred English, dead or prone on the ground, and others killing them! The gates were thrown open, and the inhabitants sallied forth, making the remainder an easy prey, and taking many prisoners: the which declared to the mayor and the dignitaries of the town all the treason which had been arranged; and further related, that at the hour agreed on, they beheld before the gates a queen more richly dressed than imagination can conceive, and with her a nun and a bishop, followed by an immense army of soldiers, who immediately attacked them. They instantly became aware that the personages they saw were no other than the Blessed Virgin, St. Hilaire, and S^{te}. Radegonde, whose bodies were in the town, and, seized with terror and despair, they fell madly on each other and slaughtered their companions.

All the towns-people, on hearing this, offered thanks to God, and returned to keep their fast with great devotion. As for the disloyal secretary, his fate was not known, for he was never seen afterwards; and, says the chronicler, "it is natural to suppose that by one of the other gates he cast himself into the river, *or* that the devil carried him off bodily."

The miracle had not ended there; for while these things were going on at the gates, the poor mayor, in great perturbation, had hurried to the church of Notre Dame la [108] Grande, and throwing himself before the altar, recommended the town to the protection of God and the Mother of Mercy. "While he was praying, all on a sudden *he*

felt the keys in his arms; at which he returned thanks to Heaven, as did many pious persons who were with him."

Bouchet, who relates this *fact*, adds:—"In memory of this *fine miracle*, the inhabitants of the said Poitiers have ever since made, and continue, a grand and notable procession of all the colleges and convents, every year, all round the walls of the said town, within, the day before Easter: the which extends for more than a league and a half. And in memory of the said miracle, *I have made these four lines of rhythm*: —

"L'an mil deux cens deux comme on clame,
Batailla pour ceux de Poietiers,
Contre les Anglois nostre Dame,
Et les garda de leurs dangiers."

In commemoration of this event, statues of the three saviours of the town were erected above the gate, and in a little chapel near: chapels to the Virgin were placed in every possible nook, and a solemn procession was instituted to take place every year, on Easter Monday, when the mayor's lady had the privilege of presenting to the Virgin the magnificent velvet robe, which she wore on the occasion. This ceremony was continued as late as 1829, since when the *cortège* no longer goes round the town as formerly, but a service is performed in the church. [109]

The belief of this miracle seems to form an article of faith; for the story was told me by three persons of different classes, all of whom spoke of it as a tradition in which they placed implicit credit.

Sainte Radegonde seems to hold, however, the highest rank of the three defenders of Poitiers. "She is a great saint," said the exhibitor of the Museum to me, "and performs miracles every day." "S^{te}. Radegonde," said the bibliothécaire—"is a great protectress of this town, and has personally interfered to assist us in times of need—but, perhaps, you are not Catholic."

"The great saint," said a votaress, who was selling *chapelets* at her tomb, "does not let a month escape without showing her power; only six weeks ago a poor child, who was paralyzed, was brought here by its mother, having been given up by the doctors; and the moment it touched the marble where it was laid, all its limbs became as strong as ever, and it walked out of the church."

We, of course, lost as little time as possible in paying our *devoirs* to so wondrous a personage. The church is a very venerable structure, surmounted by a spire covered with slate. The Saint was the wife of Clotaire the First, and quitted her court to live a religious life, having built a monastery in honour of the true cross, a piece of which had been sent to her from Constantinople by the Emperor Justinian. She erected a church in honour of the Virgin, which should serve for a burial-place for her nuns; this was beyond the walls of her monastery, and a college of priests was added to it to supply religious instruction to her community. The church was finished, and its foundress died in 587. She was interred there by the celebrated Gregory of Tours. The tomb, of the simplest construction of fine black marble, still exists in a subterranean chapel, the object of religious pilgrimages without end; and when, in the fourteenth century, it was opened by Jean, Duc de Berry, Count of Poitou, brother of Charles the Wise, the body was found in perfect preservation. In 1562 the Protestants took possession of the church, and broke open the tomb, scattering and burning the bones; but some of them were, nevertheless, gathered together and replaced in the marble, which was joined by iron cramps, and does not exhibit much injury. [110]

This huge mass of black marble has a very disgusting appearance, from being entirely covered (except at one little corner, kept clean to show its texture) with the runnings of the countless candles perched upon it by the pilgrims, who arrive in such crowds at some periods of the year, that the vault becomes so hot and close as to be unsafe to remain in long. These candles are kept constantly burning, and the devotion to the Saint also burns as brightly as ever. St. Agnes and St. Disciolus repose near their abbess. Pepin, King of Aquitaine, lies somewhere in their neighbourhood; but the exact spot is not ascertained. [111]

A miraculous foot-print is still shown, which it is recorded that Jesus Christ left *when* he visited the cell of the holy abbess: the stone, carefully preserved, is called Le Pas

de Dieu, and was formerly in the convent of St. Croix.

We had some difficulty to escape from the earnest exhortations of numerous devout sellers of rosaries, who insisted on our buying their medals, *chapelets*, &c., assuring us that they were of extraordinary virtue; and we could scarcely believe that we had not been transported several centuries back, when we saw the extreme devotion and zeal they showed, both towards the Saint, and the money she might bring from devotees.

Close to S^{te}. Radegonde is the cathedral church of St. Pierre, principally built by Henry II. of England, a very fine specimen of the grandest style of art; vast and beautiful, but with its naves rather too low. The principal portals are very much ornamented, and its towers have much elegance: but the restorations it has undergone have been injudicious, and the modern painted glass which replaces the old is extremely bad; but many of the windows are of fine forms, and, on the whole, there is [112] a good deal to admire in St. Pierre.

But little vestige remains now of the once famous convent of St. Pierre le Puellier, which owed its foundation to a miracle: it is one very often told as having occurred on like occasions; but is apparently still believed in Poitiers, where devotees of easy credence seem to abound.

Loubette was a young girl in the service of the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine, and had been witness in Jerusalem of the discovery of the true cross. She was a native of Brittany; and how she came to the holy city does not appear; suffice it that she wished to return to her own country. The empress, in dismissing her, made her a present of a piece of the true cross, and a part of the crown of thorns. Loubette placed the relics in her *little bag*, and set out on her journey *on foot*. She was of very small stature, lame, and crooked, extremely weak, and hardly able to move; however, such as she was, she took her way from Jerusalem to Poitiers, where *having arrived*, and feeling fatigued, she lay down before she entered the town under a willow, hanging her little bag (*gibecière*) on a branch, and went to sleep. When she awoke she looked for her bag; but the branch she had hung it on—similar to the steeple to which the horse of the Baron, of veracious memory, was attached—had risen in the night to such a height, "that," says the chronicler, "the said virgin could not reach her said [113] *gibecière*."

She immediately sought the Bishop of Poitiers, who, struck with the miracle, recommended her to present herself to the Count of Poitou, and solicit of his piety the means of raising a church, and supporting a chapter of clerks and priests to do duty there. The Count of Poitou is said to have been joyous and pleased when he heard her relation; but it does not appear that his generosity equalled his delight, for he did not seem disposed to grant anything to Loubette for the establishment of her church; however, unable at last to resist her entreaties, he agreed to give her as much ground as so lame and weak a creature could creep over in a day: it appears that he was not aware of her expedition from the Holy Land.

He soon had cause to repent of his jest, for scarcely had Loubette commenced her walk, accompanied by the servants of the Count, than she distanced them all, and got over so much ground that they were terrified; for, wherever she stepped, the ground rose and marked what was hers. The Count hurried after her in great alarm, and, stopping her progress, entreated her to be content with what she had already gained, as he began to think she would acquire all his domain.[5]

On the banks of the Clain is still pointed out a mound of earth on the spot where [114] *Saint* Loubette crossed the river without wetting her feet.

There is no end to the miracles wrought in this favoured city: one is told so remarkable that it deserves to be recorded. It occurred in favour of Gauthier de Bruges, bishop of Poitiers—a very virtuous and learned man, who had from a simple *cordelier* been placed on the episcopal throne by Pope Nicholas III. A question of supremacy having arisen between the archbishops of Bourges and Bordeaux, Gauthier declared for the former, and was charged by him to execute some acts of ecclesiastic jurisdiction against his rival. The archbishop of Bordeaux afterwards became pope, under the name of Clement V., protected by Philippe le Bel, and in memory of his opposition deposed Gauthier, enjoining him to retire into his convent.

The bishop of Poitiers was obliged to submit to the authority of the sovereign pontiff;

but at the same time protested against the abuse of power of which he was the victim; and he appealed against the sentence of deposition *to God and the council to come*. He died shortly after, and desired to be buried with his act of appeal in his hand.

When Clement V. came to Poitiers to treat with Philippe le Bel on *important and secret* affairs—nothing less than the suppression of the order of the Templars—he [115] lodged at the Cordelier convent, in the very church where Gauthier was buried. Being informed of the act of appeal which the unfortunate bishop would not part with at the time of his death, he had a great desire to see it, and commanded that his tomb should be opened. Accordingly, in the dead of night, by the light of torches, his desire was fulfilled. One of the pope's archdeacons descended into the vault, and in the dead hand of the bishop beheld the scroll: he endeavoured to take possession of it, but found it impossible to do so, so firmly was it grasped by the bony fingers. The pope ordered the archdeacon to enjoin the dead man to give it up on pain of punishment, which the other having done, and added, that he pledged himself to restore the paper when the pope had read it, the hand relaxed its grasp, and the act was released. The archdeacon handed it up to the pope; but when he tried to leave the vault, he found that a secret power prevented him from stirring from the place, and he was forced to remain there as hostage till the scroll was read and replaced in the hand of the bishop; he then found that his limbs had resumed their power, and he was able to quit the spot. Clement V., anxious to repair his injustice, afterwards paid extraordinary honours to the memory of Bishop Gauthier.

It was at this time, in 1306, the interview took place which decided the fate of the [116] Templars; the pope lodged with the Cordeliers, the King with the Jacobins, and, in order that they might confer more readily, a bridge was thrown across the street, forming a communication between the two convents. For sixteen months Clement remained at Poitiers on this important business; and here he had interviews with the master of the Templars, summoned from Cyprus for the occasion: here, most of the plans, destined to overthrow their dangerous power, were concocted, with less reference to justice than expediency.

The ancient palace of the Counts of Poitou is now the Palais de Justice. A fine Grecian portico which we had passed several times in our search for what we expected would be a Gothic entrance, leads to the only part which remains of the ancient building: namely, a magnificent hall of very large dimensions, surrounded by circular arches and delicate pillars, and having a good deal of fine carving, and an antique roof of chestnut wood. The exterior, which is adorned with figures of the sovereigns of Poitou, we could not get a glimpse of, as the palace is so hemmed in by buildings that it is only from the gardens and windows of some private houses that any view of it can be obtained. Elionore of Aquitaine, her husband and sons, often inhabited this abode; and it was in the great hall that Charles VII. was proclaimed [117] King of France. One can but regret that so little remains of the original structure, and that the buildings which modern taste and necessity have added, should so ill accord with the old model; for nothing can be more misplaced than the *classic temple* which conducts to a Norman hall. [118]

CHAPTER VIII.

CHÂTEAU DE LA FÉE—KING RENÉ—THE MINIATURES—THE POST-OFFICE FUNCTIONARY—ORIGINALITY—THE ENGLISH BANK-NOTE—ST. PORCHAIRE—THE DEAD CHILD—MONTIERNEUF—GUILLAUME GUY GEOFFROY—THOMAS À BECKET—CHOIR OF ANGELS—RELICS—THE ARMED HERMIT—A SAINT—THE REPUDIATED QUEEN—ELIONORE—THE BOLD PRIEST—LAY.

One of the most remarkable houses in Poitiers, of which not many ancient remain, is one now used as a school by the Christian Brothers. It is in the Rue de la Prévôté, close to the Place de la Pilori, and has been a prison. The door and windows are finely ornamented, as is the whole façade, with curiously-carved figures and foliage. Melusine, with her serpent's or fish's tail, and her glass and comb, appears amongst them—that inexplicable figure so frequently recurring in almost every part of France, [119] and even yet requiring her riddle to be solved. As we knew that this part of the world was her head-quarters, we resolved to visit her at her own castle of Lusignan, which

would be in our way when we left Poitiers. In this we were confirmed when we went to the Bibliothèque, for the gentleman to whom we were indebted for much attention in showing us the chief treasures there contained, recommended us not to pass by without seeing the ruins of the *château de la Fée*.

The university of Poitiers formerly held a very high rank, and was frequented by scholars from every part of the world. France, England, Scotland, Ireland, and Germany, sent their students: it was founded by Charles VII., and Pope Eugène IV., and was in great esteem in spite of the jests of Rabelais and others at its expense. One old author speaks somewhat irreverently of the learned town; calling its students "the flute-players and professors of the *jeu de paume* of Poitiers." Corneille makes his Menteur a pupil of the college of Poitiers; but Menot, a preacher of the period of the League, has a passage in one of his sermons which is sufficiently complimentary: in relating the Judgment of Solomon, he makes him say to one of the women, "Hold your tongue, for I see that you have never studied at Angers or Poitiers, and know not how [120] to plead." It is now the head of an academy which comprises the four departments of Vienne, Deux-Sèvres, La Vendée, and Charente Inférieure.

The public library is very extensive, and possesses many valuable volumes. The first library named in French history is that of William the Ninth, Count of Poitiers and Duke of Aquitaine, which was preserved in his palace at Poitiers. At the revolution, all that ages had accumulated was dispersed, but much has since been recollected, and amongst the twenty-five thousand volumes there are many very precious. There are more than fifteen hundred works relative to the history of Poitou, and it has, within a few years, been enriched by a present from the British government of a fine collection of historical and legal documents connected with this part of the country.

That which, however, interested me most, was a beautiful manuscript, said to have been executed by no other hand than the royal one of the good King René. I have no doubt it was done by a very skilful artist whom his munificence protected; but if, as is probable, he painted the work on chivalry now in the King's library at Paris, he did *not* paint the beautiful leaves of the Psalter which is attributed to him; there is too much knowledge of art in the latter to permit one to imagine that the same person could do both; for though the work on chivalry has great merit, it is of an inferior kind to this. [121] The birds, the flowers, the foliage, and the miniatures, are in perfection, and betray an Italian touch; true it is that the celebrated partridges, which King René loved so well to paint, are frequently repeated, and the legend is told while the manuscript is being looked at, of his occupation in depicting his favourite bird, when he was informed of the loss of his kingdom, and so interested was he in his work that he never laid down his pencil, but proceeded to finish it off as if nothing had happened. Still, I think, whoever painted this book was the royal amateur's master in the art; it appears certain that the beautiful volume was presented by him to Jeanne de Laval, his wife: it is decorated with the arms of Anjou, Sicily, and Laval, and the gold and azure are brilliant beyond description, the doves and other birds are of glittering plumage, and the flowers charming. Another psalter, of still more exquisite execution, is of later date, 1510; and though the gold is far less dazzling than that which adorns René's book, nothing can exceed the beauty of the birds and flowers introduced on the margins. One leaf, *all owls*, has a peculiarly *feathered* appearance; the solemn birds sit on wreaths in the most elegant attitudes, and at the top of the page one *Grand Duke*, larger and more dignified than the rest, seems to look down on his people with [122] satisfaction. The lupins, monkshood, marguerites, and other simple flowers, so often introduced in illuminated borders, are done with infinite skill, and *strewn* about the gold ground as if scattered there by chance: some with their stalks upwards and in disorder, evidently showing that they were painted from nature, probably from the artist's own garden in his convent.

We found in Poitiers amongst the people, very little pride of their town; they seem in fact to be inspired with a spirit of depreciation, which surprised me; and I have seldom found in any French town so much difficulty in discovering old houses and sites. "Ah, ça ne vaut pas la peine, ma foi! c'est bien vieux!" was the general answer given to any inquiry.

I had occasion to go to the post-office for letters from England, having sent the *commissionnaire* of the inn in vain. I knew that several were waiting for me, but being positively told that there were none, was going away, much disappointed, when a man ran after me across the great square, begging that I would return, as the director

wished to speak to me. I did so immediately, when I was accosted by a person I had not before seen, who, instead of producing my letters, began a conversation on the subject of Poitiers, and my journey to it; having informed himself where I came from, with all the minuteness of an American questioner, he proceeded to say there were [123] letters for a person of my name; but as he required my passport, which I found to my vexation I had left at the inn, I was tantalized with a view of the handwriting of my friends through a grating. The functionary, however, detained me still to entreat that I would satisfy his curiosity as to what we could possibly have been admiring the evening before on the ramparts near the Porte du Pont Joubert, on the banks of the Clain. "I observed you, ladies," said he, "pointing to the opposite hills, which are nothing but blocks of grey rocks, ordinary enough, and leaning over the walls watching the course of the river, which is but a poor stream; and remarking the trees on the promenades, which, after all, are but trees; in fact, it puzzled me to think what strangers could find at Poitiers to like."

Much amused at his originality, and the singular way in which he showed it, I replied that we found much to admire in the walks, the scenery, and the churches, and were surprised that he thought so little of his native town. He seemed, as well as several of his assistant clerks, and a person who patiently waited for his letters till the interview was concluded, to think me much the most original of the two; and, having no more to say, handed me my letters with the remark that I need not fetch my passport, as he had no doubt they were really destined for me. It was then evident to my mind that he [124] had laid this plan to detain the inquisitive travellers who had excited his curiosity, till he could catechise them himself, and to that end had lured us *in person* to the post-office, and detained us and our letters till his pleasure was secured. We were not sorry that nothing more was likely to arrive at Poitiers for us, as we were to pay so much for the delivery. It appears that strangers rarely remain more than a few hours here, which may account for so much interest being excited in the solitary town by our strolling.

We had delayed changing some English money, and thinking it best to do so in case of necessity, inquired the way to a banker's. We were directed to several; but, apparently, business was not very urgent with them, for at most of the houses we found the head person gone into the country, and no delegate left. At last, we met with one at home; but he appeared utterly at a loss when he looked at the unlucky English bank-note which we presented to be changed, never, as he assured us, having seen such a *bit of paper* before; but kindly offering, if we would leave it a few hours, to have it seen and commented on, and then, if approved, and we liked to pay a somewhat unreasonable number of francs, the sum should be delivered to us. We thought the whole transaction so *bizarre* that we declined his offer, resolving rather to trust to chance till we reached La Rochelle,—our next destination—than put ourselves to the [125] charges he recommended. He returned our note with a mortified air, saying, "Very well; as you please; but there are people in Poitiers who would not give two sous for your bit of paper." The house in which he lived had a very antique appearance, and we had mounted a curious tower with winding-staircase to reach his bureau; I therefore asked him if there was anything remarkable attached to its history; but he seemed never to have thought about it, and merely remarked that it was "bien vieille; mais rien de plus." He looked after us with pity, as we took our leave, and probably entertained himself afterwards at our expense with his townsman of the post-office: "Ces Anglais! sont-ils originaux! par exemple!"

Nothing daunted, we proceeded to visit the curious old church of St. Porchaire, once a monastery dependent on the chapter of St. Hilaire le Grand. The church of the priory is that part which remains. The interior is quite without beauty; but what is worthy of note is its fine Roman tower, and a portal of great singularity. The latter is ornamented with medallions of the rudest workmanship; one capital represents Daniel and the prophet Habakkuk, with lions of a strange shape; but, in order that no mistake may arise as to their identity, besides the inscription which surrounds the medallion, *Hic Daniel Domino vincit coetum leonum*, the artist has engraved, in conspicuous *[126]* letters, between the animals, the word *Leones*.

The church of St. Hilaire—a great saint in Poitiers—has been so much altered as to leave little very interesting of its original construction. This saint was much distinguished for the miracles he performed; the memory of one is still preserved by a pyramid, with mutilated bas-reliefs, recording the facts thus related by the annalist of Aquitaine:—

"When St. Hilaire visited the churches of the city, as he went through the streets he was followed by so many people that he could hardly be seen, for he was on foot. A woman, who lived in a house now situated before the *Grands Escolles*, knowing that he was passing her dwelling, while she was bathing her infant, seized with an ardent desire to behold the saint, left it in the bath, and ran out; when she returned she found her child drowned. Whereupon she called out, 'Oh, my God! shall I lose my child for having done that which was praiseworthy!' and in a rage of grief took her little dead child in her arms, covered with a piece of linen, and carried it to St. Hilaire, to whom she declared the case and the accident, praying him, in great faith and hope, to entreat of God that her child might be restored to life.

"St. Hilaire, seeing the grief of the poor mother, who had but this only child, and also [127] her great reliance, and considering that the infant had died in consequence of the mother's great desire to see him, set himself to pray, prostrating himself on the earth with great humility and tears, where he remained a long time. And he, who was of a great age, would not rise from that posture till God had, at his request, resuscitated the child. He then, taking it in his arms, presented it to the mother, who gave it nourishment before all the people, who, full of wonder, gave thanks to God and St. Hilaire."

The church of Montierneuf is one of the most ancient in Poitiers. It contains the tomb of its founder, Guillaume Guy Geoffroy, Count of Poitiers and Aquitaine; who, having led a very irregular life, thought to atone for all, by erecting a magnificent monastery for Cluniac monks. Except this tomb, there is little remaining of interest; but the effigy of Guillaume is well executed and curious, as he lies with his long curled hair and his crown, his *aumônière*, and his singularly-shaped shoes. He was one of the most daring of those wild Williams who distinguished themselves for profligacy; but this pious act of his seems entirely to have redeemed his memory.

It is recounted that, while the abbey was in progress, the King of France, Philippe I., [128] came to Poitiers, hoping to induce William to assist him against the Duke of Normandy. The monarch, struck with the grandeur of the new constructions, exclaimed that they were "worthy of a king;" to which the Count replied, haughtily, "Am I not, then, a king?" Philippe did not see fit to make any further rejoinder on so delicate a subject.

The tomb of this redoubted prince was opened in 1822, and the body found quite perfect; as this circumstance, which is by no means unusual, was in former times always considered as a proof of the sanctity of the person interred, it is to be hoped all the stories of Count William's vagaries are mere scandals, invented by evil-disposed persons; and that the history of his having established a convent, all the nuns of which were persons of more than suspected propriety, and having placed a female favourite of his own at their head, had no foundation in truth. Something similar is told of several powerful princes, so it may well be a fable altogether.

The botanical garden of Poitiers now occupies the place where the abbey of St. Cyprian stood, with all its dependencies; we sat on some reversed capitals, which now form seats in a flowery nook, and climbed a stair of a tower where seeds are dried,—the only morsel of the great convent now existing. Bouchet tells one of his strange stories of a monk of this monastery, which is curious, as it relates to that dangerous [129] and powerful subject of the harassed King of England, Henry II., who must have had enough to do to circumvent the art and cunning of the wily archbishop who was always working for his ruin and the exaltation of the Church. The annalist relates that —

"At this period, Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, in England, was a fugitive from his country, because the English princes desired to kill *and* put him to death: for that he would not agree to certain constitutions, statutes, and ordinances, that Henry II. and the princes of England had made against the liberties and privileges of the Church, and the holy canons thereof. For they wished to confer dignities and other benefices and take the fruits, thereby profaning the sanctuary of God. And the said archbishop was seven years, or thereabouts, in France, which land is the refuge of popes and holy personages; and he had great communication and familiarity with the said Pope Alexander, he being in the town of Sens, where he chiefly staid while in France. And the archbishop was sometimes at the abbey of Pontigny, and sometimes at the monastery of St. Columbe. Now, I read what follows in an ancient *pancarte* of the abbey of St. Cyprian of Poitiers, brought there by a monk of the said, called

Babilonius, who, for some grudge owed him by his abbot, was driven from his abbey, and went to complain of his wrong to Pope Alexander at Sens, while the Archbishop [130] Thomas sojourned there; from whom this monk received a holy vial to place in the church of St. Gregory, where reposes the body of the blessed Saint Loubette. I have translated the said writing from Latin into the vulgar tongue, seeing that it contains some curious things. It begins, 'Quando ego Thomas Archiepiscopus,' &c.

"When I, Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, exiled from England, took refuge with Pope Alexander, who was also fugitive, in the town of Sens, and there represented to him the bad habits and abuses that the King of England had introduced into the Church; one night as I was in the church of Sainte Colombe, engaged in prayer, supplicating the Queen of Virgins that she would vouchsafe grace to the King of England and his successors, that they might have power and will to be obedient to the Church as her children, and that our Lord Jesus Christ would cause them more fully to love the said Church, suddenly appeared to me the Blessed Virgin Mary, having on her breast a drop of water, glittering like fine gold, and holding in her hand a little vial (*ampoule*) of stone. And after she had taken from her breast the drop of water and put it in the vial, she spoke to me these words: 'This is the unction with which the kings of England shall be anointed; *not those who reign now, but those who are to reign*; for those who reign now are wicked, and so will be their successors, and, for their iniquity [131] shall lose many things. However, kings of England shall come, and shall be anointed with this unction, and shall be benign and obedient to the Church, and shall not possess their lands or lordships until they are so anointed. The first of these shall recover, without violence, the countries of Normandy and Aquitaine, which their predecessors had lost. This king shall be great amongst kings, and it will be he who shall re-edify many churches in the Holy Land, and drive all the pagans from Babylon, where he shall erect rich monasteries, and put all the enemies of religion to flight. And when he wears about his neck this drop of golden water, he shall be victorious and augment his kingdom. *As for thee, thou shall die a martyr for sustaining the rights of the Church.*' I then prayed the holy and sacred Lady to tell me in what sanctuary I should place this sacred deposit; and she replied, that there was in this city a monk of the monastery of St. Cyprian of Poitiers, named Babilonius, who had been unjustly driven forth by his abbot, where he desired to be reinstated by apostolic authority; to him I was ordered to give this vial, in order that he might carry it to the city of Poitiers, and place it in the church of St. Gregory, which is near the church of St. Hilaire, and put it at the extremity of the said church, towards the east, under a great [132] stone, *where it would be found* when the proper hour arrived to anoint the kings of England, and *that the chief of the Pagans should be the cause of the discovery of the said golden drop*. Accordingly I enclosed this treasure in a leaden vessel, and gave it to the said monk, Babilonius, to bear to the church of St. Gregory, as it was commanded."

What object *Saint* Thomas of Canterbury had in thus mystifying the monks of Poitiers, or to what *prince* or *pagan* he pointed at, remains a secret: whether the holy vial ever was found cannot now be known; or, if any discovery of such was made in that period of discoveries, the great Revolution, it was probably consigned to destruction with numerous other equally authentic relics. The most remarkable sentence in this *pancarte* is, perhaps, the prophecy of his own death by the martyr, always admitting that the whole was not composed and arranged after the event had happened.

Bouchet, glad of the opportunity of dwelling on wonders, finishes his tale by relating the circumstances of Becket's murder, and how at his burial a choir of angels led the anthem, which the monks followed: also how the cruel homicides by the judgment of God were suddenly punished; for some of them *ate their own fingers*, others became mad and demoniacs, and others lost the use of all their limbs.

The relics in the churches of Poitiers were of the most extraordinary value; each vied [133] with the other in wonders of the kind, until all the bones of all the saints in the calendar seemed gathered together in this favoured city. Whenever a prince had offended the Church, he made his peace by presenting some precious offering which was beyond price; as, for instance, in 1109, the Duke of Aquitaine, father of Elionore, after having been pardoned for one of his numerous offences, caused to be enclosed in a magnificent shrine of gold, *two bones* and *part of the beard* of the blessed Saint Peter, prince of apostles, which St. Hilaire himself had brought to his church. Soon after, to prove his repentance of some new peccadillo, Guillaume gave certain *dismes*

to the monks and priests of St. Hilaire, with the use of the forest of Moulière.

St. Bernard himself was obliged on one occasion to come to Poitiers to admonish the refractory duke, who chose to have an opinion of his own in acknowledging the pope, and many miracles were performed during his stay. Once St. Bernard severely reprimanded the duke at the altar, in the cathedral, who was for the moment terrified at his denunciations; but no sooner had he left the church than he ordered the altar at which the saint had stood to be demolished; and a priest to proclaim and command the adherence of all persons to whatever pope their duke had adopted; but this impiety was signally visited, for the priest fell down dead at the altar as he was uttering the [134] words. Also the dean, under whose auspices St. Bernard's altar had been destroyed, *fell sick* immediately, and died mad and in despair, for he cut his throat in his bed: besides which, one of the refractory bishops—he of Limoges—fell from his mule to the ground, and striking his head against a stone, was killed on the spot; and for these *reasons* and *evident signs*, Duke William acknowledged his error, and replaced the Bishop of Poitiers, whom he had deposed, in his chair.

This is the William, known by his romantic adventures as "The Armed Hermit," who, no doubt, disgusted with the tyranny of the Church, whose members at that time never ceased to interfere with the monarchs of Europe, resolved to abandon his kingdom, and embrace a life of quiet, as he supposed, "in some *horrible desert*." He was encouraged in the idea by interested persons, and *feigning to die*, left a will, by which his young daughter, Elionore, became the heiress of Aquitaine; he then secretly quitted the court, directing his steps to the shrine of St. James, in Galicia, where he joined a holy hermit, and put himself under his tuition. By *diabolic temptation* it seems, however, that he could never be content in any of the deserts; where, still clothed in armour, *cap-à-pié*, he endeavoured in vain to forget his belligerent propensities, for, every now and then, when he heard of a siege toward, he would [135] suddenly sally forth, and having assisted in the skirmish, again seized with a fit of repentant devotion, would hurry back to some desolate retreat, and endeavour, by penitence and fasts, to obliterate the sin he had committed.

His death was attended by so many miracles that it became necessary to canonize him; and orders of hermit monks rose up in every quarter, bearing his name of Guillemins, the chief of which were the Blanc Manteaux of Paris. The example of sanctity he had set in the latter part of his life seemed to have been lost on the turbulent and coquettish Queen of the Court of Love, his daughter, Elionore, and to have been also sufficiently disregarded by his grandsons. Not that Elionore neglected to build and endow churches and monasteries in every part of her dominions, particularly at Poitiers; and, probably, she considered all offences wiped out by so doing: not excepting her criminal project, recorded by Bouchet, of quitting her husband, Louis of France, and "*espousing the Sultan Saladin*, with whose image and portraiture she had fallen in love."

Whatever motives Louis le Jeune had in getting rid of his powerful wife, policy could not be one; for never was a more foolish business; he did not, perhaps, contemplate, in his shortsightedness, that she would marry his rival, and carry all her possessions to the crown of England; but he was sure that by dissolving his marriage he was injuring [136] France. The account of the state of the great heiress, insulted and injured in so vital a point, is piteous enough, and not unlike, in position, to the case of Queen Catherine when repudiated by Henry VIII.

"This dissolution and separation was signified to Queen Elionore by the bishops, who undertook the task with great regret, for they knew it would be very displeasing to the poor lady, who, as soon as the decision was announced to her, fell in a swoon from the chair on which she sat, and was for more than two hours without speaking, or weeping, or unclosing her clenched teeth. And when she was a little come to herself, she began, with her clear and blue (*vers*) eyes, to look around on those who brought her the news, and said, 'Ha! my lords, what have I done to the king that he should quit me? in what have I offended him? what defect finds he in my person? I am not barren, I am not illegitimate, nor come of a low race. I am wealthy as he is by my means. I have always obeyed him; and if we speak of lineage, I spring from the Emperor Otho the First and King Lothaire; descended in direct line from Charlemagne; besides which we are relations both by father and mother if he requires to be informed of it.'"

"Madam," said the Archbishop of Limoges, "you speak truth indeed. You are relations; but of that the king was ignorant, and it is for that very cause that he finds [137]

you are not in fact his wife, and the children you have borne him are not lawful; therefore is this separation necessary, much to the king's discomfort; he laments it as much or more than you can do; but he finds that for the safety of your souls this thing must be done."

The poor queen could only reply that the pope had the power to grant a dispensation; but she had no longer any relations to support her, and still less had she friends; and was obliged to submit. She was then about six-and-twenty, and the most beautiful woman in France. Henry of Normandy lost no time in making his proposals to her, which she at first rejected, being, as she said, resolved never to trust another man; but his eloquence, and other qualities, and the policy of placing herself in a powerful position as his queen, heir as he was of England, caused her to alter her mind; and Henry gained the richest wife in Europe and lost his happiness for ever.

There is a frequently-repeated story told of one of the most celebrated counts of Poitiers, though attributed sometimes to William VIII. and sometimes to William IX. The series of *Williams* all appear to have been more or less *de rudes seigneurs*, who were divided between the vices and virtues of their period. There is William *Tête d'Etoupes*, William *Fier-à-bras*, William *the Great*, and William *the Troubadour*; the [138]
latter—now pious, now profane—was at one time fighting foremost in the christian ranks against the Paynim; at another, "playing on pipes of straw and versing love" to fair ladies, to whom he had no right to make himself captivating. He is said to have repudiated his wife, Phillippa, or Mahaud, and espoused Malberge, the wife of the Viscount de Châtelleraud, in the life-time of her husband. For this offence the Bishop of Poitiers resolved to punish him, and, accordingly, on occasion of a grand public solemnity, in the face of the assembled multitude, he began the formula of excommunication against the offending count, regardless of consequences. When William heard, as he sat with his bold and beautiful lady-love, the first words of the anathema, he started from his seat, in a transport of surprise and rage, and, drawing his sword, rushed upon the unflinching churchman, who entreated him to allow him a short delay. The count paused, and, taking advantage of the circumstance, the bishop raised his voice, and finished the form of excommunication in which he had been interrupted. "Now," said he, "you may strike; I have done my duty and am ready." William was abashed and humbled, and, returning his sword to its scabbard, exclaimed, "No, priest, I do not love you well enough to send you straight to Paradise." He had not, however, the grace to pardon the intrepid priest, for he banished him to [139]
Chauvigny, where he shortly afterwards died, in 1115. The following is one of the lays of this famous Troubadour, whose songs are the earliest extant:

Anew I tune my lute to love,
Ere storms disturb the tranquil hour,
For her who strives my truth to prove,
My only pride, and beauty's flower;
But who will ne'er my pain remove,
Who knows and triumphs in her power.

I am, alas! her willing thrall;
She may record me as her own:
Nor my devotion weakness call,
That her I prize, and her alone:
Without her can I live at all,
A captive so accustom'd grown?

What hope have I?—Oh lady dear!
Do I then sigh in vain for thee;
And wilt thou, ever thus severe,
Be as a cloistered nun to me?
Methinks this heart but ill can bear
An unrewarded slave to be!

Why banish love and joy thy bowers—
Why thus my passion disapprove?
When, lady, all the world were ours
If thou couldst learn, like me, to love.

[140]

CHAPTER IX.

MELUSINE—LUSIGNAN—TROU DE LA FÉE—THE LEGEND—MALE CURIOSITY—THE DISCOVERY—THE FAIRY'S SHRIEKS—THE CHRONICLER—GEOFFROY OF THE GREAT TOOTH—JACQUES CŒUR—ROYAL GRATITUDE—ENEMIES—JEAN DU VILLAGE—WEDDING—THE BRIDE—THE TRAGEDY OF MAUPRIER—THE GARDEN—THE SHEPHERDESS—THE WALNUT GATHERERS—LA GÂTINE—ST. MAIXANT—NIORT—MADAME DE MAINTENON—ENORMOUS CAPS—CHAMOIS LEATHER—DUGUESCLIN—THE DAME DE PLAINMARTIN—THE SEA.

FULL of anxiety to visit the famous Château of Lusignan—the very centre of romance and mystery—we left Poitiers in the afternoon, and, in two hours, reached the prettily-situated bourg on the banks of the river Vanne. We looked out constantly for the towers of the castle of Melusine, but none appeared. At last I descried a building on an eminence, which I converted at once into the object desired; but, as the rain had come [141] on violently and the atmosphere was somewhat dull, I was not surprised that I did not obtain a better view of the turrets and donjon, which no doubt frowned over the plain beneath.

Our vehicle stopped in the middle of a very unpromising stony street, before a house which presented no appearance of an inn. Here, however, we were told that we were to alight; and, having done so in a somewhat disconsolate mood, for the storm had increased in violence, our baggage was to be disengaged from the huge pile on the top of the diligence, while we stood by to recognise it. The whole town, meantime, seemed to have arrived in this, the principal street; and a host of men in blouses paused round us, all looking with wonder on our arrival, apparently amazed at our absurdity in stopping at Lusignan; in which reflection we began to share, as they took possession of our trunks, and examined them without ceremony, while the conducteur searched his papers, in a sort of frenzy, to find our names inscribed, and convince himself that we were the persons named there as his passengers. As we had only been "set down" as "Dames Anglaises," he seemed inclined to dispute our identity; and he, and a man who acted as post-master, conned over the paper together, while all the inhabitants who could get near endeavoured to catch a peep, not only at the scroll, but the [142] suspected persons. At length, as we protested against lingering in the rain any longer, further enquiries were abandoned; the conducteur mounted his box; the post-master called porters; and the crowd made way for us, while we followed half-a-dozen guides, who made as much of their packages as they could; and we at last found shelter. The aspect of affairs now changed: a very neat landlady, and a smart waiting-maid, ushered us into a pretty, clean, decorated, raftered room,—the best in the Lion d'Or,—up a flight of tower stairs; our porters disappeared; the street was cleared; curiosity seemed amply gratified; and we were left to a good dinner, and in comfortable quarters. The sun broke forth, and all looked promising; but where were the towers of the castle?

This question we repeated frequently, and the answers assured us that *là haut* we should see the castle and the "*Trou Meluisin*." We slept well in our snow-white beds; occasionally hearing, during the night, the cracked, hollow, unearthly sound of the great church bell of the Lusignans, to which an equally ghost-like voice on the stair replied. At day-break the noise of hilarity roused us, and we found that a rural meeting was taking place below, in the *grand salon*. Our friends of the day before seemed all

met previous to setting out to begin the walnut gathering; and they uttered strange jocund sounds, more wolfish than human, without a word which could be, by possibility, construed into the French language. [143]

We hurried up the rugged way which was to lead us to the castle; but, having reached the height, I rubbed my eyes, for I thought the fairy had been busy during the night, and, by a stroke of her wand, had swept away every vestige of the castle. Certain it was that not a stone was left,—not a solitary piece of wall or tower, to satisfy our curiosity! A pretty little girl of fifteen, who had hurried after us, now approached, and offered to be our *guide*. We accepted her civility, as we hoped something would ensue: she led us to a heap of bushes, and, stooping down and pulling them aside, proclaimed to us, as she pointed to a dark chasm beneath, that we stood at the entrance of the "Trou de la Fée." "This," said she, "is the hole which she used to enter, and it has a way which leads to the wood yonder: she could there rise up at her fountain, where she bathed; and from thence there is another way leading as far as Poitiers itself." We asked her if the fairy ever appeared now; but she laughed, and said, contemptuously, "Oh! no, that is all fable: it was a great while ago." She had a tragical story of a soldier who descended, resolving to attempt the adventure; but he was never seen afterwards, as might easily be expected. She, however, accounted for [144] his fate without attributing it to supernatural causes: the superstition of Melusine has disappeared with the turrets of her castle.

The church is curious, though very much defaced: in the sacristy is a circular-arched door, elaborately sculptured with the signs of the Zodiac; but the formerly-existing stones on which the effigy of the fairy appeared have been entirely swept away.

The castle of Lusignan was once one of the most beautiful and powerful *châteaux forts* in France; so strong and so singular in its construction that it was attributed to an architect of a world of spirits,—the famous witch, or fairy, Melusine; about whom so much has been written and sung for ages, and who still occupies the attention of the curious antiquary. Her story may be thus briefly told:

She was married to the Sire Raymondin, of Poitiers; who, struck with her surpassing beauty, and aware of her great wealth and possessions, had won her from a host of suitors. He was, however, ignorant that her nature was different from that of others; and, when she informed him that, if she consented to be his wife, he must agree that she should, once a week, absent herself from him, and must promise never to attempt to penetrate the retreat to which she retired, he gave an unconditional assent. They had been married some time, and their happiness was complete; but at length [145] Raymondin's mind began to be disturbed with uneasy thoughts, and the demon of curiosity took possession of him. His wife disappeared every week for a single day—some say Saturday—and he had no idea where she went, or what she occupied herself about. Was it possible, thought he, that she had some other attachment? Could she be capable of deceiving his affection? Every time she returned to him she looked more lovely than ever; and there was a satisfaction in her aspect that was far from pleasing him. She never alluded to the circumstance of her retreat; but redoubled her tenderness and kindness to him; and, but for the growing and increasing anxiety he felt to know the truth, he might have been the happiest of men.

Melusine had, according to her wont, taken leave of him on the accustomed night of her retirement; and he found himself alone in his chamber. He mused, long and painfully, till he could endure his thoughts no longer; and, catching up his sword, he rushed to the tower, at the door of which he had parted with his mysterious lady. The door was of bronze, elaborately ornamented with strange carvings: it was thick and strong; but, in his frenzy of impatience, he did not hesitate to strike it violently with his sharp sword; and, in an instant, a wide cleft appeared, disclosing to him a sight for which he paid dear. [146]

In the centre of the chamber he beheld a marble basin, filled with crystal water; and there, disporting and plunging, was a female form with the features of his wife. Her golden hair, in undulating waves, fell over her white bosom and shoulders, and rested on the edge of the basin, and on the surface of the water; her hands held a comb and a mirror; and in the latter she occasionally gazed intently as a series of figures passed across it. Down to her waist it was Melusine; but below it was no longer the body of a woman, but a scaly marine monster, who wreathed a glittering tail in a thousand folds; dashing and casting the silver waves in every direction, and throwing a veil of shining drops over the beautiful head above, till the walls and ceiling shone with the sparkling

dew, on which an unearthly light played in all directions!

Raymondin stood petrified, without power to speak or move. An instant sufficed to disclose to him this unnatural vision; and an instant was enough to show the fairy that her secret was discovered. She turned her large lustrous eyes upon him, uttered a loud, piercing shriek, which shook the castle to its foundation, and all became darkness and silence. The lord of the château passed the rest of his life in penitence and prayer; but the lady was never afterwards seen by him.

She had not, however, abandoned her abode; and, always, from that time till within a [147]
few years, she returned whenever any misfortune threatened the family of Lusignan, screaming round the walls, and rustling with her serpent folds along the passages, announcing the event. In 1575 the castle was razed, by order of the Duke de Moutpensier, and for several nights previous to its demolition, Melusine startled the country round with her piercing cries. It is even said that certain ancient women in Lusignan hear her occasionally; but we were not so fortunate as to meet with any who had been so favoured.

Bouchet, in his chronicle, acknowledges himself greatly puzzled to account for the legend of Melusine; for, though he does not hesitate to believe anything advanced by the Church, he does not feel bound to put entire faith in a book of romance. "As for me," he says, "I think and conjecture, that the sons of Melluzine performed many fine feats of arms; but not in the manner related in the romance; for it must be recollected that at the period of 1200 were begun to be made many books, in gross and rude language, and in rhythm of all measure and style, merely for the pastime of princes, and sometimes for flattery, to vaunt beyond all reason the feats of certain knights, in order to give courage to young men to do the like and become brave; such are the said Romance of Melluzine, those of Little Arthur of Brittany, Lancelot du Lac, Tristan the [148]
Adventurous, Ogier the Dane, and others in ancient verse, which I have seen in notable libraries: the which have since been put into prose, in tolerably good language, according to the time at which they were written, in which are things *impossible to believe, but at the same time delectable to read*. But, in truth, all that romance of Melluzine is a dream, and cannot be supported by reason. You may see, in the said romance, that the children of Melluzine, Geoffrey la grande-dent, and Guion, and Raimondin, her husband, a native of Forez, were Christians, and that they fought against, and conquered, the Turks, and that the said Raimondin was nephew to a Count of Poictou, named Aymery, who had a son called Bertrand, who was count after him, and a daughter, Blanche. Now I have not been able to find in any history, letter, nor *pancarte*, *though I have carefully searched*, that, since the passion of our Lord, there has been a duke or count in Poictou, called either Bertrand or Aymery; nor that there have been any such but what I have enumerated. And as for those events having happened before, it could not be; for there were then no Christians living, our Lord and Redeemer not being then on earth."

The confused chronicler then proceeds to tell the whole serpent-story, hinting his suspicions that the lady was discovered by her husband to be unfaithful, and giving an [149]
etymology to her name, similar to one we heard on the spot, namely, that she was lady of *Melle*, a castle near. Our village archæologist added, however, that this castle was called Uzine, and as both belonged to her, she was so called, Melle-Uzine.

In the fourteenth century, the estates of Lusignan passed into royal possession. Hugues le Brun left in his will great part of the estates to the King of France, Phillippe le Bel. His brother, Guy, irritated at this disposition of the property, cast his will into the fire; on which the king had him accused of treason, and took possession of the county of Lusignan, which became confiscated to the crown. It was on this sad occasion that, for twelve successive nights, the spirit of Melusine appeared on the platform of the castle, wailing and lamenting in a pitiable manner, and making the woods and groves re-echo with her sorrows.

There is another account, that the castle was greatly added to by a powerful lord, called *Geoffrey of the Great Tooth*, son of Melusine, whose effigy might once be seen over the principal entrance of the donjon-tower; but his existence is as great a problem as that of the fairy herself.

Henry II. of England took the castle, and came here in triumph with his warriors. Louis XII. when Duke of Orleans, passed several sad years in these walls as a prisoner. It was taken by Admiral de Coligny, in 1569; but it was lost soon after, and again and [150]

again retaken, partially destroyed, and rebuilt, and at length swept away altogether, leaving nothing but recollections, a piece of old tower, and Le Trou de Melusine.

It once had three circles of defence, bastions, esplanades, moats, and walls; embattled gates, one called the Gate of Geoffrey of the Great Tooth, one the Gate of the Tour Poitevine, and the gigantic Tour de Melusine in the centre of all; its subterranean ways, strange legends, mysterious passages, and enormous strength, made it a marvel in all times, and a subject for romance from the earliest ages.

M. Francisque Michel is the last who has endeavoured to collect its curious records, and throw some light on its strange history.

In this castle was imprisoned, during his iniquitous trial, which is an eternal blot on the name of his ungrateful *friend*, Charles VII. of France, the rich and noble merchant of Bourges, Jacques Cœur, whose purse had been opened to the destitute king in his emergencies, and who had devoted all the energies of his mind to save his country from the ruin which the idle favourites who surrounded the throne were assisting as much as possible. His princely liberality, his foresight, and promptitude, had rescued Charles from perils which seemed insurmountable. He had come forward with a sum [151] of great magnitude, at the moment when his royal master was so distressed that he could not undertake the conquest of Normandy, then possessed by the English. He paid and supported an army, and Normandy was restored to France. He rescued the country from poverty and misery, placed its finances in a flourishing condition, drove marauders from the desolated land, and saw the little King of Bourges the powerful monarch of regenerated France. Then came his reward. His inveterate "adversary and enemy, the wicked Haman," who had been for years watching to accomplish his downfal, because his evil was not good in the sight of the right-minded and true-hearted friend of his country,—the detestable Antoine de Chabannes, Count of Dammartin, rightly judging that Charles would be glad to rid himself of so enormous a burthen of gratitude as he owed to Jacques Cœur, concerted with other spirits as wicked as himself, and succeeded but too well.

The first step was to shake the public faith in those at the head of the financial department; but they feared to attack the friend of Charles, and the acknowledged benefactor of France, *at first*. Money they were resolved to have, at any rate, without delay, and their first victim was Jean de Xaincoings, receiver-general. A series of charges were got up against him, which he was unable to overcome; he was convicted, [152] sentenced, imprisoned, and his property confiscated. Great was the exultation of the dissolute lords of the Court, when, in the scramble, each got a share of the spoil. Dunois—*Le Gentil Dunois*!—the hero of so many fights—was one of the first to profit by the downfal of this rich man: his magnificent hôtel at Tours was bestowed on the warrior, who did not blush to receive it.

Encouraged by this success, and becoming more greedy as they saw how easy it was to work on the king, when money was in view, the foes of Jacques Cœur set about accomplishing a similar work, with his colossal fortune in view as their prize.

At first, there seemed danger in proposing to the weak monarch to despoil his friend, and to annihilate a friendship of years, and obligations of such serious moment; but, to their surprise and delight, they found his ears open to any tales they chose to bring; and having, in a lucky hour, fixed on an accusation likely to startle such a mind, they found all ready to their hands.

Dammartin brought forward a woman, base enough to swear that the fair and frail Agnes Sorel had been poisoned by his treasurer. The infamous Jeanne de Vendôme, wife of the Lord of Mortagne sur Gironde, was the instrument of Chabannes, and her accusation was believed and acted upon. A host of enemies, like a pack of wolves eager for prey, came howling on, and the great merchant was dragged from his high [153] seat and hunted to the death.

In this very castle of Lusignan, where the fairy Melusine might well lament over the disgrace of France, in a dungeon, removed from every hope, languished the man who had, till now, held in his hand the destinies of Europe; whose galleys filled every port, whose merchandise crowded every city, who divided with Cosmo de Medici the commerce of the world. Here did Jacques Cœur reflect, with bitter disappointment, on all the selfishness, cruelty, meanness, and ingratitude, of the man he had mainly assisted to regain the throne of his ancestors. It was here he was told that the

falsehood of the charge against him had been proved; but when he quitted this, the first prison which the gratitude of the king had supplied him with, it was but to inhabit others; while a crowd of new accusations were examined, one of which was enough to crush him. The game was in the hands of his foes; his gold glittered too near their eyes; their clutches were upon his bags; their daggers were ready to force his chests; they were led on by one whose avarice was only equalled by his profligate profusion, and he was a prisoner kept from his own defence.

The wealth of Jacques Cœur was poured into the laps of *Charles* and his harpy courtiers, and the victim was consigned to oblivion. Of all he had saved and supported, one man alone was grateful—*Jean du Village*, *his clerk*, devoted himself to his master's [154] interests, and his life, and part of his property abroad, were saved.

The fate of the great merchant is still a mystery. His mock trial was decided by the commission appointed to examine him at the castle of Lusignan, in May, 1453, and judgment was pronounced by Guillaume Jouvenel des Ursins, chancellor of France, after the king *had taken cognisance of and approved it*![6]

A wedding was going on while we were wandering between the castle and the church, and we met the party on our way, preceded by the usual violin accompaniment. Our young guide was greatly interested in the proceedings, and told us the names and station of the parties concerned. "What an odd thing it is," said she, "to be married. For two or three days everybody runs out of their houses to stare at the bride and bridegroom, as if they were a king and queen, though one has seen them a thousand times before, and, after that, they may pass in the street and nobody thinks of looking at them."

Marie Poitiers and René Blanc were the happy pair on this occasion; the name of the bridegroom amused me, as I was reminded of the perfumer and poisoner of Queen Catherine, René Bianco, who had lately furnished me with a *hero* for a romance. This [155] René was, however, a very harmless-looking personage, a daily labourer, but "bien riche," as was his bride, who also worked in the fields, but had a very good property near Lusignan. "All the family are very well off; but, they work like other people. Only you see," said our guide, "that the bride's sister, who is so pretty, dresses in silk like a *grande dame*, and does not wear the peasant's cap like the rest."

The cap of the bride was worthy of attention, as were those of most of the party. As they were amongst the first of the kind we had seen, they attracted us extremely, though we afterwards got quite familiar with their strange appearance. In this part of the country, the peasants wear a cap, large, square, and high, of a most inconvenient size, and remarkably ugly shape: they get larger and squarer as you approach La Rochelle, and cease before you arrive at Bordeaux. The bride's was of thin [156] embroidered muslin, edged with lace, placed in folds over a high, square quilted frame, which supported it as it spread itself out, broad and flaunting, making her head look of a most disproportionate size. Silver ribbon bows and orange flowers were not omitted, and she wore a white satin sash tied behind, which floated over her bright gown and apron. A large silver cross hung on her breast, her handkerchief was richly embroidered, and her stockings very white and smart, though her feet and legs were somewhat ponderous, and did not seem accustomed to their adornment of the day, *sabots* of course being her ordinary wear. She was led by her father, whom I mistook for the mayor, he was so decorated with coloured ribbons, and strode along with so dignified an air, his large black hat shading his happy, florid face.

The bridegroom closed a very long procession, as he led the bride's mother along:

they were going to the Mairie, where, after signing, Mad^{e}. Blanc would take her husband's arm, and walk back again through the town to hear mass, when *ses bagues* would be presented to her by her lord. Great excitement seemed to prevail in Lusignan, in consequence of this event, and smiles and gaiety were the order of the day.

Our hostess proposed accompanying us to a château not far distant, in order that we might see the country, and as it was fine and not very damp we set out with her, [157] having stopped in the town at a little chandler's shop for her sister who wished to be of the party.

Their mother—a dignified old lady, who looked as if she had been a housekeeper at some château—welcomed us into her shop, and set chairs while her daughter was getting ready, when she resumed her knitting, and conversed on the subject of their metropolis, Poitiers, with which she appeared partially acquainted. She detailed to us several of the miracles of S^{te}. Radegonde, for whom she had an especial respect, and assured us there was no saint in the country who had so distinguished herself. I was surprised, after this, that she treated the story of Melusine as a fable, though she believed in the existence of the subterranean way, and told us of the riches supposed still to exist beneath the castle and in the ruins. One man, lately, in taking away stones to build a house, stumbled on a heap of money which had evidently been placed for concealment beneath the walls, and coins of more or less value, and of various dates, are found, from time to time, as the large stones are removed for building, any one being at liberty to demolish whatever ancient wall they find in the neighbourhood.

Our walk was an extremely pleasant one, for the country round is very pretty and rural; it terminated at the Château de Mauprier, a private residence, which appears to [158] have been formerly a fortified manor-house, to judge by its moat and the square and round towers which still remain. The "park" leading to it is a series of beautiful alleys, some of the trees of which are allowed to grow naturally, others are cut into form, with fine grassy walks between, covered with rich purple heath here and there in nooks. The walks branch off from space to space in stars, leaving open glades of emerald turf between.

As we approached the lodge through the slovenly gate half off its hinges, the sound of wailing reached us from within, and, entering the room whence it proceeded, we became witnesses of a sad scene of desolation. There was no fire on the hearth, all looked dismal and wretched; a great girl of twelve stood sobbing near the table, a younger one sat at the door, and, with her feet on the damp earthen floor, rocking herself backwards and forwards on a low chair, sat a small, thin woman, moaning piteously, and wringing her hands.

Of course we thought she was bewailing some severe domestic bereavement, and our companions, who were full of friendly commiseration, began to question her, but could obtain no answer but tears and cries. At length, by dint of coaxing and remonstrance, we discovered that the tragedy which had happened was as follows: [159]

The gardener-porter was entrusted by his master with the care of the live stock of the farm; his wife had sent a child of about eight years of age into the woods with a flock of turkeys; the young guardian had been seduced by fruit or flowers to wander away, forgetting her charge, and they followed her example, and dispersed themselves in all directions. The consequence was, that an ill-disposed fox, who was lying in wait, took the opportunity of way-laying them, and no less than seven had become his victims: the little girl had returned to tell her loss, was beaten and turned out of doors; the husband's rage had been fearful, and, though a night and day had elapsed, and the second evening was coming on, the disconsolate wife had not risen from her chair, nor ceased her lamentations. The turkeys must be replaced; the little girl was not her own, but an *enfant trouvée*, whom she had nursed and loved as her own—and how was she to be received after her crime! the husband was irate, the children were miserable, neither cookery nor fire were to be seen, and despair reigned triumphant. A small present, and a good deal of reasoning, brought her a little to herself; and we persuaded the eldest girl to light the fire, and give her mother something to revive her; the father was sent for; but the poor woman fainted, and we lifted her into bed; where we at length left her now repentant husband attending her, and promising to [160] reproach no one any more about the fox and the turkeys.

Nothing could possibly do less credit to the gardener than the appearance of the

grounds, where liberty reigned triumphant; every thing, from enormous gourds of surprising size to grapevines in festoons, being allowed to grow as it listed; yet the original laying out was pretty, and if half-a-dozen men were employed, as would be the case in England, the gardens might be made very agreeable. The proprietor is, however, an old man who spends a great deal of his time in Poitiers; and, as all French people do when at their country places, merely conceals himself for a few months, and cares little about appearances, provided his fruit and vegetables are produced in the required quantity. We heard that he was a most excellent and indulgent man, very liberal to the poor, and generous to his people; and our hostess assured us, that if he knew of the wretchedness the loss of his turkeys had caused in his gardener's family, it would give him real pain, and he would at once forgive them their debt to him. Perhaps the knowledge of his kindness might be one reason of his servant's vexation; but though that feeling was honourable to him, we could not forgive him for his severity to his poor, silly terrified little wife.

As we returned by another, and a very pretty way, we met a young girl, to whom our [161]
guides, who were zealous in the cause, told the story of her neighbour's illness; she promised to go to her and offer her aid as soon as she could, and expressed her disgust at the cruelty of the husband, whose character, she said, was brutal in the extreme. While they were talking, I remarked the appearance of the shepherdess, who was certainly one of the most charming specimens of a country Phillis I ever beheld. Her age might be about eighteen; she was tall, and well made, with a healthy, clear complexion, a good deal bronzed with the sun; teeth as white as pearls, and as even as possible; rather a wide, but very prettily shaped mouth; fine nose; cheeks oval and richly tinted; fine black eyes filbert shaped, and delicately-pencilled eyebrows, perfectly Circassian; a small white forehead, and shining black hair in braids: the
expression of her smile was the most simple and innocent imaginable, and the total [162]
absence of anything like thought or intellect, made her face a perfect reflection of that of one of her own lambs. Her costume was extremely picturesque; and her head-dress explained at once the mystery of the cap of Anne Boleyn, of which it was a model, no doubt an unchanged fashion from the time of, and probably long before, Marguerite de Valois. It was of white, thick, stiff muslin, pinched into the three-cornered shape so becoming to a lovely face, precisely like the Holbein head, but that the living creature was much prettier than the great master usually depicted his princesses. Her petticoat was dark blue, her apron white, and so was her handkerchief, and round her handsome throat was a small hair chain, or ribbon, with a little gold cross attached. Her feet were in *sabots*; and she held a whip in her hand, with which to chastise her stray sheep; on her arm hung a flat basket, in which were probably her provisions for the day, or she might have filled it with walnuts which were being gathered close by. I never saw a sweeter figure altogether, and her merry, ringing laugh, and curious *patois* sounded quite in character; she was just the sort of girl Florian must have seen to describe his Annette from; but I did not meet with any peasant swain in the neighbourhood worthy to have been her Lubin. Her beauty was, however, rare, for we
were not struck with any of the peasants besides, as more than ordinarily good- [163]
looking; but, seen anywhere, this girl must have attracted attention.

We soon, on entering a long avenue, came upon a party of walnut-gatherers, to whom the tragedy of the fox was again detailed, while groups came round us to hear and comment on the event, which appeared to be formed to enliven the monotony of a

country existence as much as a piece of scandal in a town.

Seated on the ground, quietly eating walnuts, in the midst of a ring of other children, sat the little delinquent of the tale, as unmoved and unconscious as if she had not caused a perfect hurricane of talk and anxiety in the commune; she turned her large gypsy black eyes on me with an expression almost of contempt, as I asked her a few questions, and recommended her caution in future. As one of the reports we had gathered on our way was, that the child, after being beaten, had run away into the woods and had not since re-appeared, we were not sorry to find her here; but as she looked saucy and careless, and able to bear a good deal of severity, and was besides several years older than had been represented, our sympathy was little excited in her favour. "She has acted in this way often before," said a bystander, "and cannot be made to work or to do anything she is told." She had strangely the appearance of a Bohemian, and her fondness for the *dolce far niente* increased my suspicions of her [164] parentage. The tenderness of her foster-mother for her was, however, not to be changed by her ill-conduct, for she was said to prefer her to her own children, in spite of her faults: so capricious is affection.

The road from Lusignan to Niort is through a very pleasing country, sometimes *bocage*, and sometimes *gâtine*: the latter term being generally applied to a country of rocks, where the soil does not allow of much cultivation. This is, however, not always the case, for on several occasions I have heard, as at Chartres, a little wood called *la gâtine*; and once at Hastings was surprised, on inquiring my way in the fields, to be directed to pass the *gattin* hard by; namely a small copse. The word is said to be Celtic, and may be derived either from *geat*, which means a plot of ground, or *geas*, a thick branch.

We were much struck with the town of St. Maixant; which is approached by beautiful boulevards, and the environs are very rich and fine; the road does not lead within the walls, but outside; and there was no reason to regret this, as the streets are narrow and ill-built, while the promenades round are charming. The Sèvre Niortaise bathes the foot of the hill on which St. Maixant stands, and beyond rises the forest of Hermitaine, once part of the celebrated Vauclair, where some famous hermits took up [165] their abode, and made the spot holy. Clovis assisted the recluses who had chosen this retreat as their abode, and granted them land and wood; a monastery was soon formed and the town grew round it. There is a fine cascade near La Ceuille, of which, or rather of the stream which flowed from it, we caught a glimpse on approaching St. Maixant; it falls from the *cóteau* called Puy d'Enfer, and it is one of the wonders of the neighbourhood. The old walls of the town now appear to enclose gardens, and all looks smiling and gay; but they have sustained many a rude siege at different periods, and suffered much during the wars of La Vendée.

At mid-day we reached Niort, a fine, clean, good-looking new town, with scarcely any antiquity left, though of ancient renown: a Celtic city with a Celtic name; a castle whose date cannot be ascertained; a palace inhabited by the great heroine of the country, Elionor; and convents and monasteries of infinite wealth and celebrity. That singular and famous community established by the Troubadour Count of Poitou, Guillaume IX., was at Niort, and was replaced by the holy Capuchin brothers, who must have been sufficiently scandalized at the conduct of the fair devotees who preceded them in their cells.

The Duchess Elionor was married to Henry II. at Niort, and lived here frequently. We hoped to see some remains of her palace, but found only a large square building which [166] might have formed a part of it; though its form, which is an isolated tower, makes it difficult to imagine how it could be in any way connected with the rest of the palace; this tower is now used as the Hôtel de Ville; its lozenge and circle ornaments appear not to be of older date than Francis I.; and we could scarcely persuade ourselves, however ready to believe in antiquities, that the all-powerful lady of Aquitaine, or her warrior husband, ever sat within these walls.

A curious privilege was granted by the pope, in 1461, to the mayor, aldermen, sheriffs, councillors, peers, and citizens of Niort, to be buried in the habit, and with the cord round their waists, of the Cordeliers: it is not recorded that the ladies of the town petitioned to be dressed as well in their coffins as the nuns whose beauty delighted William the Ninth, or they might have gone to their last fête in—

"A charming chintz and Brussels lace."

The most remarkable recollection connected with Niort, is that, in the prison of the town, called La Conciergerie, where her father was confined for the crime of forgery, was born Françoise D'Aubigné, afterwards the wife of Scarron, and by the favour of Louis XIV., Marquise de Maintenon, in whom the triumph of hypocrisy was complete. [167] One of the streets is called by her name; but it is not recorded that she ever did anything for her native town; probably she was not anxious to perpetuate the memory of any part of her early life, not seeing fit to be quite so communicative on the subject as her brother, whose tongue she had so much difficulty in keeping quiet.

Niort is a very pleasant, lively-looking town—that is, for a French town, where the nearest approach to gaiety is the crowd which a weekly market brings, or the groups of laughing, talking women, which the ceaseless occupation of washing collects on the banks of the river. We were much amused here with the latter, and stood some time on the bridge below the frowning round towers, of strange construction, which serve as a prison, to observe the manœuvres of the washerwomen, who, in their enormous, misshapen, towering, square caps, were beating and scrubbing away at their linen. Nothing can appear so inconvenient as this head-dress when its wearer is engaged in domestic duties; yet the women are constantly to be seen with it; rarely, as in Normandy, contenting themselves with the under frame alone, and placing the huge mass of linen or muslin over it when their work is done. On one occasion we travelled with a *bourgeoise* whose cap was so enormous, that she could scarcely get into the [168] coach, and when once in had to stoop her head the whole time to avoid crushing the transparent

superstructure of lace and muslin, which it is the pleasure of the belles of Poitou to deform themselves with. We were, however, assured that this costume was becoming, and that many a girl passed for pretty who wore it, who would be but ordinary in a plain, round, every-day cap. Sometimes this monstrosity is ornamented with gold pins, or buttons, all up the front, and the variety of arrangement of the muslin folds, both before and behind, is curious enough. It has occasionally frilled drapery depending from its height, hanging about half way down behind, or crossed over and sticking out at the sides, making it as wide as possible; I have seen some that could not be less than a foot and a half wide, and about a foot high; but some are even larger than this, [169] extravagant as the description appears. The pyramidal Cauchoise caps are as high, it is true, or even higher, but there is an approach to grace in them, while those of Poitou are hideous as to form, even when the materials are light; those of the commonest sort are of coarse linen or cotton, and reach the very acme of ugliness.

One of the great articles of commerce here is the preparation of chamois leather, which is said to be brought to great perfection; but, perhaps, like the cutlery so celebrated in so many towns, and boasted of as *equal to the English*, this famous production might be looked upon by an English tradesman as mere "leather and prunella."

There is an attempt at a *passage* here—the great ambition of country towns which think to rival Paris; but, as usual, it appears to be a failure, the shops looking common-place and shabby, and the place deserted and dismal. The public library is good, and there are several handsome public buildings; the churches are without interest, except one portal of Notre Dame, where we observed some mutilated, but very beautiful, twisted columns, whose wreaths were continued round a pointed arch in a manner I never recollect to have seen before, and which seems to indicate that the church must

once have been extremely elaborate in its ornament. [170]

Niort was a great object of contention during the wars of the Black Prince. The famous Duguesclin is said to have taken the town by stratagem from the English.

At the siege of Chisey, where Duguesclin had been successful, he had killed all the English garrison; and, taking their tunics, had clothed his own people in them, over their armour: so that, when those of Niort saw his party approaching, and heard them cry, "St. George!" they thought their friends were returning victors, and readily opened their gates; when they were fatally undeceived; being all taken or put to the sword.

Here Duguesclin, and his fortunate band, remained for four days; reposing and refreshing themselves. After which they rode forth to Lusignan: where they found the castle empty; all the garrison having abandoned it as soon as the news of the taking of Chisey reached them. The French, therefore, without trouble, took possession of "this fine and strong castle," and then continued their way to that of Chatel-Acart, held by the Dame de Plainmartin, for her husband Guichart d'Angle, who was prisoner in Spain.

When the lady found, says Froissart, that the constable Duguesclin was come to make war upon her, she sent a herald to him, desiring to be allowed a safe conduct, that she might speak with him in his tent. He granted her request; and the lady [171] accordingly came to where he was encamped in the field. Then she entreated him to give her permission that she might go safely to Poitiers, and have audience of the Duke de Berry. Duguesclin would not deny her, for the love of her husband, Guichart; and, giving her assurance that her lands and castle should be respected during her absence, she departed, and he directed his troops to march on Mortemer.

Such good speed did the lady of Plainmartin make, that she soon arrived in Poitiers; where she found the Duke de Berry. He received her very graciously, and spoke very courteously to her, as was his wont. The lady would fain have cast herself on her knees before him; but he prevented her. She then said: "My lord, you know that I am a lone woman, without power or defence, and the widow of a living husband, if it so pleases God; for my lord Guichart is prisoner in Spain, and in the danger of the king of that country. I therefore supplicate you, that, during the enforced absence of my husband, you will grant that my castle, lands, myself, my possessions, and my people, shall be left at peace; we engaging to make no war on any, if they do not make war on us."

The Duke de Berry made no hesitation in granting the prayer of the lady; for, although Messire Guichart d'Angle, her husband, was a good and true Englishman, yet [172] was he by no means hated by the French. He, therefore, delivered letters to her, with guarantee of surety; with which she was fully satisfied and much comforted. She then hastened back to her castle, and sent the orders to the constable, who received them with much willingness and joy. He was then before the castle of Mortemer; the lady of which at once yielded it to him, out of dread, and placed herself in obedience to the king of France, together with all her lands and the castle of Dienne.

We left Niort at day-break and continued our way through a very cultivated and rich country, admirably laid out, neatly enclosed, and with a great extent of very carefully-pruned vines, which had here lost the grace which distinguishes them in the neighbourhood of the Loire, where they are allowed to hang in festoons, and grow to a reasonable height. Here they are kept low, and seem attended to with care. The road is level, but the scenes pleasing and the air fine; though, as you advance in the ancient Aunis, towards the sea, low grounds, which have been marshes, extend to a considerable distance. As we approached La Rochelle this was very apparent; but still all looked rich and agreeable, and the idea of soon feeling the sea-breeze was so comforting that our spirits were greatly raised; and when on a sudden a broad glare, at a distance, of bright sunshine on an expanse of water broke on our view, we were [173] quite in ecstasies. We could distinguish white sails, and towers, and spires, on the shore; and all the memories of the Protestant town came crowding on our minds, as we turned every windmill we saw into an ancient tower formerly defended by a brave Huguenot against a host of besiegers. There are no want of these defences round La Rochelle; and every windmill has a most warlike aspect, as they are all built in the form of round towers, of considerable strength; probably owing to the necessity of making them strong enough to resist the gales which frequently prevail. [174]

CHAPTER X.

LA ROCHELLE—LES TROIS CHANDELIERS—OYSTERS—BATHING ESTABLISHMENT—GAIETY—MILITARY DISCIPLINE—CURIOUS ARCADES—STORY OF AUFFRÉDY.

On arriving at La Rochelle, early in a bright morning at the beginning of September, we found the town so full that we had immediately to institute a search for an hotel, as that at which we stopped had no accommodation. We judged so before we alighted from the *coupé*, by the air of indifference visible on the face of every waiter and [175] chambermaid, to whom our arrival seemed a matter of pity, rather than congratulation. After seeking through the greatest part of the town, we were conducted to a curious-looking street, from the roofs of almost every house in which projected grinning *gargouilles*, whose grotesque faces peeped inquisitively forth from the exalted position which they had maintained for several centuries; and, glaring in inviting grandeur, swung aloft a board on which was depicted three golden candlesticks. At Les Trois Chandeliers, accordingly, we applied, and found admission; the slovenly, but good-humoured landlady bestirring herself instantly to get ready the only room she had vacant. She was assisted in her various arrangements, or rather attended, by a sulky-looking girl with a hideous square cap; who stood by while her mistress heaped mattress upon mattress, and bustled about with zealous noise and clatter. She gave us to understand that certain of her neighbours were apt to give themselves airs, and accept or refuse visitors as their caprice dictated; but, for her part, she had no pride, and never acted in so unkind a manner: she always attended to everything herself; so that every one was satisfied in her house, and the Trois Chandeliers maintained its reputation of a century, during which time it had always been kept by one of the family. Considering these facts, the state of the entrance and kitchen, through which, as is usual in France, visitors must pass to arrive at the *salon*, [176] somewhat surprised us. The wide, yawning, black gulf, down which we had dived from the street, reminded us strongly of the entrance of the Arènes, at Poitiers, which gave passage to the beasts about to combat: it was a low, vaulted passage, encumbered with waggons and diligences and wheelbarrows, with no light but what it gained from the street and a murky court beyond; it was paved with uneven stones, between which were spaces filled with mud; dogs and ducks sported along the gutter in the centre, following which, you arrived at some dirty steps leading to the kitchen, or, if you preferred a longer stroll amidst the shades, you might arrive at a low door which led through another court to the dining-room, which was a handsome apartment adorned with statues and crimson-and-white draperies, with a flower-garden opening from it. This room we were not sorry to enter, lured by the promise of some of the finest oysters in Europe. We had heard their eulogium before from a very talkative artist of Poitiers, who described them as of enormous, nay incredible, size, but delicate as *natives*: we were, therefore, surprised to see perfect miniatures, not larger than a shilling, very well-flavoured, but *unfed*. They form the *délices* of all this part of the world, at this season, and are eagerly sought for from hence to the furthest navigable point of the Garonne. [177]

We were particularly fortunate in the weather, which was bright, warm, and inspiriting; and when we reached the walk which leads to the baths, we were in raptures with the whole scene which presented itself. The fine broad sea, smooth and green, lay shining in the sun, without a ripple to disturb its serenity; and for about a quarter of a mile along its margin extended one of the most beautiful promenades I ever beheld. The first part of it is planted with small young trees, on each side of a good road, which extends between verdant plains where *glacis* are thrown up. This leads to the great walk; a thick grove of magnificent trees, shading a very wide alley of turf of *English* richness. Here and there are placed seats, and all is kept with the greatest neatness. The establishment of the baths is ornamental, and pretty, and very extensive. About half way up this promenade, next the sea, grounds laid out with taste, and affording shade and pastime in their compartments, surround the building. A Chinese pagoda, a Grecian temple, numerous arbours and seats are there for strollers; and swings and see-saws for the exercise of youthful bathers after their dips. Altogether, it is the most charming place of the kind I ever saw: the warm baths are as good as possible, and the arrangement of those in the sea are much better than at Dieppe, Havre, or Granville. There is a row of little pavilions on the edge of the sea, [178] where bathers undress; and a paved way leads them to an enclosed space where are

numerous poles fixed, with ropes reaching from one to the other at different depths. The bathers hold by these ropes: and a large company can thus assemble in the water together, and take as much of the sea as they please, unaccompanied by guides; but, if they are timid, there are *men* ready to attend and protect them. The costume is a tunic and trowsers of cloth or stuff, with a large handkerchief over the head. Hour after hour will the adventurous bathers continue in the water; dancing, singing, and talking, while the advancing waters dash, splash, and foam all round them, exciting peals of laughter and screams of delight.

Separated by a high partition, and at a little distance, overlooked, however, by the strollers in the gardens above, is the gentlemen's compartment. These bathers usually run along a high platform, considerably raised, and leap into the sea beneath them; diving down, and re-appearing, much to the amusement of each other; while a guide sits on a floating platform near, ready to lend assistance, or give instruction in natation, if required.

The season, we understood, had been particularly brilliant this year, and was scarcely yet over; though the ball-room and reading-rooms were less crowded than a few weeks before, when we were told that all that was gay and splendid in France *et l'Etranger* was to be seen beneath the striped canopies of the sea-baths of La Rochelle. [179] Certainly a more enjoyable place cannot be found anywhere; and I was not surprised that anything so rare and really comfortable and agreeable should meet with success. With any of the brilliant *toilettes* which were described to me I did not, however, meet; as all the bathers I saw were in cloaks and slouch bonnets, and the company we met appeared by no means distinguished; peasants forming a great proportion. However, the season was nearly over, and one could not expect to see the *élégans* so late; but I have always observed that the accounts I have heard of the brilliancy of French fashionable meetings are by no means borne out by the reality. At Néris, at the Monts Dores, and other places, I have been equally disappointed on seeing the manner of French living at watering-places; but it always appears to me that, except in Paris, there is no attempt at out-of-door style or gaiety anywhere. A solitary equipage, filled with children, met us every day in our walks, and a hired barouche, for the use of the baths, toiled backwards and forwards, hour after hour; but, except these, we saw no carriages at all, and the walkers were principally tradespeople in smart caps and shawls. One morning, indeed, we were surprised by the sound of musical strains and the appearance of an officer or two on horseback, followed by a regiment, on their way [180] to exercise; every man of one company was singing at the top of his voice, joined by the officer who marched in front, and who kept beating time, a very merry song and chorus, which we stopped to listen to, *only a moment*, as the words were not quite so much to be admired as the air. This seemed to us a strange, and not very decorous scene, and was so little in accordance with our ideas of propriety or good taste that we turned away in disgust. However, since it is the custom for officers and men in France to sit together in *cafés*, playing at dominos, drinking wine and beer, and putting no restraint upon their conversation, or acknowledging any superiority, there was nothing extraordinary in the familiarity I had witnessed. How this sort of association can be relished by officers of gentle breeding I cannot conceive; and many of them must be so, though a great part are men who, having risen from the ranks, have not been accustomed to more refined companionship. If it be true that

> "Strict restraint, once broken, ever balks
> Conquest and fame,"

and that it is dangerous for those under command to

> "——Swerve
> From law, however stern, which tends their strength to nerve,"

it is difficult to comprehend how the French army is regulated. [181]

The next company which followed the vocal party, came hurrying along, helter-skelter, as if no drilling had ever been thought necessary in their military education; but, while we were remarking the "admired disorder" of their march, we heard their commanding officer's voice loud in reprobation; we could scarcely help comparing the whole scene to that which a militia regiment might present in some country town in England: "What are you all about?" cried the commander; "Eh, mon Dieu! One would

say it was a flock of sheep instead of a party of soldiers!" This admonition brought them into some order, and they advanced a little less irregularly, but still in as slovenly a manner as could well be conceived. If the French were not known to be good soldiers, one would think this laxity of discipline little likely to make them so; but they are, like French servants, good enough in their way, though careless in the extreme, and too tenacious to be spoken to.

La Rochelle is a more remarkable town, from the characteristic features it exhibits, than any we had met with since we set out on our tour. Although there is a great deal new in the streets and outskirts, yet much that originally existed remains. For instance, almost the whole centre of the town is built in the same manner: namely, in arcades. These arcades project from the ground-floors, are more or less high and broad, and more or less well paved; but they run along uninterruptedly, forming a [182] shelter from sun or rain, as it may happen, and extending along the whole length of the streets on each side. They are generally of stone, with heavy pillars and circular arches, quite without grace or beauty, but peculiar, and giving an Oriental character to the place. In some streets arcades, higher and wider, have been newly erected, which are tolerably ornamental; but the more antique they are, the lower, narrower, and closer. The Rochellois are very proud of their arcades, boasting that they are, by their means, never kept prisoners or annoyed by either rain or sun; they forget that these heavy conveniences completely exclude the light in winter from the lower part of their houses, and, confining the air, must make the town damp and unwholesome.

When we first walked along beneath these awnings we found it extremely difficult to distinguish one street from another, and were continually losing ourselves, as they branch off in all directions, with no change of aspect to distinguish them:

"Each alley has a brother,
And half the *covered way* reflects the other,"

but we got used to them by degrees. There is a sort of *Palais Royal* effect in the pretty shops under the neatest piazzas; and from the beautiful wooded square, the Place d'Armes, the range which forms one side looks remarkably well. This Place is [183] peculiarly fine and agreeable; it was formed on the sites of the ancient château, demolished in 1590, of the chapel of St. Anne and its cemetery, of the grand Protestant temple, and the old Hôtel des Monnaies; it, therefore, occupies a large space, and is planted on two sides with fine trees, called the *Bois d' Amourettes*, and closed on the fourth by the cathedral; part of the ramparts of the town, open towards the sea, are behind, and thus a good air is introduced into the square. On moon-light nights it is a charming promenade; for the effects of the sky here are admirable: a range of handsome *cafés* extends along one part, whose lights, gleaming between the trees, have a lively appearance, and the groups of lounging citizens seated under the shades give a life to the scene which the rest of the town does not possess. La Rochelle is, however, infinitely less dull than the generality of French towns; and the quays and shipping, and the constantly-changing sea, prevent it from wearing the sad aspect which distinguishes France in her country places. Notwithstanding all that travellers are in the habit of saying about the liveliness of France, I never can cease to think that it is a dull country; for, except Paris in its season, there is no movement, no activity, no bustle, in its towns, save, now and then, the confusion of market-days. Why England is considered *triste*, either in town or country, I cannot imagine: the brilliancy of its shops alone, compared to the little dark, dingy cells always met with abroad, [184] even in the most fashionable quarters, might rescue our much-maligned country from the reproach which does not belong to it.

The cathedral of La Rochelle is a modern building; still unfinished, and possessing no interest: it is very vast, for it stands where once stood the antique church—older than the town itself—of Notre Dame de Cougnes. Here and there, outside, a projecting buttress and part of an arch, built up, betrays its venerable origin; but, besides this, nothing remains of the original foundation.

At the back of the cathedral we remarked, as we passed through the street, a very large building, with a great many windows, above the portal of which were inscribed the words, *Hôpital M. Auffrédy*. We were puzzled to make out what this could mean, as the hospital was so large and important that it scarcely would appear to be the institution of a private person. Our inquiries gained us no information, and we continued to pass and repass still wondering who this *Monsieur Auffrédy* could be

whose name was so conspicuous. When, at length, I found how much interest attached to this place I reproached myself that I should have gone near it without reverence, or have carelessly named its institutor; whose romantic story is as follows, as near as I have been able to gather it: [185]

STORY OF ALEXANDER AUFFRÉDY.

At the time when the beautiful and wealthy, the admired and accomplished, heiress of Aquitaine, presided over her courts of Love, now in one city of her extensive dominions, now in another, delighting and astonishing the whole troubadour world with her liberality, her taste, her learning, grace, and gaiety, lived, in the city of La Rochelle, a rich merchant, named Alexander Auffrédy, young, handsome, esteemed and envied. His generosity and wealth, added to his personal attractions, made him an object of observation and remark, and it was not long before his name reached the ears of Queen Elionore, who, always desirous to surround herself with all that was gay, brilliant, and distinguished, sent an invitation, or rather a command, to the young merchant to appear at her Court at Poitiers.

Auffrédy went; and but a short time elapsed before he became the favourite of that brilliant circle where beauty and genius reigned triumphant; for it was discovered that his talent for music was of the highest order; his voice, in singing, of rare perfection; his verses full of grace and fire, his manners equal to those of the most finished courtier; and his judgment in the weighty decisions of the courts of Love, sound and good. Even the poets and musicians, who saw him distinguished for the time above [186] themselves, felt little envy towards him, since they shared his profuse liberality, and were encouraged by his generous admiration, loudly expressed. He was passionately attached to literature, and had so correct a taste that whatever he admired was the best in its kind, and his criticisms were so judicious that not a doubt could remain on the minds of any who listened to his opinion; yet he was never harsh, and, wherever it was possible, showed indulgence; it was only to the presuming and superficial that he was severe; and amongst that class he was by no means beloved; for, after his expressed contempt and censure had laid open to view the faults of many compositions, whose false glare had attracted praise, their authors sunk at once into the obscurity which they deserved.

His chief friends were Bernard de Ventadour, whose lays, mysteriously addressed to *Bel Viser* and *Conort*, had gained him so much fame; Rudel, the enthusiast, who devoted his life to an imaginary passion; Adhemar and Rambaud d'Aurenge, whose songs were some of the sweetest of their time; and Pierre Rogiers, who sighed his soul away for "Tort n'avetz;" and, amongst them all, his poems were held in the greatest esteem. The beautiful and coquettish mistress of the revels was not insensible to his qualities, and was anxious to appropriate him to herself; greedy of praise, and ever desirous of admiration, she used every art to enthral him, and to render the passion [187] real, which it was the fashion at her Court to feign, towards herself; but, though flattered and delighted at the preference shown him by her whom all were trying to please, it was not towards the Queen that Auffrédy turned the aspirations of his soul. There was at Court a young and beautiful girl, the orphan of a knight who had fallen in the holy wars, and who was under the guardianship of her uncle, the Baron de Montluçon; she was as amiable in disposition as lovely in person. Auffrédy soon found that his liberty was gone while he gazed upon her, but his modesty prevented his attempting to declare his passion, though in his lays he took occasion to express all the feelings he experienced, and he saw with delight, not only that the charming Beatrix listened with pleased attention when he sung, but was even moved to tears when he uttered the lamentations of an unhappy lover.

Upon one occasion he sang a lay which Queen Elionore imagined was inspired by herself; but which, in reality, he intended should convey to Beatrix his timid passion; it was as follows—in the style of the Eastern poets, then so much imitated and admired:—

LAY.

"I only beg a smile from thee
For all this world of tenderness;
I let no eye my weakness see,
To none my hopes or fears express;
I never speak thy praises now,

My tongue is mute, and cold my brow.

"Even like that fabled bird am I [188]
Who loves the radiant orb of night,
Sings on in hopeless melody
And feeds upon her beams of light;
But never does the planet deign
To pity his unceasing pain."

As he sung he would observe the eyes of Beatrix fixed on him with a tender expression; but their meaning was still obscure; for her thoughts appeared pre-occupied, and it might be more the sentiment than the author which attracted her.

Just at this time he was suddenly astounded by the information, that the uncle of her he loved had announced his intention of marrying her to a man of noble lineage and great wealth, and Auffrédy woke from his dream of happiness at once. His strains were now all gloom and sadness, and Elionore heard, with something like astonishment, the melancholy and despairing lays, to which alone he tuned the harp that all delighted to hear. Beatrix, too, whose wishes had not been consulted on a subject so important to herself, appeared quite changed from the tune the tidings first reached her; and her pale cheek and starting tears proved too plainly her aversion to the proposed union. Still did she linger near when Auffrédy sung; and when, in a passion of sorrow, he poured forth the lay here given, Beatrix betrayed an emotion for which he feared to account. [189]

LAY.

"Like that fair tree whose tender boughs
Wave in the sunshine green and bright,
Nor bird nor insect e'er allows
To seek its shelter morn or night,
My heart was young, and fresh, and free,
And near it came nor care nor pain;
But now, like that same tender tree,
When once rude hands its fruit profane,
Ill-omen'd birds and shapes of ill
Troop to its branches, crowding still,—
And sorrows never known till now
Have cast their shadows on my brow:
A ruin is my heart become
Where brooding sadness finds a home;
See—those bright leaves fall, one by one,
And I—my latest hopes are gone!"

This was the last time he had ever an opportunity of pouring forth his feelings in the presence of Beatrix; for she disappeared suddenly from Court, and, to the amazement of all, it was announced by her uncle, that her vocation for a religious life had been so decidedly manifested, that he had yielded to her entreaties, and permitted her to enter a convent.

This news made a strange impression on the mind of Auffrédy,—could it be possible, after all, that she loved him? yet, he argued, even if it were so, it was evident that her pride of birth had overcome her preference, and she had sacrificed the feelings of her [190] heart rather than descend to be the bride of a merchant, who, though wealthy beyond all the nobles of the land, was yet no match for one born in her exalted rank. From that time the troubadour sang no more; and as the Queen found he had no longer incense to lay on her shrine, her preference for him waned away, and he found that the permission he asked, to absent himself from her Court was not withheld. "Poor Auffrédy," said Elionore, somewhat contemptuously, as he departed; "he has seen a wolf and has lost the use of speech; let him go, we have many a young poet who can well replace him."

The admired favourite of a capricious beauty accordingly returned to La Rochelle, changed in heart and depressed in spirits. "And this, then," he mused, "is the reward which the world offers to genius, taste, truth, and feeling! and this is all the value set on qualities which excite admiration, enthusiasm, rapture!—a brief season suffices to

weary the most zealous and devoted—a few months, and that which was deemed wit and talent, and wisdom and grace, is looked upon as flat, tame, and unworthy attention. As long as vanity is pleased, and novelty excites new ideas, the poet is welcomed and followed; but, let sadness or sorrow overtake him, of all his admirers not one friend remains! How childish is the thirst for such trivial fame as that a poet gains! It is like the pursuit of the gossamer, which the least breath sweeps away. I will [191] sing no more. I will forget the brilliant scenes that have bewildered me too long; but to what do I now return? Alas! I have no longer a relish for that which interested me before—to what end do I seek to gain wealth? for whom should I hoard treasure? I shall in future take no interest in my successes; all appears a blank to me, and my existence a cold, monotonous state of being. These heaps of gold that fill my coffers are worthless in my eyes; these crowding sails that return to harbour, bringing me ceaseless wealth, are fraught only with care. Why was I born rich, since I must live alone and unblest!"

Still he could not help, in spite of his professions of indifference, being flattered by the manner in which his return to his native town was celebrated. The bells of the churches sounded to welcome him, the young girls of the villages round, came out, in their holiday costumes, to greet him on his way, they strewed flowers in his path and sang verses in his praise: the people of La Rochelle even went so far as to offer prayers at the shrine of the Virgin, to thank Heaven for restoring to them so honoured and beloved a citizen. Full of gratitude for all this kindness and affection, Auffrédy bestowed liberal presents upon all: he presented dowers to several of the young maidens who were foremost in doing him honour: he gave large sums to the town, to [192] be laid out in charities and in erecting new buildings, and he sent donations to the churches and convents. His mind was calmed, and his heart touched when he saw in what esteem he was held. "It is something yet," said he, "to gain the good-will of one's fellow-men, and to witness their attachment. Wealth is certainly a blessing, since it enables one to show gratitude."

About this period great preparations were being made for an expedition to the Holy Land, which was to be led by young Prince Henry, the heir of Aquitaine, Normandy, and England; and all the lords and knights of the three countries vied with each other in splendid equipments. They borrowed money in all directions, and, amongst those who were capable of lending, it was not likely that the rich merchant of La Rochelle would be forgotten. On the contrary, from numerous quarters came applications for assistance; even Queen Elionore condescended to request that he would contribute to the splendour of those who should accompany her son, and the generous and ever ready hand of Auffrédy was employed from morning till night, in lending and giving to those whose means did not keep pace with their desires. Still, therefore, did he repeat to himself that wealth had its advantages, as he cheerfully dispensed his benefits on all sides. At length he was fairly obliged to desist, for his liberality had brought him to the end of his stores, and he could not but smile, as he remarked to a friend that, if he [193] did not expect in a few weeks the return of all his vessels which were trading in the East, and regularly brought back increased wealth at every voyage, he should be a poor man. "I have nothing left now," said he, "but my plate and jewels, and the furniture of my house; and, should my fleet delay, I will sell all rather than a single knight should be kept from joining the glorious expedition."

As if he had foreseen the event, it so happened: although there were no storms to prevent it, the return of the expected vessels was indeed delayed, and, fresh and pressing applications pouring in upon him, Auffrédy found himself actually under the necessity of disposing of his personal possessions, in order to advance the ready-money required.

He was now in a novel position, without money altogether, and he had sold all he possessed of land and houses. "It matters not," said he to the friend at whose house he was staying, at his earnest and affectionate entreaty; "in a day or two I shall have more than I ever yet could call my own; for my last advices, brought by a pilgrim from the country of Manchou Khan, tell me, that all my ventures have been successful, and that this time my faithful agent, Herbert de Burgh, has excelled himself in ability."

"And even should it not be so," said his friend, "think you that the grateful town of La [194] Rochelle would not be proud to support for years, nay, for ever, if need were, the benefactor to whom every citizen is more or less indebted?"

"I doubt it not," returned the merchant, "and it would be even a gratification to me to

be reduced to poverty, which such generous friends would relieve."

But a great and most unexpected change was about to take place in the fortunes of Auffrédy: a change which neither he nor his friends had ever contemplated, and which put quite a different face upon everything. The fleet from the East did not arrive. Day after day, week after week, month after month, the first, the second, year had passed, and the chain at the harbour of La Rochelle was not loosened to give passage to his vessels. Hope had slowly faded, expectation declined, and, at length, expired,—and the powerful, wealthy, and beloved Auffrédy was a beggar.

Where was he at the expiration of the second year? What friend's mansion did he still honour with his presence, and which of his admirers was made happy by seeing him partake of his hospitality? Who, of all those he had rescued from poverty, danger, and affliction, was so blest as to show how strong the tide of gratitude swelled in their hearts? Auffrédy was heard of no more! His native town had forgotten his name: to speak of him was interdicted; he was a reproach to La Rochelle, a disgrace to the city [195] whom his misfortune left without a merchant able to assist monarchs and fit out armies. Every individual felt injured, every one resented his affront. Not a door but was closed against the bankrupt spendthrift—the deceiver who spoke of wealth which was but a vision, who encouraged hopes which had no foundation. Vessel after vessel arrived from different quarters, but none had met with Herbert de Burgh or his charge; it was doubtful if he had ever even sailed: it was possible, nay probable, indeed it soon was received as a certainty, that the fleet which was talked of had no existence but in the crazed imagination of a profuse dreamer, who fancied argosies and made the world believe he possessed them. It was enough that the drama was ended, and no one cared now, after so long a time, to ask what was become of the principal actor.

One bright summer morning, when the sun shone with dazzling lustre on the dancing waves outside the harbour of La Rochelle, and, inside, the water was as calm as glass, a little fishing-boat came gliding along, her red sail gleaming in the light. She was guided by a single sailor—a young man whose remarkably handsome face and figure was little set off by his rough habiliments, which were of the meanest kind; indeed, his boat and all belonging to it indicated little wealth, and seemed to have [196] seen, like himself, much service; but there was a cheerful sparkle in his speaking eye which spoke of content and happiness; and, as he leaped on shore and prepared to unload his little cargo of fish, his animated manner and quick and ready movements showed that, if he were poor, he gained enough by his industry to support himself, and cared for nothing but the present moment, without concerning himself for the future. He had arrived but a few minutes when a slight woman, wrapped in a long black cloak, with the peaked hood tightly drawn over her head and quite concealing her face, emerged from a neighbouring street, and, bounding forward, stood by the side of the young man, who, with a joyful exclamation, caught her in his arms, and embraced her tenderly. Together they collected the fish, which filled his boat, into baskets, and placed them on the edge of the path where frequenters of the markets must pass, and before long their little stock was sold, and they were in possession of a small sum of money, which the young fisherman put into his purse with an air of satisfaction, as, fastening his boat to the shore, and gathering up his baskets, he gave his arm to the girl, who apparently was his wife, and they left the quay. Just as they were entering the small narrow Rue de la Vache, they observed, standing under an archway, a man, of ragged and miserable appearance, who, approaching, offered to be the bearer of their baskets to their home; he spoke in a low, hollow voice, and said, "Employ me: it [197] will be a charity; I have not tasted bread these two days." Although the young couple, linked arm in arm, close together, and looking in each other's eyes, were talking in gay, cheerful accents, and, apparently, exclusively occupied with each other, yet there was something so sad, so desolate, in the tone of the poor man's voice who addressed them, that they both stopped and turned towards him. "Good friend," said the young man, "you seem in great straits; the blessed Virgin knows I am little able to help you; but take the baskets my wife is carrying, though you look but ill able to bear them. We live hard by, and we have a morsel of bread to give you, if you will." The man made no reply, but took the burthen from the young woman and followed the merry pair, who resumed their talk and their cheerful laugh as they went on. "I need not go out again for at least three days," said the husband, "since this venture has been so lucky; you see how well we can live, and how happy one can be, after all, on nothing." "Yes," answered the wife; "but, at least, while the weather is so fine, I see no reason why I

should be left at home. I could be so useful in the boat, and it would make me so happy. I know when it blows hard, it is useless to ask you, but now"—"Well, you shall go, dearest, next time, if this lasts," was the answer; "what a good sailor you will [198] make, as well as a housekeeper!" They both laughed, and at this moment they reached the door of a very humble dwelling, with only just furniture enough to prevent its being called empty; but they stepped into it, and, the porter placing the baskets on the floor, they sat down and invited him to do the same, while they shared with him a cake and some water, which was already placed on a table.

The poor man, after eating a morsel, appeared suddenly faint, and, uttering a deep sigh, fell on the ground motionless: they raised him up, and, with the utmost kindness, endeavoured to restore him: his worn and haggard countenance told of long and hard suffering; his white hair, that hung in matted locks on his shoulders, seemed blanched by misery, not age; for he appeared a young man, and his emaciated hands were white and more delicate than is usual in his station. After some time he recovered a little, and, thanking them for their help, attempted to rise and leave the house; but both, moved with compassion, insisted on his lying down on their only bed and taking some repose. "You are ill," said the husband, "and have been too long without food—rest quiet—we will get you some more suitable nourishment, and when you are better, we will hear of your leaving us."

From that day the sick man remained a guest with these poor people, till, his illness increasing, he begged they would procure him admittance into some hospital, if [199] possible, that he might cease to be a burthen on their benevolence: finding their means running very short, owing to the uncertain success of the fisherman's trade, they consented to attempt getting him admitted to the hospital established by the monks of St. Julien, who kindly received the unfortunate man: but, not content with doing this, it was agreed between the young couple that, during the husband's absence, the wife should be his nurse, and attend to him while in the asylum which was afforded him. For several weeks he lay, apparently, at the point of death; but after that time began to recover, and, though weak and emaciated, appeared to have escaped danger. As soon as he was sufficiently recovered to attempt it, he resumed the occupation of porter on the quay, which his sickness had interrupted, and, as he grew daily in strength and health, he was able to gain a little, which he insisted on adding to the small stock of the charitable persons who had saved his life by their kindness. Sometimes he accompanied the husband on his expeditions, and was serviceable to him in his perilous ventures, for his nautical knowledge seemed great, and his skill and readiness made themselves apparent. Though full of gratitude in all his actions, he never expressed in words the feelings their conduct naturally inspired: he was silent and thoughtful, and seemed labouring under some overwhelming grief which no consolations could soften: he never spoke of any person in the town, nor [200] seemed to know anything belonging to it, by which they judged he was a stranger; but, as he evidently did not desire to be communicative, they never urged him with questions, nor required to be informed of his former life. It sufficed to them that he was unfortunate, and that they had ameliorated his condition, and all three lived together, happy and content, without knowing any circumstances of each other's previous condition.

Several months passed in this manner, winters and summers fled away, and the returning seasons found them still poor, still labouring, and still content. The porter improved, not only in strength, but in spirits; for he felt that he was able to be of service to those who had befriended him, and the gloom which chained his tongue and clouded his brow, wore, in a great degree, away. They had no friends in the town, nor sought for acquaintances; the young woman always concealed her face when she went out, which she never did, but to meet her husband, or to buy necessaries for their simple household. His boat had been replaced by one larger and more commodious, and his gains were greater; by degrees their circumstances improved, and, as they sat by their fireside, they were accustomed to say that they were rich enough, and desired nothing more.

Although the fisherman and his now constant companion had been out in all [201] weathers, they had never yet encountered any dangerous storms, and the wife was now quite tranquil, from the constant habit of seeing them return safely, and complaining little. One day, in early spring, they had set out with a clear sky and fair wind, and had had one of the most fortunate voyages of any they had yet made on the Breton coast, when, just as they were within sight of the Point de Ray, which raises its

bare and jagged head three hundred feet above the noisy waves which brawl at its base, an ominous cloud suddenly overspread the heavens, and the symptoms of a coming storm were but too apparent. With silent awe the solitary mariners beheld, sailing heavily along the darkening sky, two birds, of sable plumage, whose flight seemed directed towards the fatal Baie des Trépassés, so often the grave of the adventurous seaman. "Alas!" said the young husband, as he marked their flight, "those birds bode no good: they are the souls of King Grallon and his daughter, who appear always before a storm; if we escape the perils of the Isle de Sein, we shall be indeed fortunate."

"Is this coast, then, indeed, so dangerous?" asked the porter.

"It is the abode of spirits," answered the young man; "and was the cradle of Merdynn the Bard; the city where he lived, is engulphed below those black rocks yonder, whose spires, like those of churches, are only visible when destruction threatens those who [202] are found on the coast. We have, hitherto, been fortunate in all our undertakings; but there must come an evil day, which generally arrives when one is least prepared."

"It is too true," said his companion; "for me, I thought all my misfortunes were past, and death alone could be the ill left to reach me. I have, of late, felt it *would* be an ill since I have lived again in you and yours—before that time, I prayed for it in vain."

A furious gust of wind at this instant swept past them, their frail vessel shook in every timber, and, mounting on a sweeping wave that came howling along, was sent forward with frightful impetuosity to a great distance; when, as if the angry billow disdained its weight, it was precipitated into a gulf of foam which dashed above the sunken rocks whose points received it. "Oh, Beatrix!" exclaimed the young fisherman; "it is all over; we shall meet no more; our fate has overtaken us at last! My friend," he added, grasping the arm of his companion; "if you survive, promise to protect her. We have suffered much, and borne our fortune as we could. I have brought this wretchedness upon her by my love; but neither she nor I have ever repented the lot we chose. She will tell you our story, and you will continue to comfort and support her when I am no more." [203]

"Be not cast down," answered his friend; as, buffeted by the storm, they clung together to the creaking mast; "I know your story already, and have known it from the first. You are the troubadour, Anselm, once the ornament of the Court of Elionore, and Beatrix de Montluçon is your devoted wife. She was said to have died in the convent of St. Blaise, and you to have perished in the Holy Land."

The shrieking of the wind, and the roaring of the awakened thunder, drowned the reply of the young man: a crash, a shock, and their boat was split into several parts; they each clung to a piece of wreck, and used every effort to overcome the fury of the elements. Anselm's hold, however, was suddenly loosened by the falling of the mast upon his arm, and his friend saw him no more for several instants; he re-appeared, however, and a returning wave dashed him on a rock, which the porter reaching by a spring, he caught him by the hand and dragged him to the summit. There they stood clasping each other, and expecting every moment to be washed off by the boiling surge. For some time they, nevertheless, kept their stand, and, though not a vestige of their boat was to be seen, they still lived and still hoped, for their hopes rose with the danger, and, as they offered up their fervent prayers to the Mother of mercy, they felt not altogether abandoned. All night were they in this perilous position, hearing the waters around them howling, and climbing to reach the spot where, almost by miracle, [204] they were placed. Day broke, and with morning came a brightened prospect; by degrees the sea sank, the winds subsided, and all trace of the storm was gone. But their situation seemed still little better than before; must they not perish on this barren rock, without food or shelter, if not washed off by the next tide, which might bring back the sleeping vengeance of the enraged elements? While they hung exhausted on the perilous edge of the peak, something in the distance caught their view. It grew more distinct; it came nearer; and they were aware that a sail was passing: not one, however, but many; like the glittering of the wings of a flight of sea-birds, sail after sail hove in sight, and a gallant fleet came full in view almost as soon as they had descried the first.

Loud and long were their cries; hope gave them fresh force, and their voices were sent over the now quiet waves, echoing till they reached the ears of those in the foremost vessel.

The mariners, directed by the continued sound of distress, were able to steer towards them; and having at length discovered in the specks at a distance, amidst the waves, the unfortunate friends, a boat was sent through the sea to the rock, and at once received the rescued pair. They were taken on board and tended carefully; and, the wind being fair, the vessels continued their course, which they declared was to La [205] Rochelle, much to the delight of those they had delivered from death.

The port so much desired was almost reached; and the high towers of the Château de Vauclair, of the cathedral, and the Grosse Tour de la Chaine, shone boldly forth against the clear blue sky. The captain walked the deck, and gazed long and anxiously forth; every now and then tears started into his eyes, which he brushed away; at length his feelings appeared to overcome him, and, burying his face in his hands, he sobbed aloud. The two grateful friends whom he had saved were standing by; he raised his head and addressed them; "You who are of La Rochelle," said he, "can you not, perchance, tell me if one whom I left ten years ago in that town still lives and is well? Fears and forebodings oppress me as I approach the shore, for it is long since I have heard tidings of him, and much does it import me to know that he exists, and that my enforced absence has not caused him misfortune. Is the great merchant, Alexander Auffrédy, still, as he once was, the ornament and benefactor of his native town?"

"Alas!" replied the youngest of the shipwrecked men, "you ask after one long since forgotten in La Rochelle. It is now ten years since he was a ruined man, and, having nothing more to give to his ungrateful fellow-citizens, was abandoned to his fate, and has been no more heard of." [206]

"Unhappy destiny!" cried the captain, turning pale and clasping his hands; "but he was rich, and his stores were immense; not twice ten years' absence of his fleets could have caused him to become bankrupt."

"But he gave all he had to the knights bound for the Holy Wars; his agent, Herbert de Burgh, was either faithless, or the fleets entrusted to him were lost; he never returned from his last voyage to the East, and the unfortunate merchant, reduced to penury and driven to despair, is said to have destroyed himself." As Anselm uttered these words the captain became convulsed with agony; his face was livid, his eyes rolled, his teeth were clenched. "Wretch that I am!" cried he; "who am the cause of all! I wrote to my dear master and told him of my intention to attempt a new discovery in a new world filled with riches unheard of before; but I waited not his permission; I set out without his leave, and, not content with what I had already gained for him, I resolved to seek more wealth; to what end have I gained it—to what end have I returned with riches enough to purchase Europe; all of which these vessels bear, if he, the generous, trusting, kind, indulgent, and deceived owner is no more? Where shall I hide my head?—where lose my shame?—and how survive his loss!"

They entered the harbour of La Rochelle; and as the gallant train of ships swept [207] proudly along, the whole population of the town came forth until they lined the shores in every direction. It was soon known, by the ensigns they bore, that they were the long-lost vessels of Auffrédy; and many a conscious cheek turned pale, and many an eye glared with amazement as the gorgeous galleys covered the waters.

But the captain was lying prone on the deck; his face was haggard, his look wild, and he tore his hair in distraction. "My master, my poor master!" cried he; "I have murdered thee by my mercenary wickedness; oh, holy Virgin! forgive me, for I am a sinner!" "Look up, Herbert de Burgh," said a voice beside him; "the Mother of mercy is never appealed to in vain; she can restore the dead to life; she can, though late, re-illume joy in the heart; she can revive long-abandoned hope. Look up and say if in this wretched, wasted, meagre form you can recognise one whom you loved; one who loved and trusted you with reason; who never doubted your integrity, and who mourned you lost more than all his wealth, which you restore!"

Herbert de Burgh looked up and beheld, leaning over him, the form of Alexander Auffrédy.

A few words sufficed of explanation: joy took the place of despair, exultation of tears, and the minstrel, Anselm, heard, with feelings of emotion difficult to describe, that the wretched man whom he had saved from starvation was the rich merchant of La [208] Rochelle.

Loud and joyous were the notes of triumph which sounded from every vessel as the

news became known; the clarions and trumpets rent the air; wild exclamation of happiness and congratulation rose above the pealing music which ushered in the fleet to its haven; and strange was the revulsion of feeling on shore when the despised porter stepped from his boat, attended by Herbert de Burgh, who proclaimed him as his master.

Those who had shunned and injured the now wealthy merchant were astounded; and who were there, amongst the whole population, who had befriended him, or who deserved aught but contempt and hatred at his hands? There was *but one*, and she is clasped in her husband's arms, and sees, in the man she had protected, her lover, whose songs she had so often sung to her husband!

Auffrédy kept their secret, and to none but himself was it ever known that the rich man who afterwards became governor of La Rochelle, and his beautiful wife, supposed to be a native of some foreign land, were the troubadour, Anselm, and Beatrix of Montluçon.

All the revenge Auffrédy took upon his townsmen was to reject their offers of friendship, to refuse to take his place amongst them, and to avoid appearing in their sight. The bulk of his great wealth was dedicated to the foundation of a hospital for [209] naval and military patients, and the rest of his days he passed in attendance on the sick.

This is the story of Auffrédy, the great merchant, the Jacques Cœur of the thirteenth century; and this is the history of the magnificent Hospital of La Rochelle, which he founded, and which is to be seen at the present hour, the most conspicuous object in the town. [210]

CHAPTER XI.

TOWERS—RELIGION—MARIA BELANDELLE—STORM—PROTESTANT RETREAT—SOLEMN DINNERS—"HALF-AND-HALF"—GO TO SLEEP!—THE BREWERY—GAS ESTABLISHMENT—CHÂTEAU OF LA FONT—THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED—TRIUMPH OF SCENERY OVER APPETITE—SLAVE TRADE—CHARLES LE BIEN SERVI—LIBERALITY OF LOUIS PHILIPPE—GUITON—HOUSE OP LE MAIRE GUITON—THE FLEETS—THE FIGHT—THE MAYOR AND THE GOVERNOR.

It appears that, from the position of the town of La Rochelle, it was not difficult for the vessels of an enemy to reach its walls, and even to penetrate its harbour; the latter was formed outside the town, and the access to it was by numerous gates. The entrance, nevertheless, was defended by two towers, which still exist, if not in all their original strength, yet exhibiting an aspect of defiance, and recalling recollections of times long past, such as few towns in France can now do. These towers, which stand, like Sir Bevis and Sir Ascapart, bold and menacing, and forbidding the entrance to any but a friend, are called La Tour de la Chaine and La Tour de St. Nicolas.

The first is a rugged, round tower of great height and bulk, apparently of Roman construction; it was formerly called La Petite Tour de la Chaine, because it assisted its [211] opposite sister, La Grosse Tour, to sustain the enormous chain which still, on occasion, closes the mouth of the harbour. The latter is now called St. Nicolas, and presents a most extraordinary and *old world* appearance: higher than the first, its form is so irregular, that it would be difficult to decide what shape it could be called: round on one side, square on another, with little round, square, and octagon turrets rising out of it, the whole mass has the strangest effect imaginable. Within it is just as mysterious, having chambers built up and down, and communicating with each other in the most unexpected manner, so that the whole interior is a perfect labyrinth of galleries, cells, hiding-places, and rooms on different stages. This is just the sort of tower which seemed fitted for that inscrutable tyrant, Louis XI.; who wrote upon one of the windows, with a diamond, these words: "*O la grande Folie*!" alluding, it was believed, to what he considered his weakness, in having abandoned Guienne to his brother.

The fortifications of La Rochelle were very extensive formerly, the gates numerous. La Porte Malvaut or Mauléon, La Porte Rambaud, du Petit Comte, de St. Nicolas, de Vérité, des Canards, de Mauclair, de la Vieille Poterie, de la Grande Rue du Port, de la

Petit Rue du Port, de Pérot and du Pont-Vert, tell their age by their antique names. There are but few vestiges of any of these gates, except that of Cougnes, of the [212] ancient Porte Neuve, and la Porte Maubec: but, besides all these, there are seven still existing. To complete the defences, there were formerly, *without* the gates, two forts of great strength, one called St. Louis and Des Deux Moulins, the ruins of which still exist near the fine pyramidal Tour de la Lanterne, the most conspicuous of all, now used as a prison, which raises its head far above every tower and spire of La Rochelle, and which must show its *pharos* at a great distance at sea. The architecture of this tower is remarkable, and its ornaments very beautiful: the spire that sustains its lantern is like that of a church adorned with graceful foliage to the top: it dates from 1445, and has been repaired at different periods. Medals were struck at the time of the siege, in 1628, which represent this tower, having the following motto round: —*Lucerna impiorum extinguetur* (the light of the impious shall be extinguished). It was at this time that Cardinal Richelieu caused the great *digue*, as it is called, to be made to the south-west of the town, with enormous labour and expense, in order to prevent supplies reaching the Rochellois who held out against him. At low water this *digue* is visible, and remains a memorial of the cruelty and harshness of the tyrant priest who ruled France.

One of the numerous towers which formerly protected the town is called the Demi-bastion *des Dames*, so named from its having been defended by the ladies of La *[213]* Rochelle, whose heroic devotion at the time of the siege by the duke of Anjou, in 1573, has rendered them famous in history. They were not less active half a century later, when, for thirteen months, La Rochelle withstood the united forces of Catholic France bent on its destruction. The scenes which took place at these periods have made this interesting town classic ground: there is not a wall, a tower, or a street, which has not some tale of heroism attached to it, and some noble trait may be recounted as having occurred in every quarter.[7]

There are no interesting churches in La Rochelle, the wars of religion having destroyed all the antique buildings of worship, both Catholic and Protestant. Nothing now remains of the extensive possessions of the Templars, or the Knights of Malta, who both had *commanderies* here.

The reformed religion, of which La Rochelle afterwards became the stronghold, is said to have been first introduced by a young girl of humble station, Maria Belandelle, into this part of the country. Strong in her conviction, and anxious to spread the truth, this person, more zealous than prudent, ventured to come forward, in 1534, as antagonist to, and disputant against, a Franciscan friar. However good her arguments [214] might be, the result of the controversy had of course been previously decided on by the strongest party. She was convicted of heresy and impiety, and condemned to the stake; which *righteous* judgment was carried into effect, and poor Marie was publicly burnt in the great square, to the refreshment and edification of her *soi-disant* fellow-Christians!

Calvinism, however, gained ground in spite of this example of its dangers, and many were the secret meetings held in concealed places; sometimes under-ground, like the early Christians; till in 1558 a minister, previously a priest of the diocese of Agen, named David, preached in the church of St. Barthélemi (ominous name!) the new doctrines, in the presence of the King and Queen of Navarre, parents of Henry IV. A few years later, under these powerful auspices, other ministers ventured to emerge from their hiding-places, and proclaim the "glad tidings" to their brethren. With more or less danger and indulgence, the Protestants pursued their reform for some time—now persecuted, now permitted—till, by the edict of pacification of 1570, it was agreed that persons of both religions should in future *live together in good intelligence*. The immortal horrors of St. Bartholomew, however, changed the face of things, and a long straggle ensued; during which, at different times, the Rochellois showed themselves undaunted defenders of the faith. Always opposed and persecuted, the Protestants [215] were never publicly allowed, by the State, to follow the exercise of their religion, till the great revolution swept away all barriers; and, from that time alone, those who professed that faith could do so openly. Several houses are shown in the town where the Calvinists were accustomed to meet secretly, and to one of them an accident introduced us.

Every morning before breakfast we were accustomed to go down to the baths of the beautiful *Mail*, and as the walk through the town, under the interminable arcades, was

both hot and tedious, we always chose a longer, but very agreeable, way, by the boulevards of the ancient ramparts; which are extremely pleasant, varied, and delightful, offering here and there fine views of the country beneath, and affording thick shade under their magnificent trees; some of the best houses open at the back on these ramparts, from whence their fine gardens, full of flowers and vine-trellices, can be occasionally seen. We had been a week at La Rochelle; every morning enjoying our walk, for the weather was perfection, a warm, bright sun and fresh sea-breeze inspiriting us to take so very long a promenade twice a day, in order that we might lose nothing of the splendour of the sea. One day the sun deceived us; we set out as usual; but had not got half to the end of the ramparts, when a series of dark clouds came creeping over the blue sky; a hollow wind began to sigh amongst the leaves, and [216] the light became fitful and lurid, till, on a sudden, a loud crack in the sky was heard, and in an instant down rushed the rain in a perfect deluge. We had reached the most exposed part of the boulevard; all the trees here were young; indeed, as we observed the quick flashes of lightning, we were scarcely sorry to be at a distance from the larger ones. We stood close to the old wall, and covering ourselves with our parasols as well as we could, paused, hoping the fury of the storm would soon subside. We were wet through instantly; for it seemed as if the Spirits of the shower took a pleasure in drenching us without mercy; such a roaring, and creaking, and flashing echoed around us, that it was impossible not to fancy they were enjoying our distress. Finding that there was no chance of the storm abating, we determined to continue our way, and, by getting into the streets, escape the danger of the lightning; accordingly, at the first opening, which was near the Ecluse de la Verdière, we hurried down; but here the storm-fiend became so furious, the wind so terrific, and the rain so persevering, that, seeing an open door, we darted into it, and in an instant found ourselves under shelter. When we could breathe we looked round, and could not help laughing to see where we had been so lucky as to place ourselves. It was a huge dark cavern, where [217] coals and other fuel were heaped in all directions; long aisles seemed to diverge from it with low arches leading further into the building, and apparently descending. A small, pointed window at the back just gave light enough to show its retreats, and we became convinced that this was one of the very places where of old our Protestant brethren were accustomed to meet to exercise their religion. It answered precisely to a description I had read of one of them, situate beneath the ramparts, and it was a great comfort in our emergency to think that we had thus discovered a secret haunt which must otherwise have escaped us.

The owner of the shed, or a workman, soon arrived, and seemed somewhat amused, as well as astonished, to see how we had taken possession of his grot; we had not Imogen's excuse—

"Before I entered here I called;"

but he gave us welcome, nevertheless, till the storm disappearing, as suddenly as it had arrived, we were able to pick our way home to Les Trois Chandeliers.

One of the least agreeable things which we encountered in our inn, was the manner in which our dinners were conducted; we were not allowed the privilege, which we generally claimed, of dining in our own apartments; but were given to understand that at the *table d'Hôte* we should meet with the best attendance and entertainment. [218] Accordingly, we became guests in the fine *salon* I have before described, where a party were assembled in solemn silence, as if a serious meeting, instead of one somewhat lively, was on the *tapis*. The cross-looking, silent damsel of the huge square cap slowly placed the dishes on the table, and every one sat down; but not a single individual, male or female, attempted to help his neighbour to anything; not a word was spoken, except in whispers; and very soon she of the square cap began to remove several of the untouched viands; as the soup, for which we had ventured to ask, was particularly bad, we did not interfere to prevent this proceeding. The next course appeared; but still, except a solitary individual, who made a desperate move, and cut up a fowl which he handed round, no one put out a finger; as we were quite at the lower end of the table, and saw with consternation that our appetites, sharpened with the fine air of the sea, were not likely to be satisfied, and not relishing this Governor Sancho's fare, we beckoned to a mute female, who had entered with the second course, and stood by as if a spectator of the solemnity, and remonstrated on the absurdity, entreating to have something brought us; she answered gravely, that *in our turn* we should be attended to; and in the end we were fortunate enough to procure a

[219]

little cream, of which we took possession; and then, wearied out with the tedium of the proceeding, rose and made a retreat, leaving the rest of the taciturn company to wait for and contemplate their dessert. It was not so much the supineness of the attendants as the apathy of the guests that amazed us; having generally observed in France, that *mauvaise honte* by no means stood in the way of hungry persons, and that a French appetite is with difficulty appeased, even after partaking of every dish on the table: a fact of which we had lately been reminded at Poitiers, where a set of men, who ate in a most prodigious manner, after the last condiment had disappeared exclaimed, one to the other, "*Eh, mon Dieu! on ne fait que commencer, il me semble.*"

Our desertion being reported to the lady of the Three Candlesticks, she came to apologise; fearing that her enforced absence had caused something to go wrong at the dinner. She told us that she was obliged to attend to the domestic arrangements of her hotel, and to superintend fifteen workmen who were busied in some necessary duties; but, *as she always saw to everything herself*, we should have no cause to complain another day. We had meditated finding out another place to dine at, but this disarmed us; and, day after day, we were obliged to submit to something very similar, being forced to make a perfect struggle for our dinner, and submit to the studiedly tedious movements of the Breton girl, whose frowns and scowls accompanied every action. We [220]
found, one day, a champion in an old gentleman, who, a stranger and traveller, like ourselves, endeavoured to create a reform; but was only partially successful. This person had been to England, and preserved pleased recollections of London "*half-and-half*" which he seemed to consider little short of nectar, and was astonished at my ignorance when, appealed to, I was obliged to plead guilty of not being acquainted with its virtues. He was the first Frenchman I ever heard refute the calumnies against our climate; for, though he agreed that we had fogs in London occasionally somewhat denser than in Paris, he had not fallen into the error,—which it is thought heresy to dispute,—that, at Brighton, Richmond, or Windsor, the blue sky is never seen. A very supercilious man who sat near him, annoyed at his praises of England, and his raptures at the Tunnel,—that great object of foreign admiration,—endeavoured to silence him by pronouncing that London had no monuments, and was not half as big as Paris; for, though he lived in Poitou, he had seen the capital. The comic look which our champion gave us when this oracle was pronounced was irresistible.

We had inquired for the fountain and castle of La Font, famous in the annals of the Liege; and our hostess, finding that we were bent on seeing all the sights that La [221]
Rochelle could furnish, when she met us one morning at her door, where we had been greeted by her husband, who officiated as cook in the dark retreat which we had to cross on our exit, with the salutation of "*Go to sleep*;"—which English phrase he considered as expressive as any other,—proposed to show us the way to the village of La Font, and its château—a short walk from La Rochelle. We accepted her offer; and, accompanied by her little girl—a forward, clever child of about seven years old, and two friends,—in one of whom we recognised one of the solemn officials of the dinner-table, who, it seems, was playing only an amateur part on that occasion,—we set out. The ideas of all French people, in every part of France, it appears to me, are the same respecting sights and views: to take a walk means, with them, to put on your best gown and cap, take your umbrella, and proceed, at a sauntering pace, talking all the way, down some hot, dusty road, where the *monde* is expected to be met with. The end of the journey is usually at some shabby cottage, or *cabaret*, where seats are set out in the sun, and refreshments are to be had. I think lanes and meadow-paths do not exist in France; or, if they do, they are carefully avoided by all but shepherds and shepherdesses, who are obliged to take them occasionally; but who much prefer, as do their charges, the sheep and cows, the high road, all dust and bustle. [222]

The first place we stopped at, we were assured, was very interesting: the permission to see it had been graciously granted to our hostess, for us, by the proprietor, who usually dined at the *table d'hôte*,—one of our silent *companions*, no doubt;—and we could, consequently, do no less than appear grateful for the favour. Our patience was, however, put to the test when what we hoped, by its ruinous appearance, would turn out an antique church or tower was announced to be an infant *brewery*, in a very early stage of its existence. We stood by while our companions talked to a very pretty, indolent-looking woman, surrounded by black-eyed children, whose ages and habits were dilated on, and all of whom were scattered about the premises—sitting or lying on tubs and heaps of wood; while the husband and father sauntered through something like work, which was to bring the erection, in the course of time, to a close.

He seemed glad of an opportunity of leaving off what he was supposed to be doing, to show us the garden of the establishment,—a wilderness full of mignionette, and cabbages, and vines, and pumpkins.

As an excuse for the failure of this sight, we were told that the principal works could not be shown, which, had we seen, would have amazed us not a little; but, to make up for the disappointment, we should be introduced to another *fabrique*, which should [223] well repay us. When near the Porte Dauphine, we found this treat was no other than a gas establishment; and, terrified at the odour which spread from it far and wide, which, added to the heat of a very sunny day, warned us to forego the temptation of becoming acquainted with the method of meting out gas to the town of La Rochelle, we protested against being forced to enter; contenting ourselves with admiring the tall pillar, which, being new, is an object of great exultation to the inhabitants. The air, in this part, was quite poisoned with the effluvia from the gas; and we were not surprised to hear that the soldiers, in the barracks close beneath, suffered continually from sickness since the period when the gas-works had been established. Unpleasant smells, however, seldom seem to distress French organs; and our disgust only amused our companions, who seemed now, for the first time, to perceive that it was not as agreeable as the mignionette beds we had left.

We were not sorry to reach the beautiful promenade of the Champ de Mars and the Fontaine de la Maréchale; a fine walk planted with numerous trees, with alleys diverging towards the village of La Font. Gardens, with high walls, extend for half a league in this direction; for here all the rich merchants of the town have their country-houses, and here they usually spend the summer months. Being enclosed, however, [224] the perfume of the flowers alone, and an occasional opening, betray their existence; and the walk is hot and dusty, without any view of sea, or landscape, to repay the toil. At length we found ourselves at the end of the longest village I ever was in; all composed of good square houses, the backs only of which were visible.

We turned aside, along an avenue planted with young trees, to the château of La Font; but what was our vexation to find at its extremity a range of little huts, and a black, soapy pool, at which numbers of washerwomen were busy at their ceaseless occupation. "*Voilà*!" exclaimed our hostess, in exultation, and with an air which said, You must be gratified now; "*Voilà*! this is the famous fountain *where all the linen of La Rochelle is washed*! and there is the château where my washerwoman lives,—a very respectable mother of a family;—and there are her turkeys and her farm-yard; and there is her market-garden! Oh! it is a sweet spot!"

Beyond the group of *blanchisseuses*—to whom she stopped to talk about her household arrangements,—we saw a ruined tenement flanked with round towers, very much dilapidated, and preserving but little of their ancient character, owing to having been pierced with modern windows; certainly sufficiently ruinous, if that was to be an object of attraction, but not otherwise worthy of note. Girls and women, in wooden [225] shoes, were sitting about in a slovenly yard before it, and we were welcomed as guests by one who got chairs and placed them in sight of the farm-yard wonders for our accommodation: after which she disappeared with our hostess to show the washing establishment, which we declined visiting, in spite of repeated invitations, given with all the *bonhommie* in the world, as if there had really been anything to see but dirty water and soap-suds. We comprehended, afterwards, as we sat musing in the farm-yard, watching the vagaries of some angry turkeys, whose combs became perfectly white with passion, as they contended with their fellows, that the reason of so much pride and admiration on the part of our hostess and the mistress of the *Château* de La Font was, that the washing here was carried on *under cover*; whereas, that operation usually takes place by the side of rivers and brooks, in the open face of nature, without hot water or tubs. No wonder that our apathy annoyed the parties, who had so just a reason to "be vaunty" of so expensive an establishment!

This, then, is all that remains of the castle of La Font, once a place so contended for during the numerous sieges, and which the Duke of Anjou, afterwards Henry III., took possession of, when he ordered his soldiers to destroy all the fountains which supplied [226] the besieged town of La Rochelle with water. On this spot, where Protestants and Catholics fought deadly battles, and disputed every inch of ground, the battle of a couple of turkeys, and the splashing and thumping of a group of washerwomen, were all that existed to interest the beholder.

We walked round the towers and into the field at the back, but scarcely a bit of old

wall repaid our trouble; and finding that the subject of washing became all engrossing to our hostess, who seemed to have forgotten that the hotel of the Three Candlesticks and its dinner-hour had existence, we rose and left the party, directing our way back to the town.

We had managed to make our escape quietly, but our defection once perceived, consternation ensued, and the departure of La Noue from the Protestant camp could scarcely have created more sensation. We were pursued, and accompanied home to the hotel, with repeated apologies for having been allowed to remain alone until we became *ennuyées*; and so persecuted were we with politeness, that we were not sorry to take refuge in the solemn *salle-à-manger*, where, though nearly two hours past dinner-time, we found no preparations yet on foot for our relief. It was impossible, considering the well-meant intention of our hostess, to be angry at anything; but, without exception, the whole arrangement at this most unique of all inns, was the least [227] comfortable that any unfortunate traveller ever had to put up with. Every day we meditated leaving, and every day her good-humour, and a bath and walk at the delicious sea-side, made us abandon our resolve, and—

"Tempered us to bear;
It was but for a day."

Indeed, it was impossible to be otherwise than content, to find oneself seated in one of the pretty alcoves of the Bath gardens, with a magnificent expanse of sparkling sea before the eye, a gentle murmur of waters at the feet, a hundred gleaming sails, white and red, gliding along the surface of the glittering wave, the towers of the distant town shining out from the mass of buildings which surround them, the full harbour, the green alleys, the superb trees, the pretty shrubs, the distant island shores, everything, in fact, smiling and gay and beautiful around. To forget Les Trois Chandeliers, and to grudge the time necessary for finding a new domicile, was a natural consequence; and the want of *matériel* to satisfy the sea-side appetite—sure to be gained after a whole day's sojourn on the beach—became an after consideration, our domestic privations were therefore constantly neglected, bewailed, and forgotten again next day while eating grapes and bread in the beloved alcove. [228]

There appears to be much ease in the circumstances of the inhabitants of La Rochelle: we understood that there were not many persons of very large fortune, but few positively poor. The commerce is inferior now to what it has been; as, for instance, in the *glorious* time of the *slave trade*; but there appears still to be a good deal of bustle on the quays: however, to an English eye, all French trade seems dull when compared to the movement in our own ports. There is always building going on here, as in every other town in France, where one might imagine everything had been at a stand-still for a century, and had suddenly been endowed with new life and activity. The cities of France seem—like the enchanted domains of the marble prince of the Arabian Nights—to have been doomed to a long inaction, and restored to existence by an invisible power. The magic which changed the blue and red fishes into men, was less potent than the wise rule of the present sovereign of the kingdom, under whom his country flourishes; not a town or village being forgotten in his endeavours to rescue them from the long night of wretchedness into which war and misrule had cast them. Everywhere his donations and encouragement cause ruins and filth to disappear, and splendour and neatness to take their place: yet, in spite of all this, and obvious as the benefit is to a traveller who hears of his benefactions wherever he passes, few of the subjects of this considerate and liberal monarch seem sufficiently [229] grateful for his patriotic endeavours to exalt their position. "He has not done *much* for *us*," is the general remark; a rather startling one, when one recollects the hundreds of towns, villages, and bourgs which his care has reached.

The French are certainly neither grateful nor just; for they seldom remember or acknowledge obligation either to individuals or kings. They seem, also, wilfully blind to the blessings of the peace, which Louis Philippe so offends their warlike propensities by insisting on: even while they are restoring all their battered towns and erecting new edifices, of which they are proud enough, they would willingly leave them half done to draw the sword against some windmill giant, and buckle on their armour to encounter some puppet-show termagant.

The public buildings of La Rochelle are fine, but the narrowness of most of the streets in which they are placed, prevents their showing to advantage. If the Palais de

Justice stood in the fine square opposite the cathedral, for instance, it would have a very imposing effect; but, as it is, one passes under its arcades, and under the arcades opposite, half-a-dozen times before its beauties become apparent. It is a modern building of great taste and delicacy, in the style of the Renaissance; the friezes and entablatures being executed with extreme skill and grace. The Bourse is also a [230] beautiful building, having a gallery supported by a colonnade, which connects two of its wings, and which separates the court from a pretty plantation of ornamental trees, which agreeably adorns the edifice. But the ancient building of the Hôtel de Ville is that which most attracts, both for its beauty and its recollections. The taste of Francis I. and Henry II. is evident in its architecture. Henry IV.'s additions are also obvious, and more modern *improvements* have considerably altered its original appearance.

The entrance is comparatively modern and ugly; which is the more to be regretted, since, from this spot the Maire Guiton—the great hero of La Rochelle, spoke to the people when obliged to consent to the capitulation of the town. However, the site itself cannot but be interesting; and all that surrounds it remains as it must have been at his time. The singular gallery, and its ornamented roof in compartments, with a thousand interlaced letters and devices, as mysterious as those at the house of Jacques Cœur, at Bourges, the façade, and statues, and foliage, and ornamental mouldings, the curious windows, the ancient screen, the outer walls, and *tourelles* of the thirteenth, and battlements and door-ways of the fifteenth century, all are singular and attractive.

It was, probably, in this palace that the accident happened to Charles the Seventh, *Le Bien Servi*, told with so much characteristic simplicity by Mezeray. [231]

When the news of the death of his father, the unfortunate Charles the Sixth, was brought to the Dauphin, says the Chronicler, "he was then at Espally, in Auvergne, a castle belonging to the Bishop of Le Puy. He wore mourning only one day; and the next morning changed this sad colour to scarlet. In this habit he went to hear mass in the chapel of the castle; as soon as it was over he ordered the banner of France to be displayed, at the sight of which all present cried out, *Vive le Roy*! And from that time he was recognised and called king by all good Frenchmen. But as he had neither Paris nor Rheims in his possession, he repaired to Poitiers to be crowned, where his parliament then was, and there received the oaths and homage of all who acknowledged him as sovereign. From Poitiers he took his way to La Rochelle, on a warning which was given him that the Duke of Brittany had secret designs, and that he was making warlike and powerful preparations to take possession of this province."

"There he nearly lost his life by a strange invention—the machination of some of his enemies; for, as he was holding his council in a great hall, the beams having been sawn asunder, the ceiling gave way and fell, burying every one beneath the ruins. Jacques de Bourbon, Seigneur de Preaux, died in consequence, several others were grievously wounded, but the king, by a good fortune, almost miraculous, escaped. This [232] was a certain presage, that, after great danger, Divine Providence, in the end, would save him, and draw him forth from the ruins of his empire against all human expectation."

Thus was saved the most ungrateful of all monarchs; one who suffered his friends to exert every nerve in his favour, while he sat carelessly by and saw them betrayed and slaughtered for his sake, of him Lahire said,

"On ne pouvait perdre son royaume plus gaiement."

He was urged to action only, at last, by superstition; and when all was gained for him, had nothing with which to reward his devoted friends but banishment and confiscation, as in the case of Jacques Cœur, his ill-used friend, whose money had gained him back his kingdom. Yet, at last, his death was as wretched as if he had perished in the hall at La Rochelle, for he died of famine, to avoid being poisoned by his unnatural son.

We entered the great hall at the top of the flight of steps in the centre of the building, and followed a party who were visiting the interior, by which means, although the hall was otherwise closed, we were able to see the great picture recently *given by the king*, with his usual liberality, to the town of La Rochelle.

In this *salle* is still seen the marble table, and the chair of the Maire Guiton; a mark [233] across the marble is shown as that made by his sword when, in his agony, he struck

the table, as he rose, indignant at the proposals of surrender made to him. There is nothing else in the hall which is not modern, even its form, which has been changed for the convenience of the meetings which take place here.

The picture is one of very exciting interest, and is very well executed; it is the work of M. Omer Chartel—a native, I believe, of La Rochelle—and is a most appropriate present to the town in which the circumstances it depicts took place.

Jean Guiton was mayor of La Rochelle at the time when, in 1628, Louis XIII., or rather the Cardinal de Richelieu, besieged the Protestants in the town. His mysterious disappearance, the uncertainty attached to his fate, the suspicions of his motives,—notwithstanding the grandeur of his character, and the determination of his resistance,—altogether invest him with singular interest, and every particular of his history which can be collected must be eagerly sought for.

He was appointed to the office of chief-magistrate at a moment of great danger; and on the occasion made this celebrated speech: "Fellow-citizens, I accept the honour you design me, on this condition only, that I shall have a right to pierce with this sword the heart of him who shall be base enough to speak the words of peace, or who shall dare [234] to talk of submission. Should I be cowardly enough to do so, let my blood expiate my crime, and let the meanest citizen be my executioner: the sacred love of his country will exculpate him for the act. Meantime let this poniard remain upon the council-table, an object of terror to the craven and betrayer."

The siege went on, and the unfortunate Rochellois were reduced to the last extremity; famine and misery brought them to the lowest ebb of human suffering; and, in spite of their valour and high resolves, it was evident that nothing but submission could save them from the most horrible fate. Their implacable enemy had wound his coils around their town, the fatal *digue*, thrown up with labour, incredible and impossible to all but hate, prevented any succours reaching them; there it lay, circling their port like a huge constrictor waiting patiently for its exhausted prey,—there was no remedy, and the chief persons of the town repaired in a body to Guiton to represent the state of the inhabitants and to propose a surrender. They bade him look around on the famishing wretches who lay about the streets; they bade him look on his perishing wife and dying child; they described the hopeless state of things, the cruel perseverance of their foes, and they besought him to give consent that they should treat with the besiegers.

"Is it even so?" said Guiton; "you all desire it? Take, then, this poniard; you know the [235] condition on which I accepted office, you know I swore to stab to the heart the first man who should speak of surrender; let me be the victim; but never hope that I will participate in the infamy which you propose to me."

These words produced their effect; those most resolved on submission were turned from their project, and all retired from his presence abashed, and determined to suffer still. But the famine continued, increased, no succour arrived, and human fortitude could endure no more; the Rochellois opened their gates, and Richelieu was triumphant. But where was Jean Guiton?—that question remains to be answered to this day.

He was never seen more; some have thought that he was assassinated by those who feared his resentment or his opposition; or by those who considered him still formidable, though fallen; others imagined that the king, to whom his talents as a seaman were known, and who admired the firmness of his character, had seduced him, by offers of great advantage, to abandon his party and enter his service. There is a tradition that he distinguished himself in the armies of Louis, under an assumed name, and became a terror to the enemies of France. Again, he is said to have been condemned to perpetual imprisonment; and again, to have spent his days in exile from [236] his native land, having fled from the town at the time of its reduction.

Whatever his fate may have been, it is unknown; and conjecture alone fills up the blank. It is difficult to imagine that a man such as he could listen to offers of advantage, or would have betrayed the cause for which he was ready to sacrifice his life: that he died in exile, unable to endure to see the destruction of his hopes, is more probable.

The painter has chosen the moment when the citizens are making their last appeal, and he has succeeded in conveying the feeling and interest of the scene in an eminent

degree; it is impossible to look at the picture without tears, which certainly must speak a great deal in its favour; criticism may come afterwards, and a few defects may make themselves observed; but the first impression is, that of pity and commiseration for the actors in the sad drama represented.

The Mayor of La Rochelle, with a mournful countenance, is listening to the words of Etienne Gentils, who was deputed as spokesman on the sad occasion: the commandant, Perrot, and his son stand by, and by their gestures confirm his statements. The Marquis de Feuquières—a Catholic prisoner, who had become a friend of the Rochellois, and anxiously strove to obtain for them favourable terms—is a prominent person. Paul Yvon, sire de Laden, the former mayor, adds his entreaties— [237] Madame de Maisonneuve, his daughter, has cast herself at the feet of Guiton, with her two children, and points to the pale and fainting wife of the inflexible citizen, who lies prostrate on the ground with his dying child in her arms. The scene is fearful, and the struggle terrible; he holds the dagger in his hand, and his look, though full of sorrow, speaks of no indecision. You feel that it must have been impossible to gain over such a man to the opposite party; and you cannot but thank the artist for rescuing his memory from the reproach endeavoured to be cast upon it.

Altogether, the picture is most appropriate and interesting, and we rejoiced that we were so fortunate as to arrive at La Rochelle just at the moment that it was being placed in the Grande Salle.

With infinitely more interest than before, we now walked down to the Marché Neuf, where several elegant *tourelles*, at the corners of a street of arcades, had previously attracted our attention, for we found that the street was called Rue Guiton, and the tourelles formed part of a beautifully-ornamented house, whose façade runs along one side of the market-place. This was the mansion of the unfortunate mayor, and magnificent it must have been; it is built in the style of the Renaissance, and in the same taste as parts of the Hôtel de Ville; but the carved ornaments are more delicate. [238] It is to be regretted that the whole house could not be preserved as a memorial; but still the little that remains must be hailed with pleasure, though built into shops, and serving as receptacles for different wares. One *tourelle* is particularly sharp and fine, and does not seem to have sustained the slightest injury from time. No doubt the house was very extensive; probably the gardens occupied the space where now the market is kept. In the centre of the square is one of the numerous fountains, for which the town is famous: this is called La Fontaine des Petits Bancs, and no doubt formerly one on the same spot adorned the gardens of the mayoralty.

No sooner had Louis XIII. gained possession of the Protestant city, than he began the work of *Reformation*. He had his monks ready in the camp, "like greyhounds on the slip," and three Minimes from Touraine, who had been sent as almoners, immediately commenced the building of a convent, which took the place of the Huguenot temples, under the name of Notre Dame de la Victoire. Where it stood, now stands a fort and a lazaretto.

Another convent was established at La Font, not a vestige of which remains.

The cathedral was once more restored to the old worship, and on the great Fontaine du Château, in the square in front of it, the enemies of the Protestant party placed [239] *brass* tablets, full of insult to those who had so nobly defended their town, and who, from a generous foe, would have commanded respect. These injurious inscriptions were, however, removed one night; nor was it ever known by whom; and the authorities did not think it advisable to replace them: the marks of their existence still remain.

Another mayor of La Rochelle obtained celebrity in much earlier times, for conduct not quite so heroic as that of Guiton.

Amongst the many scenes of war which have taken place before La Rochelle, not the least curious is one related by Froissart, which occurred at the time when France was making a desperate struggle to recover her towns from the power of England.

The Earl of Pembroke had been sent by his father, King Edward, with the famous Captain Messire Guichart d'Angle, to Poitou, with vessels and money; they set forth, commending themselves to the grace of God and St. George, and, wind and weather favouring them, the gallant fleet soon reached the coast of Poitou, with every prospect of success in their adventure. But the King of France, Charles the Wise, who always

managed to get information of everything done by his enemies—whether by means of the prescience of his astrologers or his spies is not known,—having heard that [240] Guichart had visited England with a view of getting supplies and a new commander, had secretly prepared a hostile fleet ready to way-lay the English. Forty large ships and thirteen barges, well manned and provided, were furnished by the King of Castile, and were commanded by four men whose names were a terror at the period. These were, Ambrosio de Bocca Negra the Grand Admiral of Spain, Cabeza de Vaca, Ferrant de Pion, and Radigole Roux, or Riu Diaz de Rojas.

These valiant captains had moored their fleet opposite the harbour of La Rochelle, awaiting the expected arrival of the English and their allies, for whose sails they looked anxiously forth. It was on the Vigil of St. John the Baptist's Day, 1372, that the Spaniards espied the English approaching in gallant array, and *they* discovered that the entrance to the town of La Rochelle was stopped, and that a contest must ensue.

The English were greatly inferior in ships and numbers; but there was no want of spirit amongst them. The Earl of Pembroke made several knights on the occasion, and every nerve was strained to support the character of British valour. They had fearful odds to sustain, and terrible was the battle which was fought, in which such deeds of arms were done, that Palmerin of England, and Amadis de Gaul, seemed leading on the combatants. But it soon became too evident that the brave handful of English, and [241] the small vessels, were no match for the opposing power. This, the inhabitants of La Rochelle were aware of, but they were ill-disposed to interfere or to assist the English.

When Messire Jean de Harpedane, the seneschal of La Rochelle, heard the *estrif* and *riote* which took place without, and found in what straits his friends were placed, he implored the mayor and people of La Rochelle to arm and go to the relief of the English; he entreated them to send out the numerous vessels which crowded their quays, to aid and comfort those who were so valiantly fighting against odds. But his animated harangue was met with silence and coldness, and he found, to his great vexation, that there was no sympathy for King Edward's people.

Harpedane had been supported in his generous desire by three brave and bold knights, the Lord of Tonnay-Boutonne, Jacques de Surgières, and Maubrun de Linières; and when they found that no one would listen to their representations, they resolved to embark, together with all their people, and go to the succour of the English. At day-break they sailed forth, and, with some difficulty, reached the fleet, where they were joyfully welcomed, notwithstanding that they brought bad news, and confirmed the doubts of the English that no succour awaited them. They, however, resolved to fight to the last, and remained prepared for the attack of the Spaniards, [242] who, favoured by the wind, came down upon them, and casting out irons, grappled with their ships and held them close. Then ensued a terrible contest, in which the greatest part of the English were killed, the treasure-vessels sunk, and all the others destroyed; and the day closed by the capture of the Earl of Pembroke, Guichart d'Angle, and all the brave knights of their company. The Spaniards then made great rejoicings, and sailed away with all their prisoners; but, meeting with adverse winds, they were obliged to put into the port of Santander in Biscay, where they carried them to a fortress and cast them into a deep dungeon, loading them with chains: "No other courtesy had these Spaniards to offer them!"

After this the Rochellois threw off their obedience to the English, and declared themselves friends and subjects of France: the manner in which this event occurred is thus related:—

The mayor of the town, Jean Coudourier, or Chaudrier, was secretly friendly to the French, and had agreed with the famous Captain Ivan, of Wales, who was before La Rochelle, to deliver the town to him. The stratagem he used was characteristic, for the governor of the Castle, Phillippot, though a brave and good knight, was in the case of William of Deloraine,—

"Of letter or line knew he never a one;"

[243]

and by this neglect in his education was he betrayed.

The artful Chaudrier, who appeared to be his intimate friend, invited the governor to dine with him one day, with some of the citizens of the town, and took occasion, before dinner, to say that he had just received news from England which concerned him. The

governor desiring to know them, he replied, "Of course you shall hear; I will fetch the letter, and it shall be read to you." He then went to a coffer and took out an open letter, sealed, indeed, with the great seal of Edward of England, but which, in fact, related to quite other matters; the governor recognised the seal, and was satisfied that it was an official communication; but, as for the writing, "he was ignorance itself" in that. A clerk, in the plot, was ordered to enlighten him as to its contents, and read that the King desired the mayor to send him an exact account of all the forces in La Rochelle and the castle, by the bearer of that letter, as he desired to know, and hoped soon to visit the town himself.

Thereupon the mayor begged that on the day following a muster should be made, in the grand square, of all these men-at-arms, and he offered to lend money to the governor, being so directed by the King, to pay his troops. All this was done as was projected, and the muster took place, every man-at-arms leaving the château, and only a few servants remaining there. Meantime the cunning mayor had provided an [244] ambush of four hundred men, who concealed themselves in *old houses uninhabited which were in the square*, and, when all the troops were assembled, these issued out, and intercepting the return, took possession of the castle, and became masters of the citadel.

Resistance was now in vain: the governor was completely tricked, and the artful traitor had gained his end. La Rochelle became French, and the first step that was taken for the security of the town, in case of its again falling into the hands of the English, was to raze the castle to the ground, and destroy that means of defence. [245]

CHAPTER XII.

ROCHEFORT—THE CURIOUS BONNE—AMERICANISMS—CONVICTS—THE CHARENTE —"TULIPES"—TAILLEBOURG—HENRY THE THIRD—ST. LOUIS—FALSE SECURITY— ROMEGOUX—PUYTAILLÉ.

OUR good fortune in respect to the weather, which we so much enjoyed at La Rochelle, seemed to have taken leave of us when we quitted that charming town and took our way southward. It rained in torrents when we got into the diligence for Rochefort, and continued to do so throughout our journey. The country is very flat for several leagues, and possesses no remarkable beauties; occasionally a turn of the road brought us close to the sea-shore; and its fine waves, dashing against the shingles, made music to our ears, and we regretted leaving it behind us. The sea seems always to me like a friend; it offers, besides, a means of escape; it appears to tell one that a vessel is ready to take the tired wanderer back to England: there is something like *home* in its vicinity, and I can well imagine with what sensations an exile might "come to the beach," and sigh forth his soul towards his native land. But that I had interests [246] still greater awaiting me at Bordeaux, I should have been even more sorry to have quitted this coast; and every time we caught another glimpse of the waves, we hailed them with pleasure.

We arrived at Rochefort, as we had frequently done at other towns in France—where the climate is supposed to be better than our own—in pouring rain; but, this time, with a little difference, inasmuch as the diligence stopped in the midst of a large square outside the town, planted with trees, with hotels in different directions, and the bureau within twenty yards: nevertheless, the conducteur's pleasure was to stop his horses exactly midway between us and shelter: all the doors were thrown open, the horses were taken off, and the passengers were free to get out and paddle to the nearest inn as best they might. Calling and exclaiming were of no use; no one attended to our remonstrances; and, scrambling out *over the wheel*—for the coupé has not the advantage of a step—while a deluge of rain and a hurricane were striving against us, we managed to reach the wet ground; but, being required, peremptorily, to show ourselves at the bureau, we were not permitted to wade to an opposite hotel, and, therefore, took our station, with other discontented individuals, under a shed where building was going on, and where our wet feet stuck in the lime and mortar which covered the floor.

While we waited till our conducteur had ceased to rave at his horses and assistants, a [247] sudden cry warned us to remove, for the diligence, pushed in by several men, was coming upon us to discharge its baggage. Having escaped this danger by flying into a neighbouring passage, we obeyed the summons of our tyrant; and having discharged his demands, a latent pity seemed to take possession of his bosom, for he allowed us to depart, having bestirred himself to send our baggage before us to the nearest hotel. There we found the hour of the *table d'hôte* dinner had arrived, and much entreaty was necessary to induce the hostess to permit us to dine alone, the absurdity of the wish seeming to strike her as extraordinary:—"It would be so much more gay down stairs," she observed. Wet and tired, we had no mind for the festivity which might reign in her halls, and at length gained our point: having served us, a pretty young country maid, in a large cap, who had looked at us with wonder from the first, seemed resolved to fill up the little leisure left her, by contemplating closer the extraordinary [248] animals that chance had brought to her mistress's hotel. She put her hands on her sides, and, opening her black eyes wide, gave us a long stare, exclaiming, "Eh, mon Dieu! est-ce donc possible!"

We asked her if many English came to Rochefort; to which she replied, as we expected, that she had never *seen one* before. We wished her good night; she was some time in taking our hint, but, as she was good-humoured, her determined delay did not annoy us, as a similar intrusion had done at La Rochelle, when the cross *bonne*, on the evening of our arrival, took her seat at the window, and looked out into the street to amuse herself; and, on our intimating that she might retire, turned round fiercely, and remarked, "You can't be going to bed yet." These *Americanisms* are common enough in this most polite of nations; but are simply amusing from such unsophisticated beings as the attendant at Rochefort.

Rochefort is a handsome, clean, open, well-built town, quite without antiquities; but, as our next destination was Saintes—one of the oldest towns in France—we were content with its more modern appearance, though not with its pavement, which is particularly bad and rugged. It is surrounded with very handsome ramparts, or boulevards, planted with fine trees, and the principal streets have avenues, in one of which the large market is held, which has a picturesque effect—the high poplars and [249] spreading acacias throwing their flickering shadows on groups of peasants in lively-coloured costumes, giving a brilliancy and life to the scene, which is not found in the other parts of the remarkably dull town of Louis XIV. Rochefort is the third important port in France; but as nothing can be so uninteresting to me, who do not understand these details, as to look on fortifications, and the bustle of a port when there is no sea to repay one—and Rochefort is only on the Charente, four leagues from the sea—I did not attempt to visit the quays; the hospitals are said to be fine; also, the school of artillery, and several commercial establishments of great consequence; but the trade of Rochefort does not appear very flourishing, to judge by the desolate appearance of the streets and squares.

The only place we visited, was the Jardin des Plantes, which is charmingly laid out in alleys and parterres; but a circumstance occurred which entirely destroyed the pleasure of our walk, and brought thoughts of woe and crime into the midst of beautiful nature and elegant art. As we hung over the parapet of a wall, we observed a party of men passing beneath, dressed in a singular costume: they were singing rather vociferously, and it struck me that, as they moved, a clanking sound accompanied their steps, for which I feared to account. As I turned away from these, my eye was [250] attracted by a group of gardeners, in an alley near, who wore the same dress of dull yellowish red. One of them was a tall, fine, handsome man, who seemed busy in his occupation; the others were indolently using their spades and brooms; and as they

moved, I saw that all had irons round their legs. A shudder came over me, and a sort of fear, which I could not shake off, as I looked round to see that we did not share these groves alone with such companions, of whom we were not long in taking our leave;—not that there was anything hostile or alarming in their appearance; but, though one may every day jostle a robber or a murderer, ignorantly, in the streets, yet to be "innocent of the knowledge" of his character, is much more agreeable to one's nerves, than the certainty of his being a culprit.

Although we had taken every precaution, by warning all the servants of our intention of departing by the steam-boat for Saintes,—had paid our bill, and been ready an hour before the time, yet the *garçon* who was to accompany us to the quay was nowhere to be found when we required his aid. When a diligence is to start, it is the custom, as we well knew, always to announce its time of departure an hour, or sometimes two, before it goes, as the *monde* is supposed to be never in time; but, even in France, time must be kept when tide is in question; and we, therefore, were very much afraid that our [251] dilatory waiter would cause us to lose our passage. It would seem that the French can do nothing without being frightened into action; and that they enjoy putting themselves into frights and fevers; for our porter, when he did appear, had to hurry, with his great barrow, through numerous streets, calling all the way, and begging that the boat would stop for *des dames*, till he was almost exhausted. The captain, who must have been used to these scenes, took compassion on him, I suppose, and we stept at length into the steamer, amidst the congratulations of the crowd, and a whole host of porters, who brought every article of baggage singly on board, in order to make the most of their zeal.

Henry IV., who liked to pay compliments to his people, and gain

"Golden opinions from all sorts of men,"

was accustomed, it is said, to call the river Charente "the prettiest stream in his kingdom;" and it certainly deserves much admiration, for the borders are rich, varied, and graceful; and the voyage along its verdant banks is extremely agreeable on a calm, fine day: such as we were fortunate enough to choose. There is no want of variety; for heights, crowned with towers and turrets and woods and meadows, succeed each other rapidly, offering pleasing points of view, and reviving recollections [252] of ancient story; and though the Charente by no means deserves to be compared to the Loire, ambitious as the natives of the department are that it should be considered equal in beauty and interest to that famous river; yet there is quite enough charm belonging to it to please the traveller who seeks for new scenes.

In few parts of France do the English travel so little as in this direction; and I believe the pretty river Charente has been rarely visited. A summer at La Rochelle could, nevertheless, be pleasantly spent, and the facilities of steam-boats in so many directions, is a great advantage, as there is much worth seeing in this agreeable country.

We were much struck with the extremely beautiful effect produced by the fairy-like, delicate appearance of a sort of crocus—of a pale, clear, lilac colour—which entirely covered the meadows, the light as it shone through their fragile stems making them look aërial. All along the banks, for leagues, these pretty flowers[8] spread themselves over the ground, in a perfect cloud of blossoms, reaching to the very wave, and, shaking their gossamer heads to the breeze, gleaming their golden centres through the transparent petals, like a light in an alabaster vase. As we admired them, a young woman near us, in the boat, shook her head, and exclaimed that we were not, perhaps, [253] aware that those pretty '*tulipes*' were deadly poison, and that very lately, a man of a village near this, had employed their bulbous roots as onions, and given the soup made with them to his wife and a neighbour, to whom he bore a spite: that they both died, and he was found to be the murderer, and suffered accordingly. My thoughts recurred, as she spoke, to the convicts in the garden of Rochefort, and with no very pleasant sensations. I was sorry she had spoilt the pleasure I had taken in looking at these beautiful flowers, which she seemed to regard with horror.

There are several fine suspension-bridges over the river; this part of the country is celebrated for them; that of Charente is considered very remarkable of its kind, and it is a usual excursion from La Rochelle to visit it.

At St. Savinien is a venerable church and tower, which make an imposing

appearance, on a height, and the ruins of the once redoubtable castle of Taillebourg frown majestically from the rocky hills they cover. All this coast was the scene of the contentions of our early kings; and Cœur de Lion and his father were actors in several of the dramas here performed.

The great hero, but disobedient son, Richard, after being forced by Henry II. to quit Saintes where he had entrenched himself, fled to this very fortress of Taillebourg, and [254] there defied attack. Henry III. of England, more than half a century later, made this part of the river the theatre of his contentions with St. Louis, as Joinville relates. Henry had disembarked at Royan—now a fashionable bathing-place, at the mouth of the Charente—and resolved, if possible, to gain back all that John Lackland had lost, led his army from town to town, taking possession of all in his way, till the sudden arrival of St. Louis stopped his career. The King of France laid siege to Tonnay-Boutonne, of which strong place scarcely anything now remains, took it, and reconquered several other fortresses. At length Louis sat down before Taillebourg, then held by Geoffrey de Rancon for the King of England. It was here, in these crocus-covered meadows, opposite the blackened walls of this crumbling ruin, that the great monarch pitched his tents and placed his camp, intending from thence to attack his enemy at Saintes.

Henry, meantime, felt secure that the Lord of Taillebourg would stand his friend, and that his strong castle would be a powerful protection to the English army, and he should be able materially to molest the French; but the grim Baron de Rancon was in his heart a foe to the English, and had embraced their cause upon compulsion: he waited but a favourable moment to betray them; and when, from his towers, he saw the French army encamped in the meadows beneath them, he threw open his gates [255] and sallied forth, followed by a numerous band of warriors, visited King Louis in his tent, and offered him his castle to abide in. His invitation was accepted, and Louis and his knights returned with him to his castle.

Henry, hearing of this arrangement, took counsel with his general, Hugues de Lusignan, and removed his head-quarters immediately to the neighbourhood of De Rancon's fortress, placing his troops in the meadows immediately opposite those occupied by the soldiers of Louis; the river only separated them, and across it was a long bridge, part of the ruins of which, evidently of Roman construction, may still be seen far away in the flat meadows. Henry's force was much inferior to that of his opponent, and he declined coming at once to battle, as Louis desired: he drew off his soldiers, leaving a strong defence on the bridge; by this movement wishing to indicate that he did not intend engaging; but the French could not be restrained, and Louis, giving way to their impetuosity, charged the defenders of the bridge at the head of five hundred knights. Immediately the river was covered with soldiers, who leaped into boats, and, hastening across the river, fell upon the English with great fury. The shock was well sustained; Duke Richard, brother to Henry, Lusignan, De Montford, and others, brought up their troops to the conflict. St. Louis ran great risks that day; for [256] Joinville says, that for every man with him the English had a hundred: as he was in the thick of the fray, his life was in great peril; but he was successful, and remained in possession of the bridge, and the left bank of the Charente. Had he pursued his advantage, the English might have been entirely routed; but, reflecting that the next day was Sunday, and should be devoted to prayer, he consented to the truce proposed by Duke Richard, and ordered his men to re-cross the bridge.

Richard cunningly took advantage of this circumstance, and hurrying back to his brother's tent, exclaimed, "Quick, quick! not a moment is to be lost; let us fly or we are defeated!" As rapidly as possible the tents were struck, the baggage prepared, and every man in readiness; and, in the darkness of night, King Henry mounted his good steed, and never slackened rein till he reached the walls of Saintes, followed by his soldiers, who, harassed and fatigued, were not sorry to find themselves once more in security.

The astonishment of Louis was great, when, at break of day, he looked from his castle windows, and saw no vestige of the great army which had covered the country on the preceding night: he very quietly ordered his troops to cross the bridge, and they took possession of the spot just left by the English. The next day he prepared to march on Saintes, and sent couriers forward to reconnoitre the country: a shepherd, [257] who had observed these movements, hastened to warn the Count de la Marche, who, with his two sons, and his vassals, were in the Faubourg de St. Eutrope. Hugues de

Lusignan marched forth immediately to meet the French *avant-garde*, without naming his intention to the King of England who was lodged in the town.

Count Alfonse de Boulogne coming up at the moment with his party, joined the *avant-garde*, and a furious combat took place: the first who fell was the châtelain of Saintes, who held the banner of the Count de la Marche. On both sides resounded the terrible war-cries of "Aux armes! Aux armes!" and "Royaux! Royaux!" and "Mont-joie! Mont-joie!" according to the usage of both nations.

These cries, the neighing of horses, and the clash of arms, were heard to a great distance, and reached the ears of the King of England, who demanded the cause: he was told that the Count de la Marche, resolved to repair his honour, which he considered that their late retreat had sullied, had attacked the French. At this news Henry called for his armour, assembled his warriors, and hastened to the succour of his father-in-law. At this juncture arrived King Louis. Mortified to be forestalled by an enemy, who he considered had basely quitted the field, he gave the signal, and the soldiers of France fell pell-mell on the Anglo-Aquitainians, who received them firmly. [258]

A general mêlée then took place beneath the walls of Saintes; and in the midst of the vines, amongst the groves, in the fields, on the high roads, a frightful carnage ensued.

The French fought with fury, increased by the resistance they met with; the English ranks began to thin; overpowered by numbers, their battalions became broken, the men turned their backs, and fled in disorder to the gates of the town, to which the French pursued them with fearful slaughter. In vain Henry and Hugues de Lusignan endeavoured to rally the dispersed troops; their expostulations were drowned in the noise and confusion, and they were themselves carried away by the stream of fugitives. Many of the French, in the ardour of the combat, entered the town with the enemy, and were made prisoners. Louis then sounded a retreat, and fixed his camp a short distance from the walls.

The following days were employed in secret negotiations between the Count de la Marche and St. Louis, which ended in their reconciliation, and the Count's abandonment of the English monarch. Meantime Henry, with his usual carelessness, after the first trouble was over, blindly deceived himself into security, and resolved to spend the heats of the month of August in quiet and enjoyment, forgetting that he was little better than a prisoner in Saintes, and taking no heed of the treachery of his friends without. Four days he allowed to pass as if no enemy were at his gates; he even made parties of pleasure, and seemed resolved to think no more of the war, when [259] he was suddenly roused from his false security by his brother, Richard, who had been warned of the dangers which threatened them by a French knight, whose life he had saved in Palestine.

By this means the self-deceiving monarch learnt that preparations were being made by Louis to invest the town with all his forces, and that the next day at day-break the siege was to commence. When this intelligence reached Henry he was just about to sit down to table; at the same time he learnt that the citizens of Saintes proposed to treat with his foes; and he had not an instant to lose. He promptly gave orders that the houses of the *bourgeois* should *be set on fire*, and, mounting his horse, set out, hungry and fatigued as he was after a day's excursion of amusement, towards Blaye, as fast as speed could take him. His captains were soon informed of his flight; they left their half-cooked viands, as did all the army, who were still fasting, and the confusion of departure exceeded belief; all hurried towards Blaye, where they sought refuge, exhausted and worn, and but for a few berries which they gathered to satisfy the cravings of their hunger, they had nearly all perished on the way.

The following day the citizens and clergy of Saintes, in solemn procession, repaired to the camp of St. Louis, bringing with them the keys of the town, and swearing oaths of fealty. The King of France entered in triumph, occupied all the evacuated posts, and [260] placed a garrison in the old citadel of the capital. His next care was to subdue all the lords of the neighbouring castles, which, having done, he commenced building a new line of walls to replace the dilapidated Anglo-Roman line, which was falling in ruins. After this, says the chronicler, St. Louis returned to his dominion of France, leaving garrisons in all the strong places of Saintonge and Aunis.

The ruins of the castle of Taillebourg serve, like most fortresses in France now-a-days, as promenades to the town to which they belong; all along the top of the massive

walls, which extend to some distance, is a line of open balustrades, which has, from the river, a very ornamental and somewhat Italian effect. Spreading trees rise above this, which appear to form part of a plantation within, and placed, as the castle is, on a very great elevation, at a turn of the river, which it must have commanded, it has a peculiarly imposing and picturesque effect. The town by no means answers to the beauty of its promenades; but that is very frequently the case, and need not be a matter of surprise. A series of rugged rocks, continued for some distance along the shore, add much to the beauty of the scenery. The next castle is that of Bussac, which retains a part of its old walls and towers, though a modern building fills up the vacancies between. It stands well, and must have been a fitting neighbour to Taillebourg; beyond this is a magnificent wood, Le Bois de Sainte Marie, which covers [261] the hills for nearly a league, and has a very grand appearance.

During the wars of religion the river Charente, from the first fortress we passed of Tonnay Charente, the site of which and a few stones alone remain, to the town of Saintes, was a continued theatre of contention and violence. One scene is curious; its hero was another of the redoubtable barons of Taillebourg named Romegoux, whose singular expedition is thus recounted:

The town of Saintes, having changed masters several times, was in the hands of the Huguenot party, and the governor was the lord of Bussac when Charles IX. sent the Duke of Anjou into that part of the country; and, under his orders, the Sieur de la Rivière-Puytaillé made several attempts on the town; but Bussac's vigilance foiled him continually. As he was returning to his fortress of Tonnay-Charente, there to wait for another occasion of molesting the enemy, in passing the castle of Taillebourg he was attacked by the Huguenot garrison. After a brisk skirmish the latter returned to his stronghold, growling like a disturbed bear, and longing for an opportunity to vent his rage.

Meantime, Puytaillé was again summoned to the walls of Saintes, for the citizens had risen; and fearing that an army would besiege them if they held for the Protestants, they resolved to turn out those who were within their walls, and give themselves up to the king's officer. Bussac was obliged therefore to yield, and was allowed to march out [262] of one gate as Puytaillé marched in at the other.

When the Baron de Romegoux heard this he was greatly enraged, and resolved to make an effort to regain the place; he accordingly invited five or six hundred men, whom he thought as zealous as himself, to a rendezvous, but only twenty-five attended his summons. This handful showing themselves little disposed to attempt so perilous an adventure, Romegoux was almost distracted with vexation; he wept, tore his hair, and used every entreaty he could think of to induce them to join him, for he was certain of success. At length he succeeded in inspiring them with his own ardour, and they consented to accompany him wherever he should lead them.

Armed with axes, and furnished with ladders, they set out, in the middle of the night, for Saintes. They fixed their ladder near the Porte Aiguières; as they were mounting, Romegoux heard a patrol passing; as soon as it was gone he and his companions lost no time in hurrying into the town; he divided his party into two, placing them at a small distance from the rampart, to protect his retreat in case of surprise; then, followed by the most determined of his band, he marched straight to the lodging of Combaudière, who had been left by Puytaillé in his place to command in his absence.

Romegoux broke open the door, surprised the governor in his bed, forced him to rise, and, without giving him time to dress himself, obliged him to march before them; [263] but so paralysed was he with terror, that he had scarcely the power to move. One of the Huguenots, therefore, placed him on his shoulders, and carried him rapidly off towards the Porte Aiguières, intending to descend by the ladders which had given them entrance: but their companions had, in the meantime, broken the bar of the gate, and lowered the drawbridge. Romegoux and his people made their exit in good order through this door, to the sound of the tocsin, the drums and the cries of alarm of the garrison and citizens, who, awaked from their slumbers, were hurrying hither and thither in the utmost confusion. The victorious party paused only at the end of the faubourg, to allow the governor to dress himself, and then went off with their prize.

Romegoux, however, though he gained great reputation by this daring adventure, was unable to carry his design further, owing to want of means, and he was so disappointed and annoyed at being forced to stop in mid-career, that he was nearly

dying with vexation.

In this castle of Taillebourg was afterwards established a Protestant chapel, and *there* were buried, after the fatal battle *des Arènes*, at Saintes, the *four brothers* Coligny, of whom d'Aubigné says, "They were similar in countenance, but still more in probity, prudence, and valour."

After a very agreeable voyage, we, at length, saw the towers and spires of the old [264] town of Saintes rising from the waters, and landed, for the first time, *from a steam-boat*, without much confusion: we resigned ourselves at once to the care of a very little boy, who bustled about with great importance, and conducted us in triumph to the Hôtel de La Couronne, by a long and beautiful boulevard of majestic trees, which gave a very imposing impression of the town. [265]

CHAPTER XIII.

SAINTES—ROMAN ARCH OF TRIUMPH—GOTHIC BRIDGE—THE COURS—RUINED CITY—CATHEDRAL—COLIGNY—RUINED PALACE—ST. EUTROPE—AMPHITHEATRE—LEGEND OF STE. EUSTELLE—THE PRINCE OF BABYLON—FÊTE—THE CÔTEAU—STE. MARIE.

Of course the earliest object which one hastens to see in Saintes, is the famous Roman arch. We beheld it first by moon-light, when its large, spectre-like proportions, as it stood in shadow, at the extremity of the bridge, gave a solemn character to the scene suitable to its antiquity: the uncertain light softened all the inequalities of its surface, and it seemed a monument of the magnificence of the days of old, which time and tempest had spared; but it was far otherwise in the morning, when we paid it our second visit, and a broad glare of sun-light brought out all its age and *infirmities*: then [266] became apparent the rents and ravages which had entirely deprived it of the original polish of its surface; and it seems to totter, as if the first gale would hurl its ruins into the waters beneath. Not a stone looks in its place; they appear as if confusedly heaped one on the other, after having been destroyed and built up again: it is, therefore, with infinite surprise that you find, on approaching nearer and nearer, that its solidity is still so great—that the melted lead inserted between the stones, which binds it so firmly, is as strong as ever, and that parts of the interior of the arch are even and smooth; much, however, of this has been restored. After looking at this magnificent arch a little while, you begin to imagine it, in the glare of day, as perfect as it appeared when the moon-beams played above, and showed it in such perfection; and all the modern buildings round, look like houses built of dominos compared to its gigantic form. It is as if an old Roman were standing at the entrance of the town, silent, stern, and proud, and gazing with contempt on the ephemeral creatures of an age he knew nothing of, and who were unworthy to pass him by.

Everything about this singular monument is mysterious: it seems difficult to determine how it came in its present position, for the bridge on which it stands is of considerably later date than itself, although that is of Gothic construction. It would [267] appear that, at the time it was built, the waters of the Charente did not run in that direction, and having changed their course, the bridge was built from necessity, and joined the arch which existed long before: but then it must always have stood as high above the bed of the river as it does now, which puzzles one again. It is true that traces are still to be found of the ancient bed of a river, and, in a house in the Faubourg des Dames, an arch, called by tradition *Le Pont-Amillon*, has been discovered.

The date of the monument is given as the year 774 of Rome, and 21 A.D. It has two circular arches, supported by Corinthian pillars, and a broad entablature; on which the curious can read an inscription, some of the letters of which, with difficulty, we could decipher. Above the cornice, is a double range of battlements, which have a most singular appearance, as they do not, by any means, amalgamate with the rest of the building: they are, nevertheless, very boldly constructed, and appear to form part of the original design. There is, however, no doubt that they are the work of a Gothic hand, and may, probably, date with the bridge. The stones of which it is composed, are masses of four and five French feet long, and two and a half thick, placed at equal

distances, without cement, and rendered solid by the introduction of melted lead and iron hooks, some of which may still be seen in the intervals between the stones. The [268] stone is from the neighbourhood of Saintes, and is full of shells and fossils: its height is twenty metres, French measurement: and it is three metres thick, and fifteen wide.

Great precautions were taken, in 1666, to preserve this precious monument, at the expense of M. de Bassompierre, Bishop of Saintes; but so disjointed are some of its parts, that, except the utmost care is continued, it can scarcely be expected to survive the demolition of the ancient bridge, on which it stands, and which is doomed to destruction.

I heard with consternation that such was about to be the case, and that a suspension-bridge is to replace it. What they will do with *the old Roman* it is difficult to say, or how they are to preserve it, standing, as it does, almost in the centre of the river, or what effect it will produce in so isolated a position, if permitted to stand, are questions which naturally occur. It is to be hoped that the inhabitants will delay its fate as long as possible, and, considering how very much must be done in Saintes before, by any possibility, it can be made to approach to anything like a habitable town, it seems a pity that one of its most interesting and famous possessions should be torn from it. When its Arch of Triumph falls, much of the glory of Saintes will fall with it; but it will probably one day become a commercial town; the steam-boats, which [269] now stop below the venerable old bridge, will sweep over the spot where it stood for ages, and the old Roman arch will be considered in the way, and will be *removed*!

The inscriptions on the *attic*, which is divided into three parts, I give from a work on the subject, as it may interest *archæological readers*:—

INSCRIPTION ON THE ATTIC, NEXT THE TOWN.

> "To Germanicus Cæsar, son of Tiberius Augustus, grandson of the divine Augustus, great grandson of the divine Julius, augur, priest of Augustus, consul for the second time, emperor for the second time.
>
> "To Tiberius Cæsar, son of the divine Augustus, grand pontiff, consul for the fourth time, emperor for the eighth time the year of his tribunitian power.
>
> "To Drusus Cæsar, son of Tiberius Augustus, grandson of the divine Augustus, great grandson of the divine Julius, pontiff, augur."

INSCRIPTION ON THE FRIEZE, NEXT THE TOWN.

> "Caius Julius Rufus, son of Caius Julius Ottuaneunus, grandson of Caius Julius Gededmon, great grandson of Epotsorovidus, priest, consecrated to the worship of Rome and Augustus in the temple, which is at the confluence, in his quality of intendant of works, has made the dedication of this monument."

The inscription on the frieze, at the side of the Faubourg, is the same repeated.

There seems, however, to be much uncertainty as to who the monument was dedicated to, and the subject is a constant source of dispute with the learned: the [270] inscription can hardly be said to exist at present, so much obliterated are the letters; but enough seems to remain to revive inquiry and puzzle conjecture. The arch is more massive, but scarcely so beautiful as the arches at Autun, with which we were so much delighted: it is much more conspicuous and higher: both of those being on low ground. There is no occasion to seek for this of Saintes; for it stands, like a huge baron of old, guarding the river: we saw a company of soldiers pass beneath it, as we lingered at a distance, and we felt astonished to think how, in the midst of the centuries of violence it had seen, in all the stormings and batterings and besiegings, it could possibly have escaped, and be still there, a monument of the power of the most redoubtable warriors of all.

Saintes is one of the most extraordinary towns I ever saw: it somewhat reminded me of Autun, of Provins, of Château Thierry; yet it is very different from either, and in fact

"None but itself can be its parallel."

It is separated into three towns, quite distinct one from the other, yet joined, like a trefoil. As you stand on the broad boulevard leading above the first town, the other two spread out beneath on either hand. The churches of Notre Dame, of St. Eutrope, and the cathedral of St. Pierre, each claim a part.

Descending the *Cours*, the aspect of that division which claims the stupendous [271]
church of St. Eutrope[9] is wondrously imposing. I never beheld anything more so, and we stood some time on the high-raised road which commanded the view, rapt in astonishment at the ruined grandeur before us. The enormous tower of St. Eutrope rises from a mass of buildings which appear Lilliputian beside it; gardens and vines and orchards slope down from it, and low in the meadows a long series of arches betray the celebrated amphitheatre—another of the wonders of this remarkable place. What convents and churches and castles and towers have been cleared away to form the *Cours* which extend from town to town, I cannot say; but it appears as if not a quarter of the original site can now be occupied; indeed, one is perfectly bewildered at every step with the piles of ruin and rubbish scattered about, the remains of old buildings destroyed to make room for new, which, begun and left unfinished, or completed and then abandoned, have added a series of modern ruins to those which are antique. There is not a single street, or place, or road in Saintes, which can be called finished: materials for building are scattered in all directions, and, in many parts, moss and weeds have grown up amidst the piles of stone destined to construct some new house or temple: in the meantime the streets are without pavement, or as bad, hollow, damp, dirty, and dreary; the houses are unpainted, slovenly, neglected, [272]
and ugly: the churches are dilapidated, or but half restored; grass grows in the newly-projected squares, and all is in a state of confusion and litter. It seems as if the task of regenerating Saintes, rebuilding it from the ground, in fact, had been undertaken in a moment of desperation, and the project had been abandoned as suddenly as conceived.

All attention seems now directed to the river side. The erection of a new quay absorbs every mind; and all the workmen that can be procured are busy hurrying to and fro, amidst the mud and water of the spot where passengers land from the steam-boat. One would wonder why any body should think of coming to Saintes at all, except from curiosity, as we did; but that it is the direct route to the Gironde; where, from Mortagne, another steam-boat, in communication with the Charente, conveys passengers to Bordeaux. Since the establishment of these boats a great change has been operated in Saintes, and probably its condition will now improve.

Notwithstanding this *too true* description of the once important capital of Saintonge, it possesses an interest which may well attract the antiquarian visitor to its walls. The ruins of the Arch and those of the Amphitheatre alone would be attraction enough for many; and as the hotels are remarkably good, clean, and comfortable, a sojourn of a [273]
few days in Saintes will quite repay the traveller who comes, as we did, out of his way to visit its battered walls. We were not fortunate, as at La Rochelle, in the weather, for most of our excursions were performed in the midst of showers. I cannot but think, from the experience of several years' travelling, that there is even more uncertainty in the weather in France than in England; and I was particularly struck with the fact, that the nearer we approached the south, the colder, damper, and less genial it became. It is a mere absurdity to talk of the difference of our climate and that of France, in any part: it is assuredly *warmer* in England, and not a whit more changeable.

We took advantage of the first gleams, after a wet night, to explore the strange old town, once said to contain a hundred thousand inhabitants, and, both in the time of the Gauls and the Romans, to have been of the utmost importance.

The cathedral is a monument of the violence of religious fanaticism; it was almost torn to pieces by the Huguenots; in the sixteenth century, all its fine architecture was defaced, its saints dragged from their niches, and its ornaments destroyed. The principal entrance must, originally, have been very grand; but is so much injured that little but its form remains. The most remarkable part of the building is the enormous tower, which rises to a gigantic height above all the edifices of the town on the side next the river, vying with that of St. Eutrope in the opposite quarter. This tower is [274]
supported by flying buttresses, of great strength and beauty: the Calvinists had

resolved on its destruction, and had already begun its demolition, when it was represented to Admiral Coligny that the fall of so gigantic a mass would probably occasion serious accidents; and that if it were fortified it might be turned to great advantage for the defence of the town. Fortunately, this advice was taken, and the fine tower remains in all its stupendous grandeur, with its flying buttresses, crocketed pyramids and arches, unique in their form; it is said to be one of the largest in Europe, and one of the finest specimens of the decorated style of Gothic architecture.

The interior of the church is so much altered as to have little of the original left; however, a few bits show how fine it must once have been: the mean buildings which formerly hemmed it in are removed, and an open space is left, which allows it to be seen to some advantage.

On the spot where once stood the capitol, the civil hospital now crowns the height, and a fine view of the country and the river may be had from that point, though the road to it is sufficiently difficult to deter one from approaching it. A fine military hospital is placed in an elevated position answering to the other. The college, founded by Henry IV., is said to be good, and the prison very admirable in its way. The rest of [275] the public buildings are no more to be admired than the private ones.

We remarked a very handsome house, forming one side of a neglected square, whose grand terraces and fine wings spoke it something of consequence. We found it was once the bishop's palace, but had been long left to go to ruin; and a part of it was now used by some Sisters of Charity for a school. It was but of a piece with the rest of Saintes, desolate and degraded, and "fallen from its high estate."

St. Eutrope lay in our way to the ruins of the great amphitheatre, and we paused as we passed it at an open door, which was too tempting a circumstance to be neglected on a rainy morning, when there might be some trouble in finding the sacristan, and we rightly judged this would lead to the famous crypt, the object of admiration and surprise to antiquarians. Down a steep inclination we pursued our way towards a dark nook, and there, through an iron grating, we discovered before us the subterranean church, of immense size, and in perfect preservation; its massive pillars and sharpcut capitals, its high-curved roof and circular arches, all perfect, and its floor and walls undergoing restoration. We resolved to see it more in detail hereafter, and, in the meantime, went on to a lower part of the dim passage, where, turning aside, we found ourselves close to a huge well of fearful depth, all round which were ranged stone [276] coffins, of primitive forms, one, in particular, still preserving its cover, and of a most mysterious shape, which must have belonged to some early inhabitant of this holy pile.

While we were speculating on the subject, a voice at a distance reached our ears, requesting to know how long we intended to remain in that retreat: we returned, and found, stationed at the door by which we had entered, a young woman with pails of water by her side: she laughed good-humouredly, and remarked—"I would not disturb you as I saw you looking through the bars of the old church as I came back from drawing water; but you staid so long that I began to think it time to call out, as I must lock the door and go home now." We accordingly accompanied her out, resolving to resume our visit on our return from the Arènes, to which she directed us.

We followed a very steep path; and, keeping a range of ruined arches in view, threaded the mazes of a long lane, till we arrived at the irregular space where once stood the famous Roman amphitheatre. The diameter of this building is the same as that of Nîmes, and it, apparently, could have held about five thousand spectators: the ruins are scattered over a very large extent in confused heaps; but there are a great many vaulted arches, small and great, still standing, some covered with weeds and grass, and overhung with wild vines and flowering shrubs. There appears little doubt that here was a Naumachia, from different discoveries that have been made of vaults [277] which must have conducted the waters to this spot. The meadows and little hills all around are covered with remains of this once important place of amusement; and the labourer is for ever turning up, with his spade or plough, coins and capitals and broken pillars and pavement, belonging to the period of its existence.

There still exists in the centre of what was the Naumachia, a well, called La Fontaine de Sainte-Eustelle, to which miraculous virtues are even now attributed, and to which the following legend belongs:

Eustelle was the daughter of an officer high in command in Saintonge: a man of

great power and severity, and a pagan: he had a particular horror of the sect called Christians, who had begun to spread themselves over the country, and were slowly, but surely, making their way. It was far different with his beautiful daughter, whose nurse having imbibed the principles of the true faith, had communicated her knowledge to her foster-child, who listened with delight to her lessons, and, from year to year, as she grew up, more than ever abhorred the superstitious observances of her father and her friends. In the huge hollow stones worshipped as gods, she saw only profanation; and, while compelled to offer sacrifice to an imaginary deity, she in her heart addressed prayers to a superior Being, that he would condescend to enlighten [278] those who were led astray, and assist her in her secret faith.

It was at this period that her father resolved to bestow her in marriage on the son of Xerxes, King of Babylon; and as the prince was shortly expected to arrive in Saintonge, he bade her prepare to receive her intended husband. Eustelle heard these tidings with despair, secretly resolving never to become the wife of a heathen, such as she was certain the Prince of Babylon must be: her tears and entreaties, however, had no effect on her father, who began to suspect her change of faith, and resolved to secure the alliance at once. Preparations on a magnificent scale were being made, and in a few days the bridegroom elect was expected to arrive, when news was suddenly brought that the prince had disappeared from his father's court, and was nowhere to be found. The father of Eustelle hastened to her chamber to prepare her for the disappointment, when, to his surprise, he found her not; and on the couch where she usually slept a golden cross was laid; but no one could give any account of her. The country was searched in all directions in vain; and it was at length supposed that Eustelle had destroyed herself.

It was, however, far otherwise, for, in a cavern by the side of a fountain, on the spot where now stand the ruins of the Roman amphitheatre, Eustelle had concealed herself, having been guided thither by a shining light, which flitted before her to the [279] spot, and rested at the mouth of the cavern: there she was miraculously supported, drinking only of the waters of the fountain, which not only served her for nourishment, but so increased her beauty, that she was a marvel to behold. One morning, as she came forth from her cavern to perform her usual devotions at the side of the fountain, she was surprised to see a young man kneeling on the ground in devout prayer, so absorbed that he did not perceive her approach; but as he raised his eyes, her figure becoming suddenly visible to him, he exclaimed, "Oh, blessed Heaven! my prayers are then heard—the Holy Virgin is herself before me!" Eustelle started, and amazed at his words, demanded who he was, and whether he was indeed a Christian, like herself, as his exclamation made it appear. "Beautiful lady," replied he, "since you are not, as I supposed, a heavenly visitant, know that I am Eutrope, the son of the King of Babylon, fled from a marriage which I detested with a pagan of this country. I am, indeed, a Christian and a priest, and obliged to conceal my faith from the persecutors of those who hate us. The time will come when we can declare ourselves, for already we increase in numbers as in faith."

Eustelle, as she looked upon his features and heard the soft tones of his voice, felt a momentary regret that he had been so precipitate in rejecting the supposed pagan wife offered him; but considering such feelings a crime, she replied: "Holy father, you [280] see before you one who has also fled from persecution, and sought a solitude where she can worship the only true God in safety. I am she who was destined to be your wife, had not a better fate been prepared for us both. In future, we can serve and pray, and our spirits will together praise Him, who has directed us thus to meet."

What passed in the mind of Eutrope, when he heard these words, it is difficult to say; but he resigned himself at once to the lot which was appointed for him. He built himself a hut at a small distance from the cavern, and, devoting himself to prayer and thanksgiving, he permitted his mind only to regard Eustelle in the light of a holy sister, while she on her part held him as a saint sent to confirm her in her belief. By the side of the miraculous fountain, many a time did the holy pair sit in pious converse, mutually instructing each other, while angels hovered above them, and joined in the chorus of praise which they sang.

St. Eutrope afterwards became the first bishop of Saintes, and St. Eustelle lived a recluse in her cavern, where miracles were long afterwards performed by her, and where she expired at the same moment that her holy companion suffered the martyrdom which secured him a crown of glory to all eternity.

The fête of the two saints is kept together on the 30th of April, and, for eight days after, the otherwise quiet town of Saintes is a scene of gaiety and rejoicing: a fair is held, and minstrels, jugglers, and merchants of all kinds add to the liveliness of the [281] scene. Why such demonstrations should be made in honour of two persons whose lives were spent in solitude and self-denial, it is somewhat difficult to understand; and how the dull, dreary, desolate, and ruined town can ever be made to wear a brilliant aspect, is equally difficult of comprehension; but such *is said* to be the case. On the morning of the fête, great honours were paid, formerly, to St. Eustelle, which are not even yet altogether discontinued. An image of the holy Virgin is suspended in the grotto near the miraculous well, and there the water is dispensed to believers in its efficacy "for a consideration."

It is principally visited by young girls, who are anxious to secure a happy issue to an existing attachment, or to obtain, through the medium of the indulgent saint, a lover before the end of the year. The way to obtain this is to throw a pin into the fountain, and to drink a little of the water. It is not impossible, after this, that a prince of Babylon will make his appearance. Every year, however, this superstition is wearing out, and probably will soon be forgotten altogether.

The sun shone, and, the day being mild, we lingered for some time amongst these extensive ruins, climbing and exploring and looking down caverns and ravines in the rocks, beneath one of which rolls a dark stream, doubtless the source of those waters which were formerly directed into the arena to serve the Naumachia. There is [282] something fearful in knowing that beneath your feet, as you wander in these ruined places, exist gulphs of darkness, into which a false step amongst treacherous bushes and weeds might precipitate the unwary. We were driven from both the beauties and dangers of the spot by the beginning of a shower, and determined on making a retreat to St. Eutrope, whose enormous tower beckoned us from the hill above. We had not, however, gone many steps when the storm came down with all the impatient fury of *French rain*, and we were glad to take shelter in a wood-shed, at a house which we should have endeavoured to visit had no accident introduced us to its premises.

This house, now entirely modern, belongs to a farmer, and is called *The Côteau*; in the garden is an *oyster bank* of some extent, which is looked upon as one of several proofs that the sea once bathed the walls of Saintes; and beneath the building is a subterranean range, formerly communicating with the amphitheatre, which is distant the length of several fields from the house. As accidents might occur in consequence of the great extent and ruined state of the galleries and arches of this singular building, the proprietor has lately closed up the entrance, and there is now no possibility of exploring; but the wonders of this place have been described by different writers who have occupied themselves with the antiquities of Saintes, of which there is [283] so much to be said and seen that it is almost a dangerous subject to touch upon. Certainly it is a town which presents a wide field of enquiry and interest to archæologists, and as it now lies in the highway to Bordeaux, the curious may be attracted to its walls, and will be rewarded by their visit.

Then, perchance, may be fitly described by a Gally Knight, the Camp *de César*, the *Terrier de Toulon*, the *Tour de Pyrelonge*, the Aqueduct of *Font-Giraud*, the Cavern of *Ouaye-à-Métau*, the *Grand-Font-du-Douhet*, the *Font-Morillon*, the *Plantes des Neuf-puits*, all works of the Gauls and Romans, of which, wells and arches, and baths and subterranean temples, still excite the astonishment, not only of the peasants who are constantly stumbling on their remains, but of the antiquary who ventures into the long galleries and ruined chambers which speak to him of the glories of a people who once swayed the country they rendered powerful and beautiful by their architecture, the traces of which time itself cannot entirely sweep away.

We found, on visiting St. Eutrope on our return, that little interest attaches to the church itself, scarcely any part of its interior having been spared by the numerous hostilities which it has had to undergo; some parts of the exterior are, however, beautiful, and the crypt lost none of its interest on a second view. It is, after that of Chartres, the most perfect and the most extraordinary in France, and formerly [284] extended as far again as at present. The fine bold circular arches, of different sizes and heights; the massive cylindrical pillars, the rich sharp capitals, and *still fresh* gothic character of the cornices, astonish the beholder; it is undergoing restoration in parts, which appears sufficiently judicious. So solemn and silent was the sacristan who conducted us over this subterranean church, that we imagined for some time he was

dumb, till we were undeceived on his expressing his pleasure at the small donation we bestowed on him for his trouble; as it is somewhat difficult, at the present day, in France, to meet the exalted expectations of the numerous guides who exhibit to English travellers the lions of their towns, we were amused at the satisfaction betrayed by our silent cicerone.

The once beautiful church of Notre Dame, or S^{te}. Marie, serves now as the stables of the garrison, and all its fine remains are hidden from public view; parts of its exterior still attract the eye, and make one regret that it has fallen into such utter decay. It was once covered with statues of great beauty, some of which remain; but that of Geoffrey Martel, its founder, is destroyed, with a host of others, once its pride; enough, however, is to be seen which is well worthy of attention; but, from its present occupation, we did not do more than attempt to find it out in its degradation. The cells of the nuns are now occupied by dragoons. [285]

CHAPTER XIV.

FRÈRE CHRÉTIEN—UTILITY OF CUSTOM-HOUSE SEARCH—BOLD VOYAGER—PAUILLAC—BLAYE—THE GIRONDE—TALBOT—VINES—THE LANDES—PHANTOM OF KING ARTHUR—THE WITCH-FINDER—THE LANDES—WRECKERS.

Our destination was now the Gironde, and we found our only plan was to set out in the middle of the night for Mortagne, where the steam-boat to Bordeaux from Royan touched for passengers. We accordingly secured our places in the *coupé*, and, having been quite punctual to the hour of twelve, we expected to begin our journey. At the appointed time, however, neither horses nor *conducteur* were to be found, and the diligence remained for a full hour beneath the trees of the *cours*, filled with its impatient passengers, without any appearance of moving. The pause was enlivened by a violent altercation between a passenger on the roof and the proprietor, which caused a great encounter of tongues, so furious that we dreaded that blows must ensue, when we heard the vociferous individual who had usurped somebody's place, favoured by the darkness, kicking and resisting as he was dragged from his exalted [286] station. However, as is almost always the case in France, the moment the culprit—who was loud in his threats of vengeance when too far off to execute them—descended to earth, and had an opportunity of making them good, he became mute and humble, and made his escape at once, amidst the jeers of those who had also threatened to annihilate him as soon as he was within their reach. This scene, taking place at midnight, beneath the high trees of the great avenue in the gloomy ruined town of Saintes, was sufficiently unpleasant, as there seemed less and less chance of our ever stirring from the spot, and a great probability of our arriving, at any rate, too late for the steamer at Mortagne; but a priest, who was our companion, and who seemed to have previously filled up the lonely hours of evening by potations, seemed greatly to enjoy the bustle, till a remark of mine, on the unsuitableness of the scene to one of his order, acted like magic on him, and he ceased the *swearing* and encouraging exclamations in which he had before indulged, and became as meek and demure as he probably passed for, being amongst those whose eyes he knew to be on him. He was of the order of Christian Brothers: a community by no means remarkable for the edification of their manners and demeanour.

It is customary with *conducteurs*, when very much behind their time, to regain it by [287] furious driving; and this being the case in our instance, we got to the inn at Mortagne in time, the boat being, as it happened, later than usual. In the midst of the rain we were obliged to obey the custom-house summons to produce our keys, in order that our trunks might be inspected, and if *bales of cotton* should be found amongst our caps and gowns, we might suffer according to our offence against the laws. After much uncording and dashing and knocking about of baggage, the person who officiated proceeded to drag open the suspected packages rather unceremoniously. An exclamation, which one of our party made in English, seemed to put an end, however, to the search, for, looking up and bowing, he said, "Oh, English ladies,—that's enough!" Having escaped this *necessary* ceremony, we had to walk about half a mile in the mud and rain to the pier, though there was no sort of reason why the coach should not have taken us all with our goods to the shore; except, indeed, that by so

convenient an arrangement, the demands of a whole host of porters would have been evaded.

We were huddled into a clumsy boat, some standing and some sitting on the wet seats, and paddled off to the steamer which stood off; our baggage strewn on the pier, to be transported hereafter, if the captain chose to wait. And in this unpleasing state [288] of uncertainty, at six o'clock in the morning, in a pouring rain, we were put on board the vessel which was to transport us to Bordeaux.

In spite, however, of the wondrous confusion which made it probable that accidents of all kinds would ensue, nothing tragical happened, and nothing was lost. One little stout man, in a long cloak, attached himself to our side, not so much with a view of affording us *his* protection, as to obtain it at our hands. He looked very pale and cold; and as he trudged along in the mud, addressed me frequently, in tremulous tones, requesting to know my opinion as to the state of *the ocean*; whether I did not fear that it would be very rough and very dangerous, confessing that he felt pretty sure such would be the case, though he had never seen the sea before, and hoping I would not be alarmed. I assured him I had no fears on that head, as, in the first place, wide as the expanse before us appeared, it was not the *sea*, but the *river*, several leagues from its *embouchure*; next, that it was as calm as a mill-pond, without a breath of wind to ruffle its thick yellow waters. "Hélas!" said he, "you do not seem to care; but perhaps you have no baggage as I have, otherwise you would feel great uneasiness."

I found him afterwards on board almost crying after his *effêts*, which consisted of a hat-box, carpet-bag, and little bundle, all of which were safely produced. When we had [289] proceeded about an hour, he came strutting up to us, and, with a patronizing air, exclaimed, "There, you see, there is no reason to be alarmed; I told you so." I gratified him exceedingly by agreeing that he was perfectly right.

The Gironde is, indeed, at this part, like the sea: the opposite shores cannot be distinguished, so broad and fine is the expanse; and the exceedingly ugly colour of the water is, at first, forgotten in the magnitude of the space which surrounds the voyager.

But that we had resolved to make ourselves acquainted with the Roman city of Saintes, we should have followed the usual course, and, on leaving Rochefort, proceeded across the country to Royan, once an insignificant village, now a rather important bathing-place. By this means the whole of the banks of the Gironde may be seen; and it is a charming voyage.

The first object of interest is the famous Tour de Corduan, built on a bank of rocks, and placed at the entrance of the river, with its revolving light to warn mariners of their position. It was originally constructed in 1548, by the celebrated engineer, Louis de Foix, whose works at Bayonne have rendered his name illustrious. Pauillac is the *chef-lieu* of the last canton of Haut-Medoc, and its port being good, many vessels, which cannot reach so high as Bordeaux, stop here, and discharge their cargo. Here grow the wines, called Château Lafitte, and Château Latour. There is nothing very [290] remarkable in the appearance of the town but a long pier, of which many of our passengers took advantage to land, and our steward to go to market, returning with a store of eatables, for which every one seemed quite ready. The weather had now cleared, and the aspect of things was, consequently, much brightened; and, as we approached Blaye, the skies were fine, and the air fresh and agreeable.

A group of islands, called *Les Isles de Cazau*, rises from the waters; and on one of them appears the singularly-shaped tower of Blaye, so like a *pâté de Perigord*, that it is impossible, on looking at it, not to think of Charlemagne, or his nephew, the famous paladin, Rolando, who should be the presiding genii of the scene.

All along the left bank of the river extend, in this direction, the far-famed plains of Medoc—once the haunt of wolves and wild boars, now covered with the vines renowned throughout Europe.

The first place, after Mortagne—where once stood the castle of that Jeanne de Vendôme who falsely accused Jacques Cœur—is Pauillac, a town of some commercial importance; and near is an island, called Patiras, formerly the abode of a pirate, called Monstri, whose depredations were so extensive that the parliament of Bordeaux was obliged to send a considerable naval force to put him down. But Monstri was not the only depredator who found the Gironde a fitting theatre for his piracy. Amongst all

that *coquinaille*,—as Mezeray designates the notorious Free Companies who, after [291] their services were no longer required to drive the English from the recovered realm of Charles VII., exercised their cruelties and indulged their robber-propensities on the people of France, wherever they came,—was a knight and a noble, who may serve as a type of those of his time, Roderigue de Villandras, known as *Le Méchant Roderigue*; together with Antoine de Chabannes, Lord of Dammartin, the Bâtard de Bourbon, and others; Villandras led a troop of those terrible men, who boasted of the name of *Ecorcheurs*. It was true that, in the lawless period when the destitute *Roi de Bourges* had neither money nor power, they had done great service to his cause—as a troop of trained wolves might have done—ravaging and destroying all they came near; but the end once accomplished, the great desire of all lovers of order was to get rid of the scourge which necessity had obliged the king to endure so long. To such a pitch of insolence had these leaders arrived, that, not content with despoiling every person they met, Villandras had, at last, the effrontery to attack and pillage the baggage of the king himself, and to maltreat his people. Enraged at finding the vexations of which his suffering subjects had so long bitterly complained, come home to himself, personally, Charles resolved on vigorous measures, and gave instant command that these companies should be pursued and hunted from society: that every town and village should take up arms against them, and, as for Chabannes, Roderigue, &c., they [292] were banished from the kingdom. Roderigue, however, retired, with a chosen band, to the Garonne, and there, entrenching himself in one of the islands, carried on the trade of a pirate, destroying the country on each side of the river, and murdering the inhabitants without mercy.

This state of things lasted for some time: the labouring people and proprietors, unable to resist these incursions, left their land in despair, and fled for protection into the towns: the consequence of which was, that plague and famine ensued, and their miserable country became a prey to a new species of wretchedness.

In less than six weeks, fifty thousand people died in Paris alone, until the city became so emptied of inhabitants that not more than three persons were left to each street. It is recorded that famished wolves came down upon the great capital, and prowled about the streets as if they had been in a forest, devouring the bodies scattered about unburied, and attacking the few living creatures in this great desert.

Meantime, the revolt of the disaffected lords, who composed what was called the Praguerie, gave new employment to all the *mauvais sujets* of the kingdom, and Chabannes and Villandras did not neglect so fine an opportunity of committing additional outrages; and, for a time, they carried their terrors throughout Poitou and Champagne. Being taken in arms, the fearful Bâtard de Bourbon met his deserved fate [293] by being sewn in a sack and thrown into the river; but Villandras escaped the justice of the king, in consideration of services required of him and his band of robbers; and De Chabannes was reinstated in the favour of Charles, being too powerful and dangerous to offend.

One is not surprised to be told that the fortress of Blaye is called *Le Paté*: it is, doubtless, of great strength and importance, but not imposing, in consequence of its want of height, and its flat, crushed appearance on a marshy island. The exterior walls appear very ancient, but all the centre of the tower is fitted up with modern buildings, having common-looking roofs, quite destroying all picturesque effect.

The steamer made the entire tour of the island; so that we saw the fort on every side, and presently came in full view of the town and citadel of Blaye, partly on a height and partly on a level with the river. No part of it offers any beauty; nor does it possess features of majesty and grandeur, though its recollections cannot fail to excite interest. The Duchess of Berry must have found her sojourn in this desolate castle dismal enough: it is an excellent place for a prison; and was, formerly, no doubt of the utmost importance to Charlemagne, as it probably continues to be to this day to the ruling powers. The body of Rolando, after the fatal day when

> "Charlemagne and all his peerage fell
> At Fontarabia,"

[294]

was brought here; and, several centuries afterwards, his tomb was removed to the church of St. Seurin, at Bordeaux. King Chérébert, grandson of Clovis, has also his tomb on this rock; but no remains of it, I believe, are now shown. Our troops, in 1814, could tell of the obstinate resistance of the citadel, and were well able to measure its

strength.

The banks of the river are, from hence, covered with vines, and are higher and more rocky. Numerous dwellings cut in the rocky face of the hills remind one of the same appearance on the borders of the Loire; but in no other respect can the clay-coloured river claim resemblance with that crystal though sand-encumbered stream. Several bold rocks diversify the prospect here,—one called the Roque-de-Tau, and another the Pain-de-Sucre.

The space where the two rivers, Dordogne and Garonne, meet, and falling together into one, form the Gironde, is called *L'Entre-Deux-Mers*; and the shore the Bec d'Ambez. This part is sometimes dangerous; and, I dare say, our timid fellow-voyager felt a little nervous; but nothing happened to our boat, as we fell quietly into the Garonne, leaving the sister river, and its boasted Pont de Cubzac,—the object sought by the spy-glasses of all on board,—in the distance.

We were now passing along between the shores of the famous river Garonne—always the scene of contentions, from its importance, and particularly so during the long wars between France and England in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. [295] Although but few of the castles whose turrets once frowned along the hills above the waters now remain, even in ruins, yet, in those days, they were nearly as numerous as the trees which have now taken their place. Many a time has the banner of the Black Prince been displayed on the waves of this river, and been saluted or attacked according as he was victor or besieger. Every inch of land and water, from the Tour de Corduan to the walls of Bordeaux, and, indeed, to Agen, has been disputed by struggling thousands, from the time of Elionore of Guienne to the Duke of Wellington! But it was at the time when the star of France emerged from its dark clouds, and shone above the head of Charles VII., that the French shook off the foreign yoke which had so long kept from them this—one of the finest rivers in their realms.

Charles VII., after having despoiled his friends and reduced his enemies, was endeavouring to shut out from his memory the visions of the betrayed heroine of Orleans and the persecuted merchant of Bourges, the lost Agnes Sorel and the turbulent and revolted Dauphin; and had retired to his castle of pleasure at Mehun-sur-Yevre, where he could best conceal from prying eyes the idle occupations and degrading enjoyments which filled the time of the hero *of other's swords*. He had just concluded a peace with Savoy, and had rejected, as vexatious, the petitions of his [296] subjects of Gascony, who were writhing under the exactions of his ministers. He felt that all was now at his feet; and he would not permit his loved ease and quiet to be disturbed by appeals to his justice and humanity. The people of Guienne, therefore, saw that it was in vain that they had submitted, and had consented to give up the English rule, to which they had been so long accustomed, and under which they had flourished. Several of the higher families allied with that country, had endured the alienation with uneasiness. Amongst others, Pierre de Montferrant, who bore the singular title of Souldich de l'Estrade, or de la Trau, had married a natural daughter of the Duke of Bedford: he had been forced to capitulate when taken prisoner at Blaye; but he preserved his ancient attachment to England; and, taking advantage of the discontent which prevailed, he sent messages to Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, recommending him to attempt the re-conquest of the Bordelais, which promised to be an easy prize.

The lords of Candale and l'Esparre confirmed his statements, in an interview with the earl, in London, where they had remained after the treaty. They assured him that, if the English landed a small force at Bordeaux, they would certainly be joined by the disaffected, and had little to contend with; for Charles had withdrawn most of his [297] troops, to send them against Savoy, and, it was thought, against the Dauphin himself. This was followed by the announcement that the powerful lords of Rosan, Gaillard de Durfort, Jean de la Linde, and the Sire de Langlade, with many other gentlemen of the country, had proclaimed their intention of rising as soon as the English flag should be displayed on the Garonne. The Archbishop of Bordeaux and the Bishop of Oleron had entered into the plot; for there is proof that they had solicited new favours from Henry VI. before the return of the English to Guienne.

A favourable turn in the affairs of Henry seemed to render the moment propitious; and Marguerite d'Anjou seized the occasion of success against her opponents, to despatch Talbot, as the lieutenant of the king in Aquitaine, with an army of between seven and eight thousand men, with ample powers to pardon all offences committed

against England. The aged chief, favoured by the wind and weather, arrived at Bordeaux, and was introduced into the city, by the citizens, before the soldiers of Charles VII. had even dreamed of his approach. The seneschal, the under-mayor, and almost all the French garrison, were instantly surprised and taken prisoners.

Talbot, delighted at his prompt success, roused all his old energy, and, in an incredibly short space of time, had retaken all the places which had been lost to the English, in the preceding year, in the Bordelais, the Agenois, and the Bazadois. Eighty [298] vessels arrived with provisions from England, and all went well with the conquerors. The French who held out were obliged to retire to their ancient frontiers, and do their utmost to defend the remainder of Guienne against the fortunate invaders.

Meantime, the King of France was dreaming away his life, as he had formerly done, while the English were lords of his kingdom; but the news of their return woke him from his slumbers, and, hurrying to Lusignan, and assembling his forces in haste, he set forth in his character of warrior, and paused not till he had reached the Dordogne. The two famous brothers Bureau brought up their sappers and miners, and their tremendous artillery; nobles and knights flocked to his standard, and Talbot found that the foe he held in utter contempt, presented an aspect of resolve worthy of his attention. The old general was about to hear mass when it was falsely announced to him that a party of his people had routed the French, who had abandoned their park of artillery, before Chatillon en Perigord. He started up, and exclaimed, as he interrupted the ceremony, "I swear that I will never hear mass again till I have swept away the French from before me." So saying, he rushed to arms, called out his troops, and marched forth with impetuosity, uttering his war-cry, "Talbot! Saint George!" [299]

Fatal was his haste, and fatal was the misrepresentation made to him; in the battle that ensued the gallant veteran and his son were slain, with upwards of four thousand men; the French were too much harassed to pursue their victory; but, finding the body of Talbot amongst the heaps of dead, it was proclaimed to France that their most dreaded enemy was no more.

"Talbot is slain!—the Frenchman's only scourge;
Their kingdom's terror, and black Nemesis!"

"Whose life was England's glory—Gallia's wonder."

The face of things was now essentially changed; all the influences were turned to the advantage of 'Charles the Victorious.' One after another the towns and fortresses on the Garonne, Blancafort, Saint Macaire, Langon, Villandras, Cadillac, were forced to surrender. And all the country "*between the two seas*" was in the hands of the French. The Gironde was filled with vessels sent to the aid of France by Castile, Burgundy, Bretagne, and all the province of Poitou. On the other hand, the fleet of England and the Bourdelaise were at anchor half a league below Bordeaux, and formidable did both appear.

The men of Bordeaux beginning to fear that all was lost, had already proposed a surrender, on condition of free pardon; but the answer of Charles had not been favourable; he consented to receive all of English birth to ransom, but those of his own [300] subjects he insisted should be left to his mercy. While they paused, reflecting upon the amount of mercy they might expect, the English, careful only of their own weal, decided for them, and agreed to the terms, leaving the unfortunate Gascons, their companions in arms, to their fate.

Charles began by putting to death Gaillardet, the brave commander of Cadillac; whom he condemned as a rebel, although he had merely done his duty in obeying the head of a house which his ancestors had been accustomed to serve for three centuries.

The fevers of Autumn had now begun to appear; several of the generals of the French king had fallen victims to it; and as Bordeaux still held out and refused to surrender without certain concessions, dictated by Le Camus, who refused to sacrifice the Gascons under his command, Charles was obliged to listen to his representations. He agreed to pardon the citizens and their adherents, reserving twenty of the most guilty, whose estates were confiscated, and they banished for ever from the kingdom.

It was on the 19th of October, 1453, that the City of Bordeaux opened its gates to Charles *the Well-Served*, and the discomfited English sailed mournfully away from its walls, never to return as its masters.

All the vines along the shores of the Garonne are famous. Cantemerle, Sauves, Cantenac, and the mighty monarch, Château Margaux; Ludon, Parampuire, and Blanquefort; St. Louis de Montferrant, and Bassens. These renowned vineyards cover the country with riches; but fever reigns here triumphant throughout the year, and the coast denies its advantages to any but vine-growers. [301]

M. de Peyronnet, the ex-minister, has a château in a pretty situation on the river; but whether this particular site is unhealthy we did not hear.

From the Tour de Cordouan to the Port of Bordeaux, extending far over the wide and marshy country, which spreads out its sandy and unhealthy plains towards Bayonne, superstition formerly held her head-quarters; and though, within a few years, belief in the supernatural has lost its force, the dreams and fancies of the dark ages are not quite effaced. There is hardly any extravagance credited by the inhabitants of Brittany, which has not been held as an article of faith in the Landes, and cast its influence over the departments bordering on the Pyrenees.

There is an idea, not altogether worn out, that certain families are under a spell, and subject to strange visitations; they are supposed to be recognized by their heavy, sullen air, and their aversion to society in general: these are called *Accus*, and are as much avoided as possible, as they are suspected of witchcraft and other mal-practices; they are said to have too much experience in the nocturnal amusements of those mysterious beings called Loups-garoux, so generally known and dreaded throughout France and Germany. [302]

That the evil one delights in this part of the country is not to be questioned; and there may be some risk in passing along the river towards nightfall, because the fiend and his company are apt to haunt those meadows closest to the waters, and there they may be occasionally seen dancing in circles, where their hoofs spoil the grass, which refuses to grow again where once their steps have been. Perhaps the rapidity of the steam-boat may now prevent their being so often perceived; or, indeed, its introduction may have offended, and chased away, the *mesnie* of the fiend altogether.

Between the Dordogne and the Garonne, l'Entre-deux-Mers, it is generally believed that a male child who has never known his father, as well as a *fifth* son, have the power to cure certain maladies by the touch. And it is in these parts that the once famous Dragon of Bordeaux used principally to sojourn, much to the terror of the surrounding neighbourhood. There is scarcely any malignant spirit, from a *loup-garou* to *an ague*, which cannot be found in the deserts of Aquitaine.

Often do the peasants of Medoc hear in the air, sometimes in mid-day, sometimes in the clear nights of summer, the horns and cries of the phantom hunter, Arthur and his men. If he is, indeed, the same King Arthur, whose fame is enshrined in the legends of Wales and Brittany, he must have been a prince with even a more extended domain than that of Henry, the husband of Queen Elionore, for he carries on his chace on the banks of the Gave of Pau, and still further into the Pyrenees. He was a very excellent and pious prince, valiant and courteous; but he had one great fault, an inordinate love of hunting, which in the end proved his bane. For once, on the occasion of some solemn fête, while he was in the church assisting at the mass, some mischievous friend brought him word, that a fine wild boar had just appeared at a very short distance from the holy precincts. In a moment, his respect for religion, his reverence for the sacred ceremony in which he was engaged, all were put to flight; he uttered a joyous shout, seized his spear, and rushed forth to the sport. He enjoyed a most animated hunt, but— [303]

> "So comes the reck'ning when the banquet's o'er,—
> A dreadful reck'ning—and men smile no more!"

From that day he *hunted eternally* and *in vain*!—for ever is he traversing the vast field of air, urging on his steed, hallowing to his hounds, sounding his horn, and madly rushing over mountain and plain, reflected in the sky; but he has never yet, nor ever will attain the object of his pursuit!

There are certain spots in the Landes where trees of strange appearance grow, which may be recognised as those under which the evil one distributes poison to his human friends, to dispense to those who have fallen under their displeasure: the districts where these meetings take place are fortunately known and avoided, but to [304]

such a height had grown the daring of the friends of Satan at one time, that the King of France,—no other than Henry the Fourth (!)—under the ministry of Sully (!) sent persons into these climes to root out the evil. The famous *witch-finder*, Pierre de Lancre, has recorded his successes in this particular.

"The King," says he, "being informed that his country of Labourt was greatly infested with sorcerers, gave commission to a president and a counsellor of the court of parliament of Bordeaux, to seek out the crime of sorcery in the said country, about the year 1609.

"This commission was entrusted to the Sieur Despagnet and I: we dedicated four months to the search, during which happened an infinity of *unknown things, strange, and out of all belief*, of which books written on the subject have never spoken: such for instance, as *that the devil came and held his meetings at the gates of Bordeaux, and in the quarter of the Palais Gallien*, which *fact* was declared at his execution by Isaac Dugueyran, a notable sorcerer, *who was put to death* in 1609. It appears to me that it will be extremely useful, nay necessary, to France and the whole of Christendom, to have this account in writing for many reasons. [305]

"All this must convince the most obstinate, stupid, blind, and *ignorant*, that there is no longer a doubt that sorcery exists, and that the devil can transport sorcerers really and corporally to his sabbath: and that there is no longer any excuse for disputing on the subject, for all nations are agreed concerning the truth, aided by *ocular* demonstration, permitted to an impartial judge and good Christian. *Too much mildness is shown in France towards sorcerers:* all good judges should in future resolve to punish with death all such as have been convicted of attending the devil's assemblies, even if no harm has immediately resulted therefrom: for to such an extent has witchcraft spread that it has passed the frontier and reached the city of Bayonne, which is cruelly afflicted in consequence. Satan having made great advances and spread his sabbaths over an infinity of places in our deserts and Landes of Bordeaux." [10]

In consequence of the representations of this righteous judge, *eight hundred victims* were condemned to the flames for this pretended crime: and this, incredible as it may appear, by command of Le Bon Henri and his Protestant minister, Sully! At the very period, too, permission was refused to the unfortunate Moors, then driven by bigotry from Spain, to establish themselves in the Landes, where their industry and [306] perseverance would soon have converted the barren waste into a fertile and smiling country, instead of remaining for centuries an unwholesome marsh.

Neglected and uncultivated as this extended country has long been—only *now*, in fact, assuming an aspect of improvement—it is not surprising that superstition has lingered longer amongst its uneducated people than with their more fortunate neighbours. Within ten years new roads have been made, new buildings erected, and a rail-road is projected across the Landes from Bordeaux to Bayonne: it may, therefore, be now expected that the last vestige of idle belief in witches and demons will shortly disappear; but, in the meantime, much of such weakness is lingering still. For instance, the Landais believe that in certain maladies the physician has no power, and that recourse must be had, for relief, to certain gifted persons, who will propitiate the evil spirit who caused the ill. They attribute great virtue to what they call *les Veyrines*, namely, narrow openings in the thickness of the pillars of a church: persons affected with rheumatic diseases, have only to pass through these narrow spaces, repeating at the time certain prayers, having previously made the circuit of the pillar nine times. His head is first inserted, and the rest of his body is pushed through by his friends. These practices are, in spite of the exertions of the clergy, said to be still carried on in secret. [307]

In the month of May they strew the street before their houses with reeds, on fête days, and there they frequently pass their evenings, sitting in groups, and telling to each other superstitious stories, which are eagerly listened to, and thus handed down from father to son.

The *orfraie* and the screech-owl are looked upon with terror in the Landes: their approach to any dwelling bodes evil in all forms: the dead quit their tombs at night and flit about in the fens, and covered with their white shrouds come wandering into the villages, nor will they quit them till the prayers and alms of their friends have calmed their perturbed spirits.

The various tribes of the Landes, form, as it were, in the midst of France, a separate people, from their habits and customs: they are called, according to their locality, Bouges, Parants, Mazansins, Couziots, or Lanusquets: they are generally a meagre race, and subject to nervous affections; taking little nourishment, and living a life of privation and fatigue. Obliged to labour for their support, like most people in the departments of the Pyrenees, and to dispose of the products of their industry, they have usually fixed places of repose; each peasant drives his cart drawn by two oxen, and carries with him the food for those patient animals, who are the very picture of endurance. His own food is generally coarse, ill-leavened bread, very hardly baked, and made of coarse maize, or rye-flour, which he sometimes relishes with *sardines* of [308] Galicia. He gives his oxen a preparation of dried linseed from which the oil has been extracted, and which he has made into flour, and he then lets them loose on the Landes for a time, while he snatches a hasty sleep, soon interrupted to resume his journey. The dwellings of these people are sufficiently wretched: low, damp, and exposed to both the heat and cold by the rude manner in which they are constructed; a fire is kept in the centre of the principal room, from which small closets open: they sleep in general under two *feather beds*, in a close, unwholesome air, many in the same room. Still their domestic arrangements seem a degree better than those of the Bretons, and their dirt does not appear so great, bad as it must necessarily be.

The dress of the men is a large, heavy, brown stuff cloak, or a long jacket of sheepskin, with the fur outwards; to which, when gaiters of the same are added, there is little difference between them and the animals they tend: a very small *berret*, the cap of the country, covers merely the top of their heads, and is but of little use in sheltering them in rainy weather. The women wear large round hats with great wings, adorned with black ribbon, and sometimes with a herb, which they call Immortelle de Mer;[11] the young girls frequently, however, prefer a small linen cap, the wings of which are crossed over the top of the head.

Shepherds are almost always clothed in sheepskins, and in winter they wear over [309] this a white woollen cloak with a very pointed hood. These are the people who make their appearance on stilts, called *Xicanques*, and traverse the Landes with their flocks, crossing streams of several feet deep, and striding along like flying giants. They have always a long pole, with a seat affixed, and a gun slung at their backs, to defend them from the attack of wolves. Monotonous enough must be the lives of these poor people, for months together, alone, in a solitary waste, where not a tree can grow, with nothing but a wide extent of marshy land around, and only their sheep and dogs as companions; but they are accustomed to it from infancy, and probably are comparatively insensible to their hardships, at least it is so to be hoped. Seated on his elevated seat, the shepherd of the Landes occupies himself in knitting or spinning, having a contrivance for the latter peculiar to this part of the country. Their appearance, thus occupied, is most singular and startling.

A dignitary of Bordeaux is said once to have prepared a fête to an Infanta of Spain, the destined bride of a French prince, in the Landes; in which he engaged a party of these mounted shepherds, dressed in skins, and covered with their white mantles and hoods, to figure, accompanied by a band of music, and passing under triumphal arches formed of garlands of flowers: a strange scene in such a desert, but scarcely so [310] imposing to a stranger as the unexpected apparition of these beings in the midst of their native desolation.

The Landais seldom live to an advanced age: they marry early, are very jealous, and are said to enjoy but little of the domestic happiness attributed to the poor as a possession; they are accused of being indifferent to their families, and of taking more care of their flocks and herds than of their relations: they are docile and obedient to authority; honest, and neither revengeful nor deceitful.

Whether from affection or habit, they show great sensibility on the death of neighbours or friends. The women cover their heads, in the funeral procession, with black veils or aprons, and the men with the pointed hood and cloak. During the whole year, after the decease of a father or mother, all the kitchen utensils *are covered with a veil*, and *placed in an opposite direction to that in which they stood before*; so that every time anything is wanted the memory of the dead is revived.

The Landais, on the sea-coast, are, like the Cornish people, reproached, perhaps falsely, with being *wreckers*; and their cry of "Avarech! Avarech!" is said to be the signal of inhumanity and plunder.

Their marriages are attended with somewhat singular ceremonies, and their method of making love is equally strange: after church, on a fête day, a number of young people, of both sexes, dance together to a monotouous tune, while others sit round in [311] a circle on their heels, watching them. After dancing a little time, a pair will detach themselves from the rest, squeeze each other's hand, give a few glances, and then whisper together, striking each other at the same time; after which they go to their relations, and say they *are agreed*, and wish to marry: the priest and notary are called for, the parents consent, and the day is at once fixed.

On the appointed day, the *Nobi* (future husband) collects his friends, and goes to the bride's house, where he knocks; the father, or some near relation, opens to him, holding by the hand an *old woman*, whom he presents: she is rejected by the bridegroom, who demands her who was promised. She then comes forward with a modest air, and gives her lover a flower; who, in exchange, presents her with a belt, which he puts on himself. This is very like the customs in Brittany, where scenes of the kind always precede weddings.

When the bride comes to her husband's house, she finds at the door a broom; or, if he takes possession of her's, a ploughshare is placed there: both allegorical of their duties. The distaff of the bride is carried by an old woman throughout the ceremonies.

The Landais, altogether, both as to habits, manners, and general appearance, form a singular feature in the aspect of this part of France. [312]

CHAPTER XV.

PORTS—DIVONA—BORDEAUX—QUINCONCES—ALLÉES—FIRST IMPRESSION—CHARTRONS—BAHUTIER—BACALAN—QUAYS—WHITE GUIDE—S^{TE} CROIX—ST. MICHEL—ST. ANDRÉ—PRETTY FIGURE—PRETTY WOMEN—PALAIS GALLIEN—BLACK PRINCE'S SON EDWARD.

TAVERNIER has said, in speaking of the most celebrated ports, "three only can enter into comparison, one with the other, for their beauty of situation and their *form of a rainbow*, viz., Constantinople, Goa, and Bordeaux." The poet, Chapelle, thus names this celebrated city:—

Nous vîmes au milieu des eaux
Devant nous paraître Bordeaux,
Dont le port en croissant resserre
Plus de barques et de vaisseaux
Qu'aucun autre port de la terre.

The commendatory address to his native city, by the poet, Ausonius, is often quoted; and has been finely rendered by M. Jouannet, whom I venture to translate.

I was to blame; my silence far too long
Has done thy fame, my noble country, wrong:

Thou, Bacchus-loved, whose gifts are great and high, [313]
Thy gen'rous sons, thy senate, and thy sky,
Thy genius and thy grace shall Mem'ry well
Above all cities, to thy glory, tell.
And shall I coldly from thy arms remove,
Blush for my birth-place, and disown my love?
As tho' thy son, in Scythian climes forlorn,
Beneath the Bear with all its snows was born.
No, thy Ausonius, Bordeaux! hails thee yet;
Nor, as his cradle, can thy claims forget.
Dear to the gods thou art, who freely gave
Their blessings to thy meads, thy clime, thy wave:
Gave thee thy flow'rs that bloom the whole year through,
Thy hills of shade, thy prospects ever new,
Thy verdant fields, where Winter shuns to be,

And thy swift river, rival of the sea.

Shall I describe thy mighty walls revered,—
Thy ramparts, by the god of battle feared,—
Thy gates,—thy towers, whose frowning crests assay
Amidst the clouds towards Heaven to force a way?
How well I love thy beauties to behold,
Thy noble monuments, thy mansions bold,
Thy simple porticos, thy perfect plan,
Thy squares symmetrical: their space, their span.
And that proud port which Neptune's lib'ral hand
Bade from thy startled walls its arms expand,
And show the way to Fortune! Twice each day
Bringing his floods all crown'd with glittering spray,
And foaming from the oar, while, gleaming white,
A host of vessels gaily sweep in sight.

It would appear by this description, that Bordeaux was, under its Roman masters, a very magnificent city; the famous *Divona*, the beneficent fountain, so celebrated by Ausonius, has left no trace of its existence, and has employed the learned long to account for its disappearance. Probably it was from some plan of Roman Bordeaux, [314] that the present new town was built; for the above lines might almost describe it as it now stands: certainly, except the gigantic towers, the old city has no claim to praise for wide streets, fine houses, porticos, or symmetrical squares; probably, the architects of the Middle Ages destroyed its *perfect plan*, and swept away most of the beauties and grandeur which inspired the muse of the classic minstrel.

Like most pompous descriptions, this was, perhaps, overdrawn at the time as much as, it appeared to me, the accounts of modern travellers have exaggerated the effect of a first arrival by water at Bordeaux.

As Bordeaux is approached, the banks on one side become more picturesque, and at Lormont, where was once an extensive monastery, the scenery is fine: its promise is, however, forgotten by degrees, and I was surprised not to see any fine houses on the banks, as I had understood was the case. The few that are seen have a slovenly, neglected appearance, by no means announcing the splendours and riches of the great mercantile city we had now nearly reached. Paltry wine-houses, with shabby gardens, border the river, and flat meadows and reclaimed marshes give a meagre effect to the whole scene.

Mast after mast now, however, began to appear, and in a short time we were steaming along between a forest of vessels of all nations, the reading of whose names [315] not a little amused us as we hurried by them. English, Russian, Dutch, French, succeeded each other; the *coup d'œil* was extremely imposing, and the long wide quays, which seemed to know no end, announced a city of great importance. The small steamer continued its way, more fortunate than that which arrives from England, which, from its size, cannot go far up the shallow river, and stops half a league from the town at a faubourg called Barcalan; but we were enabled, from our comparative insignificance, to reach to the very finest point of Bordeaux, and land at the foot of the grand promenade *Des Quinconces*—the glory of the Garonne.

The extreme flatness of the town, built as it is on marshes, takes from its effect; and I was surprised that it struck me as so little deserving its great reputation, compared, as it has been, to Genoa, Venice, and Constantinople, and imagining, as I did, that I should see its buildings rising in a superb amphitheatre from the waves, and crowning heights, like those we had passed, with towers and spires. The quays, also, had been so much vaunted to me that I expected much finer mansions on their sides; whereas they are principally warehouses, and those not very neatly kept: there was little of the bustle and stir of business which one, accustomed to London, may picture: all seemed sufficiently quiet and still, except the clamour of the commissioners, who contended [316] for the possession of the passengers in our vessel, whose arrival in this commercial port made much more stir than seemed reasonable in so great a city.

The *immense* space of the Quinconces passed, we crossed an *immense* street to an *immense* irregular square, from whence lead *immensely* wide *cours* in various directions; and we stood before one of the largest theatres in one of the widest spaces I ever saw in a town: here, after much contention with our vociferous attendants, we

resolved to pause, choosing the hotel the nearest to this magnificent building, and which promised to be most airy and quiet; the river running at the bottom of the long street in which it was situated, the theatre before it, and the great square left at its side, with all its rattle of carts and wheelbarrows, and screaming commissioners. In the handsome, clean Hôtel de Nantes we were accordingly deposited, and had reason to congratulate ourselves on our choice while we staid at Bordeaux.

It appears almost heresy to every one in France to find fault with Bordeaux, which it is the custom to consider all that is grand, magnificent, and beautiful; yet, if I were to be silent as to my impressions, I should feel that I was scarcely honest. We stayed nearly a fortnight at Bordeaux, and, in the course of that time, had a variety of weather, good and bad; so that I think we could not be influenced by the gloom which [317] at first, unexpectedly, damp, chill and uncongenial skies spread around. A few days were very brilliant, but still the waters of the Garonne kept their thick orange hue, without brilliancy or life, and this circumstance alone suffices to prevent the great city from deserving to be called attractive. The quays on its banks are extremely wide; but, except for a short space on each side the Quinconces, the houses which border them are no finer nor cleaner than in any other town in France; the pavement is very bad near them, and there are no *trottoirs* in this part: incumbrances of all sorts cover the quays in every direction, so that free walking is impossible; and the irregularity of the pavement next the river is so great that it is constantly necessary to resume the rugged path on the stones, among the bullock-carts and market-people, who frequent this part in swarms at all times of the day. The bridge is extraordinarily long, over the clay-coloured river, but appears too narrow for its great length, and the entrances to it struck me as poor and mean. From the centre is the best view of the town; but, though very *singular*, from the strange shapes of its towers and spires, the mass of dark irregular buildings it presents cannot be called fine. The hills on the opposite side relieve the extreme flatness; but there is no remarkable effect of the picturesque amongst them.

The boast of Bordeaux is its wide *allées*, which are avenues of trees, bordered with [318] uniform houses of great size; its enormous square next the river surrounded with a grove of trees; its theatre, certainly magnificent, and its wide *spaces*, not to be called *squares*. The new town is *all space*; and if in space consists grandeur, it cannot be denied that there is a great deal of it; but, to me, these wide, rambling places appeared ungraceful and slovenly, wet and exposed in winter, and glaring and dusty in summer. The splendid theatre stands in one corner of a great space, from which several wide streets diverge: some old and dark, some new. The best street, the Rue du Chapeau Rouge, which is of great width, runs along on one side; it is short, but continued, with another name, across the Place, and leads from one end of this part of the town to the other. There is a good deal of foot-pavement in this street, and here are the smartest shops; but, compared with Paris or London, or any great English town, they are contemptible.

The fine Allées de Tourny traverse the town in the form of a star, and the rays meet in a great square,—the Place Dauphine—which, if cleaner and less neglected, would be extremely magnificent. The Place Tourny and the Place Richelieu are also fine openings; and there are said to be no less than forty public squares altogether, which must give a good circulation to the air in most parts.

The old town is, however, close, dirty, damp and dingy, beyond all others that I have ever seen, and, in common with all the *new* part of Bordeaux, the worst paved, [319] perhaps, of any in France. Here it is crowded enough, and forms a singular contrast with the deserted appearance of the gigantic squares in the sister town.

Nevertheless, although I am by no means able to agree in attributing extraordinary beauty to Bordeaux, there is no denying that there is much to be astonished at in its magnitude, and to congratulate its inhabitants upon, in the facilities afforded them of enjoying the air in streets which would be shady, from the trees on each side, if they were not so wide; in alleys and walks apparently interminable, where the whole population can promenade, if they please, without appearing crowded; in squares where they may lose themselves; and the most magnificent theatre in Europe, which they generally neglect for several smaller in other parts of the town.

Still it appears to me impossible to forget that Bordeaux is built on a marsh, and is surrounded by immense marshes, for leagues; and that, go out of it which way you will, there is no fine country nor any agreeable views. All its alleys and gardens are

flat and formal, and all in the midst of the town itself, surrounded by colossal houses, and only bounded by a thick clayey river, which it is unpleasing for the eye to rest upon.

The sight of several of the most admired and important towns in France, has reconciled me, in a singular degree, with that of Tours, whose fame appeared to me, [320] when I first saw it, to be undeserved. I judged, as one accustomed to English splendour, and English neatness, and I scarcely gave Tours all the credit it deserved. When I compare the clear, rapid, sparkling Loire—shallow though it be—with the ugly waters of the sluggish Garonne, I feel that it is indeed superior to most other French rivers; and when I recollect the long, broad, extensive street which divides Tours into two parts, is paved throughout, and connects it with a bridge of noble proportions and most splendid approach, I am not surprised that Tours is so much the object of a Frenchman's pride; and I confess, that, if I had seen it after the boasted city of Bordeaux, its river, and its bridge, I should have found little to find fault with; for though it lies in a plain, it is not a marsh; and though it is glaring and flat, it is dry and sandy, and not damp and unwholesome.

Bordeaux is—notwithstanding that it failed to impress me with a sense of admiration of its *beauty*—full of interest in every way, and worthy of the most minute inspection and examination. We scarcely neglected a single street, of all its mazes, and scarcely left unvisited a single monument. As in all other French towns, building is actively going on, and new public works are in progress: some on a very grand scale. The antique buildings, so curious from their history, have, in spite of repeated wars and [321] the efforts of time, preserved a great deal of their original appearance, and some of them are as fine as any to be found in France. Amongst these, is the Portal of St. Seurin, and the façade of St. Michel and St. André.

Bordeaux is a city which seems to belong to two periods, totally unlike each other. The old town, full of old houses—one of which, called *Le Bahutier*,

is a specimen of others—is an historical monument of the Middle Ages, while the new is an epitome of La Jeune France, with all its ambitious aspirations, its grand conceptions, and its failures. There is no attempt, in the restoration of French towns in [322] general, to bring the new style as near the old as possible; on the contrary, it would seem that modern architects were only glad of the vicinity of antique fabrics, in order that they might show how superior was their own skill, and how far they could deviate from the original model. In Bordeaux, this is very striking. It appears as if the new city ought to have been built by itself on another site, leaving the gloomy recesses of the ancient city to themselves, for all that now surrounds it is incongruous and inharmonious.

Taken by itself, modern Bordeaux is to be admired; but, backed and flanked as it is by a dense mass of blackened buildings belonging to another age, it is singularly out of keeping.

All the way from the great square of the Quinconces, with its Rostral pillars, to the port of Bacalan, a series of wide quays border the broad river; the Quai des Chartrons is considered one of the finest in France, and, for commercial purposes, no doubt is so. Some parts of these quays are bordered with trees, and, from the river, have a good effect. The whole of this faubourg is on a grand scale. The appellation of Chartrons, is said to be derived from Chartreux, a convent of that order having existed here. The inhabitants of this quarter call themselves *Chartronnais*, and a remarkable difference

is supposed to exist between them, both in countenance and manners, and those of the other Bordelais. It is a common expression to say, *on va Chartronner*, when a person takes a walk along the quay. We had occasion to do so several times, as we were expecting friends from England, who were to arrive by the packet, not long established between Southampton and Bordeaux, and, on one occasion, on reaching the village of Bacalan, we hoped to be able to while away the time of waiting, by a walk into fields, or by some path near the river; but our hopes were in vain; there seem never to be any walks or paths in fields, lanes, or by rivers, in France, except in Normandy; no one cares, or is expected to care, for anything but the high road, or the public promenade. The fields are generally marshy, and the borders of the streams impracticable; except, therefore, one has a taste for rough pavement, or can admire long ranges of warehouses, of great size, the best way is to remain stationary, as we did, if necessity calls one to Bacalau, seated on felled trees, under the shade of others growing by the river, careless of inodorous vicinity or dust. [323]

We were surprised to find that the expected arrival of the packet from England created no sort of interest in any one's mind in Bordeaux; but this fact was explained, when we heard that it was a private undertaking of English merchants, which, as it interfered with the vessels to Havre, was by no means popular, and was little likely, in the end, to answer. The same thing has been several times attempted in Bordeaux, but has always been abandoned, not meeting with encouragement, although it would seem to be a great convenience to persons visiting the South of France. It was not thought that the steam-boat we were expecting would make many more voyages, and, to judge by the small number of passengers who arrived by it, there was little reason to expect that it could be made to answer. [324]

In order to become well acquainted with the quays of Bordeaux, we made a pilgrimage along their whole extent, by following the line, on the other side of the Quinconces, as far as the old church of Sainte Croix—one of the most ancient, as well as most curious, in Bordeaux. Our remarks, and frequent pauses, on our way, as we passed the ends of different streets which we destined for future explorings, attracted the attention of a person whom, as he had an intelligent face, we addressed, begging him to direct us in our way to Sainte Croix, as we began to think it could not be so very far from the point where we, started, and we feared we might have to retrace our steps over the uneasy pavement. Our new acquaintance assured us, however, we were in the right road, and with great zeal began to describe to us how many more ends of streets we must pass before we should reach the desired spot. His costume was somewhat singular, and we might have taken him for a character in the Carnival,—if it had been the proper season—or one *voué au blanc*, for he was entirely dressed in white, cap and all, following, we presume, the calling of a baker or a mason. He expressed his pleasure that we thought it worth while to go and see *his* poor old church of Sainte Croix, for he came from that *quartier*, and had a fondness for it: "It is past contradiction," said he, "the most ancient and beautiful in Bordeaux, though I say it, and deserves every attention, though it has been dreadfully battered about at different times. People have tried to run it down, and have asserted that the sculpture on its façade, represented *des bétises*; but all that has now disappeared. It was built in the time of the Pagans, when the Protestant religion—to which," he continued, bowing, "no doubt you belong—was unknown, and when they were ignorant, and did many improper things. But, I assure you, now, you will find the old arches very interesting; the church has been restored, and is in very good condition. But that I have pressing business another way, I should have made it a duty and a pleasure to have been your guide, and pointed out the beauties of the old place to you; but, as I cannot do so, I recommend you to the politeness of any one, on your route, for all will consider themselves honoured in indicating to you the exact position of the church, which is still at some distance." [325] [326]

So saying, our white spirit, pulling off his nightcap again, and, with many bows, disappeared down a dark alley, carrying his refinement to the doors of his customers. He must have been a good specimen of the urbanity and good manners of his class in Bordeaux, and certainly no finished cavalier could have expressed himself better. We had not gone far before he re-appeared, to beg us not to forget, on our return, to visit the church of St. Michel. We promised to neglect nothing, and parted.

Sainte Croix does indeed deserve a visit from the curious, though the lovers of neatness would be somewhat shocked at the extraordinary state of filth and slovenliness in which the area of ruin where it stands is left. To look on either side of

the path which leads to the façade would cause feelings of disgust almost fatal to even antiquarian zeal, and the wretched dilapidation of the space formerly occupied by the immense convent once flourishing here cannot be described. The Saracens, it seems, destroyed great part of the church and convent, which dates from the seventh century, or earlier, and one would imagine it had remained in the same state of ruin ever since; though it has probably been rebuilt and re-destroyed fifty tunes.

[327] Much still remains, in spite of all the efforts of time and force, to make Sainte Croix an object of singular interest; some of the circular arches are quite perfect, with their zig-zag ornaments, as freshly cut and sharp as possible; many of the pillars of the interior remain in their original state—huge blocks out of which the columns have not yet been carved, in the same manner as those at St. Alban's Abbey, in Hertfordshire. Some of the string-courses are interrupted, being adorned with foliage and other ornaments to a certain distance, and then stopping suddenly, as if an incursion of new barbarians had frightened the workmen from their labours. The space of the church is extremely fine, the roof lofty, and the whole imposing; what is left of the exterior of the principal entrance is very beautiful; but the carved figures round the door-way are scarcely distinguishable; many of them were, it is said, removed not long since, having been considered objectionable, and not calculated to inspire piety in the beholders.

All the tombs and relics of this famous abbey have disappeared, and no one can now read the epitaph on St. Maumolin, Abbé of Fleury, by whose zeal the bones of St. Benedict were brought to Sainte Croix, and who was of singular piety; here he was buried, says his chronicler, at the age of *three hundred and seventy years*.

[328] From Sainte Croix we directed our steps towards St. Michel, whose giant tower had attracted us on our way, but, deterred by the extraordinary filthiness and closeness of the nearest streets leading to it, we chose a very circuitous route, outside the former enclosure of the town; and, by this means, came unexpectedly on a large building of very imposing appearance, which we found was the Abattoir: we did not care to linger long near this place, but escaped, as soon as we could, from the droves of bullocks which we met patiently plodding their way to their doom. For a considerable distance we followed the walls, which had all the appearance of being of Roman construction; and, dirty as our walk was, we could not but prefer the free air in this part to the interior; we had frequently occasion to ask our way, and invariably met with marked civility; every one leaving their work to run forward, and point out to us the nearest point we wished to reach. It appeared as if we should never gain the entrance to this immense town again, so many streets and alleys and gates did we pass; at length we came to one which was to lead us down to St. Michel. Long boulevards did we traverse in this direction, handsome and open; and in one part we were followed for some time by a regiment going out to exercise with one of the finest bands I ever heard, which, echoing along the extended parade, had a very splendid effect.

[329] We reached at length the church of St. Michel, the caverns of the tower of which are remarkable for their power of preserving the bodies buried in them from putrefaction; ranges of skeletons, still covered with the dried flesh, hideous and fearful, scowl on the intruder from their niches, and present a most awful spectacle. The belfry has often served, in times of civil war, as a beacon-tower, dominating, as it does, the whole country and town; it is of the most marvellously-gigantic construction, and appears to have been originally highly ornamented. It stands isolated from the church itself, whose façades present the most exquisite beauties; and are singularly preserved at every entrance. The principal façade, however, is the most perfect as well as the most beautiful; its rose window, its ranges of saints, its pinnacles, and wreathed arches, are as much to be admired as any in France, and rivet the attention by the delicacy and minuteness of their details. Its date is of the twelfth century, and the utmost taste and cost were bestowed on its construction; although, on the side of the tower there is a space filled with trees, and unencumbered, yet it is to be regretted that, on the side next the chief entrance, the church is blocked up with the houses of a dark, narrow, and filthy street, so that its beauties are sadly hid. Surely it would have been worth while to have cleared away the encumbrances which surround this fine building, so as to show it well, instead of much that has been done in the way of addition in the new town.

[330]

The only comparatively modern church in Bordeaux, which is much vaunted, is Notre Dame, erected in 1701; it is lofty, and large, and of Grecian architecture; but did not impress me with any feelings of admiration; and it stands at the end of a narrow street

in a corner, shown to little more advantage than the neglected St. Michel itself.

Before the cathedral of St. André, which we next visited, a space has been cleared away; and at St. Seurin, also, where a grove of trees has been planted, which adds greatly to the venerable appearance of the building.

St. André is of the thirteenth century, and is wonderfully magnificent and curious. Its tower, called De Payberland, stands alone, like that of St. Michel; and is only less stupendous than that wonder of architecture. The size and height of the aisles and choir are amazing, and the nave of the choir is bold and grand in the extreme. The two spires of the southern portal are of great beauty, and the whole fabric is full of interest, though scarcely a tomb remains. There are, however, several exquisitely-carved canopies where tombs have been, and, standing close to one of the large pillars behind the choir, is a group which excited my utmost interest; it seems to represent the Virgin and St. Anne, but might have another meaning. A figure in a nun's habit stands close against a pillar in a niche, and by her side is a little girl of about eleven [331] years of age, in the full costume of the thirteenth century, one of whose hands touches her robe, and who appears under her protection. This charming little figure represents what might well be a young princess in flowing robes; the upper one is gathered up, and its folds held under one arm: her waist is encircled by a sash, the ends of which are confined by tassels. A necklace of beads is round her neck; the body of her gown is cut square. Her hair hangs in long thick tresses down her back, and over her shoulder, and is wreathed with jewels. A small cap, *delicately plaited*, covers the fore-part of her head, and a rich wide band of pearls and gems surmounts it. The features are very youthful, but with a grave majesty in their expression; the attitude is queenly, and the whole statue full of grace and simplicity. The nun has a melancholy, benevolent cast of features, inferior in style to the little princess, but extremely pleasing.

I imagined this to be the effigy of Elionore, the young heiress of Aquitaine, under the care of a patron saint; and, thinking the pretty group was in marble, had visions of the queen of Henry II. having erected these figures in her life-time, in the cathedral which she built; but, on requesting a person, on whose judgment I could rely, to examine it for me, he discovered that the whole was *only plaster*; and, consequently, as he added in the language of an antiquarian, "presenting no possible interest." I gave up my [332] theory with reluctance; although I ought to have been certain that, had any such statue existed of her time, it was more likely to be found amongst the rubbish of the ruined cloisters, where many are still seen, than in the body of the cathedral.

Close to the group is a picture—at the altar of *Sainte Rote*, who also wears a nun's habit. Probably my favourite has some connexion with her legend.

The once fine cloisters of the Cathedral are in ruins. A few door-ways remain, which seem of an earlier date than the church itself; and some very antique tombs, with effigies, are thrown into corners totally uncared for. If these were restored to some of the empty niches they would be more in place.

At one end of the Cathedral, under the organ-loft, are some very curious bas-reliefs, in which there seems a singular jumble of sacred and profane history. They are very well executed, and worthy of minute attention. An arcade of the time of the Renaissance, extremely beautiful, but incongruous, encloses these carvings.

But, perhaps, the most remarkable of all the churches of Bordeaux is St. Seurin: its portico is one of the richest and most elaborate I ever saw, and the beauty and delicacy of its adornments are beyond description. The church itself, except this [333] precious *morceau*, is not so interesting as others; although here once reposed the body of the famous paladin, Rolando, whose body was brought, by Charlemagne, from Blaye. There, on his tomb, rested his wondrous sword, Durandal, which was afterwards transported to Roquemador en Quercy. This was the weapon with which he, at one stroke, clove the rock of the Pyrenees which bears his name.[12] His tomb and his bones must be sought elsewhere now, with those of many other of the knights who fell at Roncesvalles' fight. Where his famous horn was deposited after it came from Blaye does not appear.

Another long ramble, which exhibited to us more of the curiosities of Bordeaux, brought us to the Roman building which still rises, in ruins, in one of the distant quarters of the town, and is called the Palais Gallien. This fabric has a singular [334] appearance, its strong arch, which still serves as a passage from one street to another,

its thick walls of brick and small stone, its loops, through which the blue sky shines, and its ivy-covered masses make it very imposing. The learned are divided as to its date: Ausonius does not name it in his enumeration of the works of Bordeaux; but its Roman origin, of whatever age, is undoubted. It stands in a state of squalid neglect and dirt, sharing the fate of most of the antiquities of Bordeaux. If the space were cleared, and the surrounding huts removed, a decent walk made, and the whole enclosed, this monument of former days might form an attractive object: as it is, the struggle to escape entanglement in every sort of dirt, while fighting one's way to the ruined amphitheatre, is almost too disheartening. When these circumstances accompany a visit to antiquities in out-of-the-way places, such as Saintes, and distant and anti-commercial towns, such as Poitiers, one has no reproach to make to the inhabitants; but what is to be said for rich and flourishing Bordeaux,—the rival of Paris,—when she allows her monuments to remain in so degraded a state!

One of the glories of Bordeaux is having been the birth-place of Montaigne, whose tomb is in the church of the Feuillants, now the college. There are two inscriptions,—one Greek and one Latin; both of which appear unsuitable and extravagant. [335]

Another great man, born near Bordeaux, was Montesquieu: to see whose château of La Brède, about four leagues off, is one of the usual excursions of tourists; but we were prevented visiting it by bad weather.

Whatever may be the effect of Bordeaux, as a city, one charm it has which can hardly be disputed, namely, the remarkable beauty of its young women of the *grisette* class, and the peculiar grace with which they wear the handkerchief, which it is usual to wreath round the head in a manner to display its shape to the greatest advantage, and which is tied with infinite taste; showing the form of the large knot of hair behind, which falls low upon the neck, in the most classical style. They have generally good [336] complexions, rich colour, fine dark eyes and very long eye-lashes, glossy dark hair, and graceful figures. As they flit and glide about the streets,—and you come upon them at every turn,—in their dark dresses and shawls, with only a lively colour in the stripe of their pretty head-dress, a stranger cannot fail to be exceedingly struck with their countenances and air. Black and yellow predominate in the hues; but sometimes a rich chocolate colour, with some other tint rather lighter, relieves the darkness of the rest of the costume. A gold chain is worn round the throat, with a golden cross attached; and a handsome broach generally fastens the well-made gown, with its neatly-plaited collar, rather more open in front than is usual in France. They are said to be great coquettes; and certainly worthy of the admiration which they are sure to attract.

When one observes how flat and marshy all the ground about Bordeaux is, even now, one need not be surprised at the illness it must have engendered in the time of the Black Prince, nor that his health suffered so fatally from its influence. He appears to have deferred his departure from this uncongenial climate as long as possible, until the loss of his eldest son, Prince Edward, at the interesting age of six years, decided him to trust it no longer. [337]

The poor child died the beginning of January 1371, to the extreme grief of his parents; "as," says the chronicle, "might well be." It was then recommended to the Prince of Wales and Aquitaine that he should return to England, in order that, in his native country and air, he might recover his health, which was fast failing. This counsel was given him by the surgeons and physicians who understood his malady. The prince was willing to follow their advice, and said that he should be glad to return. Accordingly he arranged all his affairs, and prepared to leave.

"When," says the chronicler, "the said prince had settled his departure, and his vessel was all ready in the Garonne, at the harbour of Bordeaux, and he was in that city with madame his wife, and young Richard their son, he sent a special summons to all the barons and knights of Gascony, Poitou, and all of whom he was sire and lord. When they were all come and assembled in a chamber in his presence, he set forth to them how he had been their father, and had maintained them in peace as long as he could, and in great prosperity and power, against their neighbours, and that he left them only and returned to England in the hope of recovering his health, of which he had great want. He therefore entreated them, of their love, that they would serve and obey the Duke of Lancaster his brother, as they had obeyed him in time past: for they [338] would find him a good knight, and courteous, and willing to grant all, and that in their necessities he would afford them aid and counsel. The barons of Aquitaine, Gascony, Poitou, and Saintonge, agreed to this proposition; and swore, by their faith, that he should never find them fail in fealty and homage to the said duke; but that they would show him all love, service, and obedience; and they swore the same to him, being there present, and each of them *kissed him on the mouth*.

"These ordinances settled, the prince made no long sojourn in the city of Bordeaux, but embarked on board his vessel, with madame, the princess, and their son, and the Earl of Cambridge, and the Earl of Pembroke: and in his fleet were five hundred men-at-arms, besides archers. They sailed so well that, without peril or harm, they reached Hampton. There they disembarked, and remained to refresh for three days; and then mounted on horseback—*the prince in his litter*—and travelled till they came to Windsor, where the king then was; who received his children *very sweetly*, and informed himself, by them, of the state of Guienne. And when the prince had remained a space with the king, he took leave and went to his hotel at Berkhampstead, about *twenty leagues* from the city of London." [339]

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GARONNE—THE LORD OF LANGOYRAN—MIRACLE OF THE MULE—CASTLE OF THE FOUR SONS OF AYMON—THE AGED LOVER—GAVACHES—THE FRANCHIMANS—COUNT RAYMOND—FLYING BRIDGES—THE MILLER OF BARBASTE—THE TROUBADOUR COUNT—THE COUNT DE LA MARCHE—THE ROCHELLAISE—EUGÉNIE AND HER SONG.

At four o'clock, on a September morning, we followed our *commissionnaire* from the Hôtel de Nantes, at Bordeaux, along the now solitary quay, for nearly a mile, the stars shining brightly and the air soft and balmy, to the steam-boat, which was to take us along the Garonne to Agen—a distance of about a hundred and twelve miles. The boat was the longest and narrowest I ever saw, but well enough appointed, with very tolerable accommodation, and an excellent *cuisine*.

As soon as it was daylight, we began to look out for the beauties of the river, which several persons had told us was, in many respects, superior to the Loire; consequently, as we continued to pass long, marshy fields, without an elevation, covered with the [340] blue crocus, and bordered with dim grey sallows, we were content, expecting, when we were further from the neighbourhood of Bordeaux, that these beauties would burst upon our view. For many hours the boat pursued its way against the stream, but nothing striking came before our view: the same clay-coloured river, the same flat bank, with here and there a little change to undulating hills of insignificant height, and occasionally some village, picturesquely situated, or some town, with a few ruined walls, which told of former battles and sieges. All these banks were the scenes of contention between the Lusignans and the Epernonists, in 1649; and here are many famous vineyards; amongst them Castres and Portets, renowned for their white wines; close to which is La Brède, where Montesquieu was born.

The scenery about this part began to improve; some ruins, crowning a height, appeared, which we found had once been the Château de Langoyran; about a lord of which an anecdote is told, characteristic of the period when it occurred. François de Langoyran carried on constant contention with two neighbouring chiefs, who were friends to England; and, one day, with forty lances, he presented himself before the walls of Cadillac, occupied by an English garrison: "Where is Courant, your captain?"

said he; "let him know that the Sire de Langoyran desires a joust with him: he is so good and so valiant, he will not refuse, for the love of his lady; and if he should, it would be to his great dishonour; and I shall say, wherever I come, that he refused a joust of lances from cowardice." Bernard Courant accepted the challenge, and a deadly strife began, in which Langoyran was wounded and thrown to the earth. Seeing that his troop were coming to his rescue, Courant summoned his adversary to yield; but, he refusing to do so, Courant drew his dagger, stabbed him to the heart, and rode out of the lists, leaving the imprudent knight dead on the spot. A later lord of Langoyran became a firm ally of the English, till they were expelled under Charles le Bien Servi. [341]

Cadillac, where once stood a magnificent castle, built by the Duke d'Epernon, where Louis XIII. and all his court were entertained with great pomp, in 1620, and which cost above two millions of francs, offers now but a retreat for convicts.

Barsac is not far off, well known for its fine white wines; and beyond, is Sainte Croix de Mont, a village placed on rather a bold eminence. At Preignac the little river Ciron runs into the Garonne, and brings on its current wood from the Landes. Sometimes this small stream becomes so swollen, that it overflows, and renders the road in its neighbourhood dangerous. After the battle of Orthez, the mutilated remains of the French army crossed the valley, which this river had rendered a perfect marsh, at the peril of their lives, in order to pursue their melancholy journey, flying from the British arms. [342]

Close by is Garonnelle, a port of the *Verdelais*, where, situated a little way up the country, is a famous chapel, dedicated to Notre Dame du Luc, to which pilgrims resort, on the 8th of September, from all parts of France—so great is her renown. The chapel was founded in the twelfth century, by a Countess of Foix, and re-edified by another, or, as some say, built first in 1407, under the following circumstances:—

One day, as Isabella de Foix, wife of Archambaud de Grailli, Count of Bénauge, was visiting her domains, she had occasion to pass through a wood, when suddenly the mule on which she was riding, stopped, and would not stir from the spot either one way or the other. It was found that his foot had sunk into a *very hard* stone, to the depth of four or five inches, his iron-shod hoof imprinting a mark on the substance. The lady, much *surprised* at such a circumstance, which could be no other than a prodigy, descended from the animal, had the stone raised, and beheld, as well as all those who accompanied her, and as all may see who visit the holy chapel raised in the wood, a perfect portrait of the blessed Virgin, where the hoof of the mule had been!

This sanctuary was given in charge to the monks of the order of Grand Mont. The Huguenots pillaged and burnt the chapel, in 1562. It was again constructed, and given to the Father Celestins, in the seventeenth century; but in all its perils and dangers the miraculous stone has remained uninjured, and attracts the same veneration as ever. Perhaps it is its vicinity which has imparted such virtues to a vineyard near, which produces the far-famed "Sauterne" known throughout Europe. [343]

We came to a great many suspension-bridges on our way: the French seem to have a perfect passion for throwing them across their rivers in this region; and, it is said, not all of them are safe; as, for instance, the admired and vaunted Cubzac, which, it is now generally feared, will give way. One of these bridges is at Langon; once a very important town, and one of late much improved in commerce, in consequence of the traffic caused by the steam-boats from Bordeaux to Agen.

A famous siege was sustained here, against the Huguenots, in 1587, when the Lord of Langon defended himself in a gallant manner, though abandoned by all his people, *his wife alone* sharing his danger, and fighting by his side to the last, and even after his castle was taken, resisting still. The grand route from Bordeaux to Bayonne passes by Langon. There is no vestige of its castle; but a fine church, built by the English, exists, where the arms of England are even now conspicuous. Scattered about, here and there, but distant from the river, ruins of castles are still to be seen: amongst others, that of Budos is very picturesque. [344]

At St. Macaire, where furious contentions once took place, during the wars of religion;—two hundred English prisoners were taken at the time of the battle of Toulouse. The church has an imposing effect.

Soon after this, the banks of the river become rocky, and are full of caverns,

inhabited in a similar manner to those which so much struck me on the Loire; but they by no means present so singular or picturesque an appearance. The remains of the ancient stronghold of Castets look well placed on a height in this neighbourhood; but the scattered ruins which cover a hill near, are more interesting than any, although there are now but little traces of a fortress once the theme of minstrels and romancers. This is no other than the castle of the Four Sons of Aymon.

The little port of Gironde is remarkable for a dreadful event which happened there in the last century. There was formerly a ferry where the bridge now extends; and one day the ferryman insisted on being paid double the usual fare. There were no less than eighty-three passengers on board his boat, all of whom resisted the imposition. The "*ferryman-fiend*" was so enraged, that, just as they reached the shore, he ran the boat against a projecting point, and overturned it. Only three persons, besides himself, [345] escaped: the rest were all lost. The wretch fled instantly, and was never taken; he was condemned to death, and hung in effigy; and since then an annual procession takes place on the banks of the Drot, where the catastrophe occurred, and solemn service is performed for the victims.

The town of La Réole has an imposing effect, rising from the waters. It has shared the fate of all the other towns on the banks, during the ceaseless troubles which for ages made this river roll with blood. When Sully was but fifteen, he was amongst a successful party who took possession of this place; he entered, at the head of fifty men, and gained it in most gallant style; but it was lost the next year, under the following circumstances, which prove that Henry IV. carried his love of jesting considerably beyond the bounds of prudence.

The command of La Réole, says Péréfixe, was given to an old Huguenot captain, named Ussac, who was remarkably ugly, to a degree which made him a mark of observation; nevertheless, his heart was too tender to resist the fascinations of one of the fair syrens who aided the plans of Catherine, the Queen-mother. The Vicomte de Turenne, then aged about twenty, could not resist making the passion of the old soldier a theme of ridicule among his companions; and Henry, instead of discouraging [346] this humour, joined in it heartily, making his faithful servant a butt on all occasions. Ussac could not endure this attack on so very tender a point, and, rendered almost frantic with vexation, forgetting every consideration of honour and religion, abandoned the cause of Henry, and delivered over the town of La Réole to the enemy.

In this part of the country are to be found that race of persons known to the original natives as *Gavaches*: the word is one of contempt, taken from the Spanish; and the habit of treating these people with contumely, which is not even yet entirely worn out, comes from an early time: that is to say, so long ago as 1526; at which period a great part of the population on the banks of the Drot, and round La Réole and Marmande, was carried off by an epidemic; so that the country was completely desolate; and where all was once fertile and flourishing, nothing but ruin and misery was to be seen. Henry d'Albret, King of Navarre, anxious to save it from sterility, and to restore a happy state of things, re-peopled the lands with emigrants, whom he induced to come and settle there, from Anjou, Angoumois, and Saintonge. They united themselves to the very small remnant of those remaining, who had escaped the contagion, and, in a short time, forty-seven *communes* recovered their prosperity. [347]

The strangers who thus filled the places of the former inhabitants, brought their customs and manners with them; Du Mège remarks that, "to them are owing the style of building which may be observed in some of the old houses in this neighbourhood, namely, the very pointed and inclined roofs, which belong rather to a country accustomed to snow,[13] than to this where it is not usual."

The descendants of these new colonists have not forgotten their origin; they inherit the manners of their fathers; wear the same thick hair and long coats. Their drawling pronunciation, peculiar idiom, and the slowness of their movements, make them easily distinguished from the lively Gascons. A curious mixture of dialect resulted from the re-union of so many provinces with the *patois* of the country, and the language still heard there is a jargon of strange sounds.

The capital of what was called *La Gavacherie*, was placed at Castelmoron-d'Albret, which is now one of the finest and most fertile cantons in the diocese of Bazas.

There exists a propensity, it seems, in the people of this part of the country, [348]

particularly about Agen, to fix contemptuous epithets on strangers who settle amongst them; it matters not from what land they come,—it is sufficient that the Gascon idiom is unknown to them.

The foreigner is generally called, in derision, *lou Franchiman*;[14] and is, for a long time after his first arrival, an object of suspicion and dislike.

This term evidently belongs to the period of the English possession, when a *Frenchman* was another word for an enemy.

On these shores, traces of the dwellings of the Romans are constantly found in Mosaic pavements, and ruins and coins. At Hures, in particular, some fine specimens have been lately discovered: amongst others, fragments of pillars of *verd-antique* and fine marbles of different sorts. There is also a marvellous rock at Hures, where an invisible miraculous virgin is still in the habit of performing wonders, though her statue has been long since removed.

A high hill, once crowned with a castle, rises from the river after a series of flat meadows. This was once Meilhan, one of the finest castles in the Garonne, belonging to the Duke de Bouillon, who, suspected of treason, blew up his magnificent abode, destroying with it the abbey and church beneath. An immense forest spread far into [349] the Landes from this point, only a few trees of which remain.

When the castle was destroyed, the clock of the Benedictine church rolled down into the river, and was afterwards raised in the night, and taken possession of by the Marmandais; the Meilhanais even still insist on its being their property.

There are some ruins, in the quarter called La Roque, of a rampart, from whence is a perilous descent to the shore: here once stood a tower, through a breach in which it is said that the Maid of Orleans conducted the soldiers of Charles VII., and took the town. This tower was seen at so great a distance that it gave rise to a proverb: "He who sees Meilhan is not within side it."

Over the principal entrance of the castle was a sculptured stone—still preserved, but in a most ignoble position: it represented a cavalier armed with a lance, with a shield on his left arm; by the form of which it would appear to belong to those used by the ancient Franks. The arms of Meilhan are *three toads*, doubtless the most familiar animal in so damp and marshy a country.

At a village called Couture, a phrase is left from very old times, when *a* Raymond, Count of Toulouse, happening to stop there to rest, asked for a measure of wine, which he drank off at a draught, though it was no small quantity; instead, therefore, of saying a bottle of two *litres*, it is usual to say in this country, "*A measure of Count* [350] *Raymond's*."

The *Roc de Quatalan* is near this point, whose name has been derived from *quatre-a-l'an*; because it causes so many wrecks in the course of the year.

There is nothing very striking in the appearance of Marmande, once remarkable for its castle and churches and abbeys; but now only a place of commerce connected with Bordeaux. Nevertheless, the Romans, Goths, and Saracens, made it a place of importance, and severally destroyed it in their turn. Richard Cœur de Lion rebuilt and fortified it, only to be again ravaged and pillaged by the party of Montford, and, under the Black Prince, it was taken and retaken. Henry IV. besieged it, and, in 1814, the town of Marmande had to sustain its last attack. It has a good port, and, apparently, some pretty public walks, and is about half-way between Bordeaux and Agen.

Caumont appears next, once not only famous for its castle, but its tyrannical lord; who, in the time of Louis XIII., was governor of this part of the river, and carried on a system of oppression which became unbearable. He cast an iron chain across the river, to prevent the passing of vessels, on which he laid his hands in the most unpitying manner, taking possession of all he could meet with. At length, the relation of his cruelties and rapines found a hearing with the King, who, without consulting any [351] one, had the detested lord of Argilimont, as his stronghold was called, arrested and condemned; his sentence was executed at Bordeaux the day after he was taken, and his castle and estates were bestowed on the Sire d'Estourville.

If half the castles which once bordered this river existed now, the scenery would be wonderfully improved; but they live in memory alone, and their sites are all that

remain. Gontaud and Tonneins, where proud towers once frowned, are but insignificant villages now; at the first, a *patois* song is said still to be popular, the chorus of which commemorated the loss of all the people of Gontaud, put to the sword by Biron, in revenge for the death of one of his best officers: it runs thus:—

"Las damos, que soun sul rempart
Cridon moun Diou! Biergé Mario!
Adiou, Gountaou, bilo jolio!"

Perhaps that which is most worthy of remark on the Garonne, is the number of *flying bridges* which cross it, replacing many an old stone or wooden one, or a ferry, with which the inhabitants of these parts were so long contented. It is to the Messrs. Seguin that France is indebted for these beautiful constructions, the hint of which they are said to have taken in England. I had seen few of them when I visited his *family of beauties* in the valley near Montbard, whose accomplishments and singular attractions furnished me with a romantic chapter in my *last pilgrimage*.[15] [352]

A stone bridge, built by Napoleon, however, crosses the river at Aiguillon, which stands at the confluence of the Lot and Garonne, and is famous for its castle, built by the Duke d'Aiguillon—that minister who, protected by M^{de}. du Barry, gave his aid towards preparing the downfal of France, undermined by the acts of a series of worthless characters, in every department of the state, from the monarch downwards. Marie Antoinette held him in especial odium, and he was exiled, by her desire, to his gorgeous château on the Lot, where he was, in fact, a prisoner, not being allowed to sleep out of it; on one occasion, when he visited Agen for two days, word was sent to him that it was expected he should not prolong his stay. The castle, in his time, was a Versailles in miniature, and was not entirely finished at the Revolution.

An ancient Roman tower, of which a few walls only now remain, on the route to Agen, was once a conspicuous object from the river: it was called *La Tourrasse*, ("*enormous tower*" in *patois*), and many discoveries prove the importance of this place in the time of the Romans. [353]

The Baïse is the next river that falls into the Garonne, following whose banks towards Nerac is Barbaste and its old château, of which Henri Quatre was fond of calling himself *The Miller*, which title, on one occasion, stood him in good stead when a great danger threatened him; a soldier of the opposite party, who came from this part of the country where the prince was always beloved, could not resolve to see the destruction which awaited him if he had advanced a step towards a mine which was just on the point of blowing up. At the critical instant, he called out, in *patois*, which none but Henry understood, "Moulié dé Barbaste, pren garde a la gatte qué bay gatoua:"—'Millar of Barbaste, beware of the cat' (*gatte* means, indifferently, *cat* or *mine*) 'which is going to kitten' (*gatoua* has the meaning of *blowing up*, as well.) Henry drew back in time, just as the mine exploded. Thanks, therefore, to his readiness, and the expressive nature of the Gascon *patois*, the hero was, for that time, saved; he took care not to lose sight of his deliverer, and, on a future occasion, rewarded him amply for the service he had rendered.

The little port of St. Marie, well known as a safe harbour to the fishermen of the Garonne, once formed part, with the town, of the possessions of Raymond, the last Count of Toulouse; who, after a series of persecutions from the Pope and the King of France, (St. Louis,) to induce him to give up the protection of the Albigenses, was permitted to retain this portion, only on condition of destroying the fortifications of the strong castle which existed there. Guy, Viscount de Cavaillon, his friend and fellow troubadour, on one occasion addressed to him the following lines, to which he returned the answer subjoined; but, nevertheless, was obliged to submit to the power of the Church, like the rest of the world: [354]

GUY DE CAVAILLON TO THE COUNT OF TOULOUSE.

"Tell me, Count, if you would rather
Owe your lands and castles high
To the Pope, our holy father,
Or to sacred chivalry?
Were it best a knight and noble
Conquer'd by his sword alone,
Bearing heat, and cold, and trouble,

By his arm to gain his own?"

ANSWER OF COUNT RAYMOND TO GUY DE CAVAILLON.

"Guy, much sooner would I gain
All by valour and my sword,
Than by other means obtain
What no honour can afford.
Church nor clergy I despise,
Neither fear them, as you know;
But no towers or castles prize
Which their hands alone bestow:
Holding honour above all
Gifts or conquests, great or small."

[355]

The evening was drawing in too much by the time we reached that part of the shore, where the few walls of the once stupendous château of the Lusignans appear, and we could see nothing but the shadow—it might be of the wings of the fairy, Melusine, hovering in the dim light over this, one of her numerous castles.

Here lived and contended Hugues de Lusignan, Counte de la Marche, who had married his first love, the beautiful Isabeau d'Angoulême, widow of King John of England; whose effigy so delighted me at Fontevraud, lying beside that of her brother-in-law, Cœur de Lion.[16] But, if that lovely face and delicate form truly represented the princess, her character is singularly at variance with her gentle demeanour. She was the most imperious, restlessly proud, and vindictive woman of her time, and kept up a constant warfare with her husband and the King of France; to whom she could not endure that the Count de Lusignan should be considered a vassal. "I," she cried, "the widow of a king! the mother of a king and an empress! am, then, to be reduced to take rank after a simple countess! to do homage to a count!" This was on the occasion of the marriage of the brother of Louis IX., with Jeanne, Countess and heiress of Toulouse, to whom the Count of Lusignan owed homage. "No," she continued, with [356] indignant fury, "you shall not commit so cowardly an action: resist: my son, and my son-in-law, will come to your aid. I will raise the people of Poitou—my allies, my vassals—and, if they are not enough, I have power alone to save you from such disgrace." Hugues, thus excited, agreed to follow her counsel; and a long struggle ensued, sometimes attended with triumph to the haughty countess, sometimes with discomfiture; and ending by the ruin of her husband and children, and the confiscation of much of their domains to the crown of France. This was she to whom the troubadour count addressed these lines, amongst others:

"So full of pleasure is my pain,
To me my sorrow is so dear,
That, not the universe to gain
Would I exchange a single tear.

"What have I said?—I cannot choose,
Nor would I seek to have the will;
How can I when my soul I lose
In thought and sleepless visions still,
Yet cannot from her presence fly,
Altho' to linger is to die."

We were seated in the cabin of the steam-boat, resigning ourselves to patience until Agen should be reached—for it was now dark, and a shower had fallen which made the decks wet—when we were summoned to brave all by the promise of a treat above. We [357] had observed, in the course of the day, a party of young women, each wrapped in a large black cloak, the pointed hood of which was either drawn over the head or allowed to fall behind, showing the singular square cap, which at once told they were Rochellaises. They were at the opposite end of the long vessel; and, as some were below, we had no idea that they mustered so large a party, for it appeared that there were no fewer than twenty-one, all from La Tremblade, or the other islands in the neighbourhood of La Rochelle. They were taking their usual autumn voyage up the Garonne, and, from Agen, were destined to various towns as far as the Pyrenees, where they remain all the oyster season, receiving, by the boat, twice a week, a consignment of oysters to be disposed of, on the spot where their residence is fixed.

They were generally young, some extremely so, and very well conducted; sitting together in groups, and talking in an under tone; but, at this hour of the evening, they all congregated on deck, and were singing some of their songs as the boat went rapidly on, and the soft breeze caught up their notes.

When I first joined them, it was so dark that I could distinguish their figures with difficulty, and only knew, by the murmurs of applause which followed the close of their chaunt, that they were surrounded by all the crew, who were attentively listening to [358] their strains. When they found some strangers had come amongst them they were seized with a fit of shyness, which I feared would put a stop to the scene altogether; for the chief songstress declared herself hoarse, and uttered "her pretty oath, by yea and nay, she could not, would not, durst not" sing again: however, at last the spirit came again, and, after a little persuasion, she agreed to recollect something. "Ah, Ma'amselle Eugénie," said one of the older girls, "if I had such a voice I would not allow myself to be so entreated." Accordingly she began, and the chorus of her song was taken up by all the young voices. I never heard anything more melodious and touching than the song altogether: Eugénie's voice was soft, clear, and full, and had a melancholy thrill in it, which it was impossible to hear without being affected; she seemed to delight in drawing out her last notes, and hearing their sound prolonged on the air. The ballads she chose were *all sad*, in the usual style of the Bretons: one was expressive of sorrow for absence, and was full of tender reproaches, ending in assurances of truth, in spite of fate; and one, "Dis moi! dis moi!" was a lament for a captive, which, as well as I could catch the words,—partly French and partly *patois*—was full of mournful regret, and seemed to run thus at every close:

"The north wind whistles—the night is dark; at the foot of the hill the captive looks [359] forth in vain,—ah! he is weeping still! always at the foot of that hill you may hear his sighs.

"'Alas!' he says, 'what is there in the world that can compare to liberty? and I am a prisoner. I weep alone!'—he sees a bird fly by, and exclaims, 'There is something still left worth living for—I may be one day free!'"

"Hélas! le pauvre enfant—il pleure toujours:
Il pleure toujours! au fond de la colline."

Perhaps this song might allude to some of those unfortunate patriots of La Vendée, whose fate was as sad as any romance could tell.

I never remember to have heard what seemed to me more real melody than this singing; and was very sorry when the young girls insisted, in return for their compliance, on one of the crew obliging them with a song; for he obeyed, and, in one of the usual cracked voices, which are so common in France, raised peals of laughter by intoning an *English air*—no other than "God Save the King." This effectually spoilt the pretty romance of the veiled Rochellaises; not one of whom we could see, in the darkness, and their voices seemed to come from the depths of the Garonne, as if they were the spirits of its waters, who had taken possession of our vessel, and were beguiling us with their sweet voices into their whirlpools and amongst their sands. [360]

I thanked them for my share of the amusement, and remarked to one near me how beautiful the voice of Eugénie was. "Yes," said she, "she is celebrated in the country for singing so well; but, even now, her mother sings the best; you never heard such a lovely tone as her's; they are a musical family: every one cannot have such a gift as Eugénie."

This seemed a good beginning for the music and poetry of the south, and promised well for all that was to come; *but that music was the last*, as it had been the first, I had heard in France; where, in general, there is no melody amongst the people, in any part that I have visited. As for its poetry, we were approaching a place where a celebrated *patois* poet resided, who is the boast, not only of Agen, but of Gascony, and who has made, of late, a great sensation in this part of France. [361]

CHAPTER XVII.

AGEN—LA BELLE ESTHER—ST. CAPRAIS—THE LITTLE CHERUBS—ZOÉ AT THE FOUNTAIN—THE HILL—LE GRAVIER—JASMIN, THE POET-BARBER—THE METAPHOR—LAS PAPILLOTAS—FRANÇONNETTE—JASMIN'S LINES ON THE OLD LANGUAGE—THE SHEPHERD AND THE GASCON POET—RETURN TO AGEN—JASMIN AND THE KING OF FRANCE—JASMIN AND THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND.

It was night when we reached Agen, and, amidst a tumult of *patois*, which sounded like Spanish, and was strange to our unaccustomed ears, we landed, and had our goods torn from us by peremptory porters, who, in spite of remonstrance, piled every one's baggage together in carts, and, ordering all the passengers to follow as they might, set off with it to some unknown region. The stars were bright, and the night fine, as we scrambled along over a very rugged road for more than a mile—for, the new pier not being yet finished, the boat was obliged to land its cargo at a distance from the town. Up and down, in and out, we pursued our way, guided by the lanthorns of our tyrants, and at last found ourselves in a boulevard, planted with large high [362] trees, which we followed till a shout announced to us that the Hôtel de France was reached.

By what seemed little less than a miracle, all our baggage was safely brought after us, our troubles were quickly over, and we took possession of spacious and lofty chambers, in a very imposing-looking hotel.

The next morning the weather was magnificent, and Agen came out in great splendour, with its fine promenades, handsome bridge, its beautiful hills and river, and its fine clear fresh air, so different from the dull atmosphere of Bordeaux. The first figure we saw on going out, was one of the Rochellaises seated at the inn door, installed with her oyster-baskets, and receiving the congratulations of all her friends of the hotel, who hastened to welcome her annual return to Agen. It seems, she takes up her abode at the hotel during her stay, and her arrival is considered quite an event, as we found at breakfast, where numerous Frenchmen were conversing with great animation on the subject. *La Belle Esther* seemed to be a general favourite, as well as her merchandise, and she was so remarkably pretty, modest and graceful, that I was not surprised at the fact. Every one of her admirers gave her an order as he arrived, and her pretty little hands were busily engaged in opening oysters for some time, which having done, she brought them in herself, on a dish, to each guest. I was sorry [363] to see that she had abandoned her costume, and was dressed merely like any other *grisette*; but this is very much the case everywhere. She told me, on great fête days, however, she occasionally appeared in it; but she seemed to think it more convenient to wear the little flat frilled cap of the town, rather than the square winged machine of her province. I had heard before that she was so well behaved, and so graceful in her manners, that she was occasionally invited to the public balls of Agen; but she only answered by a deep blush, when I asked if it was so; and said, she *seldom went to soirées*. She is about three or four-and-twenty; and if the rest of her party who sang to us in the boat were as pretty, they must have been as dangerous as Queen Catherine's band of beauties, when their black hoods were thrown back. She was, however, not one of the singers herself; but I recognised, in her voice, the reproving sister who urged Eugénie to sing, and told me of her mother's talent. I afterwards met with more of my acquaintances in the dark, who were scattered through the towns of Gascony.

The town of Agen is very agreeably situated on the right bank of the Garonne: the river is here, though by no means clear, less muddy than at Bordeaux; and its windings add much to the beauty of the landscape. Between the suspension-bridge and the town is a magnificent promenade, formed of several rows of fine trees—one of [364] the most majestic groves I ever saw: it is called Le Gravier. There are two others, each extremely fine: one of which is planted with acacias. The town has nothing to recommend it, being dull, and ill-paved, with scarcely a building worthy of notice; the strange old clock-tower of the Mairie, looks as if it had once formed part of a ponderous building; but it has no beauty of architecture. Some of the oldest streets and the market-place are built with arcades, in the same fashion as La Rochelle, and they are very dark and dilapidated.

The cathedral, dedicated to St. Caprais, is, however, a monument of which the Agenois have reason to be proud: it has been cruelly ill-used, and its exterior is greatly damaged; but it is undergoing repair, and the restorations both within and without are the most judicious I had observed anywhere. The beautiful, ornamented, circular arches are re-appearing in all their purity; and the fine sculptured façade is shining

out from the ruin which has long encompassed it; a wide space is opened all round the building; and, when the restorations are completed, the effect will be very grand.

In the interior are some most beautiful specimens of early architecture; galleries above galleries, of different periods, all exquisite, and one row of a pattern such as I had never before met with, almost approaching the Saracenic. The grace and lightness of the whole is quite unique, and we sat for an hour enjoying the cool retreat of the [365]
aisle, endeavouring to follow the elaborate tracery of the arches, and admiring the effect of the sun-light streaming in at the open door, which gave entrance to a procession of priests, and children of very tender age, who were about to undergo the ordeal of examination. As we sat, by degrees, first one little stray black-eyed creature, in a tight skull-cap and full petticoat, then another, came and placed themselves before us, immovable and curious, like so many tame gazelles; we pretended to be angry, and drove them away; but, while we went on with our sketches of some of the arches, the little things came back again with the same imperturbable look of silent amazement and curiosity as before. There were four or five, all very round and rosy-cheeked and pretty, and, though their vicinity rather interrupted us, we were sorry when the zealous beadle appeared, at the distant glimpse of whose portly form the troop rattled off, making their wooden shoes ring along the pavement, and disappeared in the sun-gleam of the old Roman door-way, like so many cherubs in the costume of the Middle Ages.

The morning was magnificent when we mounted the high hill which overlooks the town, and which is called *Le Mont Pompéian*, or De l'Ermitage; the banks were covered with box and purple heath and wild thyme, the air full of freshness and fragrance, and all was "balmy summer." The ascent to the top is extremely steep, and must be very toilsome to the peasants, some of whom were climbing up, bending [366]
under different loads. A party, however, who kept pace with us, told us they were merely out taking a walk, as it was such a fine day, to do the children good; and they seemed to enjoy the prospect and the warm sun as much as we did, and be quite in the same humour for idling their time away. On the top of the hill is a telegraph, from whence there is a beautiful view; and the vine-field, full of ripe purple grapes, looked very inviting; jasmine grew wild in the hedges, and perfumed the air; and, altogether, the hills of Agen gave a promise of southern beauty, which, alas! I found, on advancing nearer to Spain, was by no means realized. We remained for some hours, choosing different retreats from whence to enjoy the views, which are varied and beautiful in the extreme. After passing fields of high Indian corn, gay with its tasselled blossoms, we came to a splendid opening, where we beheld the broad Garonne, winding through a landscape of great richness and variety, glittering in the sun, and spreading wide its majestic arms over the country. Through a long lane of purple grapes and crimson leaves, we pursued our way, until we came to a ruined fountain, of very picturesque appearance, extremely deep, and the water sparkling at the bottom like a diamond in the dark; the mouth covered with shrubs and flowers of every hue, and straggling vines, with their now purple and crimson leaves, making a bower around it. Two women and a boy were resting near, and we entered into conversation with them; [367]
there was something interesting in the worn features of the younger female; who told us she was from Le Mans, a great way off, in a charming country, which she said, with a sigh, that she had not seen since she was a girl, before she made the imprudent match which had reduced her to work hard in the fields of Agen to support a large family; for her husband had deserted her, and she had no one to look to. "I dare say," she said, "Le Mans is much altered now, since I saw it; there is no chance of my ever going home again now:" these words were uttered in so sad a tone that we were quite affected. She had been very pretty, and was even now agreeable-looking, though, so very pensive; her name, she told us, was Zoë, and she seemed glad to hear news of her native town, though the recollection revived, evidently, very painful thoughts. As we sat drawing, these poor people remained wandering about, picking up sticks and resting in the shade; the ground was damp, and the old woman—who had asked her companion, in patois, the subject of her talk with us, as she did not understand French —looked very benevolently towards us, and presently took off her apron, and came insisting that we should use it as a seat, as she said it was dangerous for such as us to sit on the bare ground; "we are used to it, and it does us no harm; but you are wrong to risk it," was her remark; and, with all the kindness imaginable, she made us accept [368]
her courtesy. We have often met with similar demonstrations of kind feeling from the peasantry in France; who, when not spoilt by the town and trade, are generally amiable, and anxious to oblige on all occasions.

Nothing could be more lovely than the extensive view before us from this spot; hills covered with vines and rich foliage, fields of Indian corn, bright meadows and banks of glowing flowers, with the river winding through all, wide and bright; the town, picturesque in the distance, undulating hills, and a clear blue sky. At the end of a large field, we came to a pretty bower, formed of vines, on the edge of the wooded declivity; probably used as a retreat by the master and his family, in the time of the vintage; it looked quite Italian, and we were not sorry to shelter there from the hot sun.

Half-way down from the telegraph hill is a cavern called the Hermitage, which once was the retreat of a holy anchorite; but, being now chosen as a place for fêtes, has become a sort of cockney spot, and has lost its character of solemnity; but it is the great object of attraction to the inhabitants of Agen, who flock there in crowds on saints'-days and Sundays.

We had made an appointment, on our return from wandering amongst the heights, to pay a visit to a very remarkable personage, who is held, both in Agen and throughout Gascony, to be the greatest poet of modern times. We had heard much of him before we arrived, and a friend of mine had given me some lines of his with the [369]
music, in England; one song I published in a recent work;[17] but I was not then aware of the history of the author, of whom the ballad "Mi cal mouri!" was one of the earliest compositions, and that which first tended to make him popular. My friend, who possesses very delicate taste and discrimination, was much struck with the grace and beauty of this song; though the reputation of its author has reached its height since the time when she first met with his melody.

At the entrance of the promenade, Du Gravier, is a row of small houses—some *cafés*, others shops, the indication of which is a painted cloth placed across the way, with the owner's name in bright gold letters, in the manner of the arcades in the streets, and their announcements. One of the most glaring of these was, we observed, a bright blue flag, bordered with gold; on which, in large gold letters, appeared the name of "Jasmin, Coiffeur." We entered, and were welcomed by a smiling dark-eyed woman, who informed us that her husband was busy at that moment *dressing a customer's hair*, but he was desirous to receive us, and begged we would walk into his parlour at the back of the shop. There was something that struck us as studied in this, and we began to think the reputation of the poet might be altogether a *got-up* thing. I was [370]
obliged to repeat to myself the pretty song of "Mi cal mouri," to prevent incredulous doubts from intruding; but as I recollected the sweet voice that gave the words effect, I feared that it was that charm which had misled me.

His wife, meantime, took the advantage of his absence, which had, of course, been arranged *artistically*, to tell us of Jasmin's triumphs. She exhibited to us a *laurel crown of gold* of delicate workmanship, sent from the city of Clemence Isaure, Toulouse, to the poet; who will probably one day take his place in the *capitoul*. Next came a golden cup, with an inscription in his honour, given by the citizens of Auch; a gold watch, chain, and seals, sent by the King, Louis-Philippe; an emerald ring worn and presented by the lamented Duke of Orleans; a pearl pin, by the graceful duchess, who, on the poet's visit to Paris accompanied by his son, received him in the words he puts into the mouth of Henri Quatre.[18]—

"Brabes Gascous!
A moun amou per bous aou dibes creyre:
Benès! benès! ey plazé de bous beyre:
Aproucha bous!"

A fine service of linen, the offering of the town of Pau, after its citizens had given [371]
fêtes in his honour, and loaded him with caresses and praises; and nick-nacks and jewels of all descriptions offered to him by lady-ambassadresses, and great lords; English "*misses*" and "*miladis*;" and French, and foreigners of all nations who did or did not understand Gascon.

All this, though startling, was not convincing; Jasmin, the barber, might only be a fashion, a *furor*, a *caprice*, after all; and it was evident that he knew how to get up a scene well. When we had become nearly tired of looking over these tributes to his genius, the door opened, and the poet himself appeared. His manner was free and unembarrassed, well-bred, and lively; he received our compliments naturally, and like one accustomed to homage; said he was ill, and unfortunately too hoarse to read anything to us, or should have been delighted to do so. He spoke in a broad Gascon

accent, and very rapidly and eloquently; ran over the story of his successes; told us that his grandfather had been a beggar, and all his family very poor; that he was now as rich as he wished to be, his son placed in a good position at Nantes; then showed us his son's picture, and spoke of his disposition, to which his brisk little wife added, that, though no fool, he had not his father's genius, to which truth Jasmin assented as a matter of course. I told him of having seen mention made of him in an English review; which he said had been sent him by Lord Durham, who had paid him a visit; and I then [372] spoke of 'Mi cal mouri' as known to me. This was enough to make him forget his hoarseness and every other evil: it would never do for me to imagine that that little song was his best composition; it was merely his first; he must try to read me a little of l'Abuglo—a few verses of "Françouneto;"—"You will be charmed," said he; "but if I were well, and you would give me the pleasure of your company for some time; if you were not merely running through Agen, I would kill you with weeping—I would make you die with distress for my poor Margarido—my pretty Françouneto!"

He caught up two copies of his book, from a pile lying on the table, and making us sit close to him, he pointed out the French translation on one side, which he told us to follow while he read in Gascon. He began in a rich soft voice, and as he advanced, the surprise of Hamlet on hearing the player-king recite the disasters of Hecuba, was but a type of ours, to find ourselves carried away by the spell of his enthusiasm. His eyes swam in tears; he became pale and red; he trembled; he recovered himself; his face was now joyous, now exulting, gay, jocose; in fact, he was twenty actors in one; he rang the changes from Rachel to Bouffé; and he finished by delighting us, besides beguiling us of our tears, and overwhelming us with astonishment. [373]

He would have been a treasure on the stage; for he is still, though his first youth is past, remarkably good-looking and striking; with black, sparkling eyes of intense expression; a fine ruddy complexion; a countenance of wondrous mobility; a good figure; and action full of fire and grace; he has handsome hands, which he uses with infinite effect; and, on the whole, he is the best actor of the kind I ever saw. I could now quite understand what a troubadour or *jongleur* might be, and I look upon Jasmin as a revived specimen of that extinct race. Such as he is might have been Gaucelm Faidit, of Avignon, the friend of Cœur de Lion, who lamented the death of the hero in such moving strains; such might have been Bernard de Ventadour, who sang the praises of Queen Elionore's beauty; such Geoffrey Rudel, of Blaye, on his own Garonne; such the wild Vidal: certain it is, that none of these troubadours of old could more move, by their singing or reciting, than Jasmin, in whom all their long-smothered fire and traditional magic seems re-illumined.

We found we had stayed hours instead of minutes with the poet; but he would not hear of any apology—only regretted that his voice was so out of tune, in consequence of a violent cold, under which he was really labouring, and hoped to see us again. He told us our countrywomen of Pau had laden him with kindness and attention, and spoke with such enthusiasm of the beauty of certain "misses," that I feared his little [374] wife would feel somewhat piqued; but, on the contrary, she stood by, smiling and happy, and enjoying the stories of his triumphs. I remarked that he had restored the poetry of the troubadours; asked him if he knew their songs; and said he was worthy to stand at their head. "I am, indeed, a troubadour," said he, with energy; "but I am far beyond them all; they were but beginners; they never composed a poem like my Françounete! there are no poets in France now—there cannot be; the language does not admit of it; where is the fire, the spirit, the expression, the tenderness, the force of the Gascon? French is but the ladder to reach to the *first floor* of Gascon—how can you get up to a height except by a ladder!"

This last metaphor reminded me of the Irishman's contempt for an English staircase in comparison to his father's ladder; and my devotion to the troubadours and *early* French poets received a severe shock by the slight thrown on them by the bard of Agen.

We left him, therefore, half angry at his presumption; and once out of his sight I began again to doubt his merit, not feeling ready to accord the meed of applause to conceit at any time; I forgot that Jasmin is a type of his kind in all ways, and "is every inch" a *Gascon*. [375]

His poems, of which I am tempted to give some specimens, must speak for him, although they necessarily lose greatly by transmission into a language so different to the Gascon as English. The last volume he published we brought away with us. It is

called *Los Papillotos*[19] *de Jasmin, coiffeur*, and contains a great many poems, all remarkable in their way, even including those complimentary verses addressed to certain "*Moussus,*" (*Messieurs*.)

The history of this singular person is told by himself in a series of poems called "His recollections," which present a sad and curious picture of his life in its different stages. It appears that Jacques Jasmin, or as he writes it in Gascon, *Jaquou Jansemin*, was born in 1797 or 1798.

"The last century, old and worn out," (says his eulogist, M. Sainte-Beuve,) "had only two or three more years to pass on earth, when, at the corner of an antique street, in a ruined building peopled by a colony of rats, on the Thursday of Carnival week, at the hour when pancakes are being tossed, of a hump-backed father and a lame mother was born a child, a droll little object; and this child was the poet, Jasmin. When a prince is born into the world, the event is celebrated by the report of cannon; but he, the son of a poor tailor, had not even a pop-gun to announce his birth. Nevertheless, he did not appear without *éclat*, for at the moment he made his appearance, a *charivari* was given to a neighbour, and the music of marrowbones and cleavers [376] accompanied a song of thirty-stanzas, composed for the occasion by his father. This father of his, who could not read, was a poet in his way, and made most of the burlesque couplets for salutations of this description, so frequent in the country. Behold, then, a poetical parentage, as well established as that of the two Marots."

The infant born under so auspicious an aspect, grew and throve in spite of the poverty to which he was heir. He was allowed, when a few years had passed over his head, to accompany his father in those concerts of rough music to which he contributed his poetical powers; but the chief delight of the future troubadour was to go, with his young associates, into the willow islands of the Garonne to gather wood.

"Twenty or thirty together, we used to set out, with naked feet and bareheaded, singing together the favourite song of the south, 'The lamb, that you gave me.' Oh! the recollection of this pleasure even now enchants me."

Their faggots collected, these little heroes returned to make bonfires of them; on which occasion many gambols ensued. But, in the midst of the joyous *escapades* which he describes, he had his moments of sadness, which the word "*school*" never failed to increase, for the passion of his soul was to gain instruction, and the poverty of his family precluded all hope. He would listen to his mother, as she spoke in whispers to [377] his grandfather, of her wish to send him to school; and he wept with disappointment, to find such a consummation impossible. The evidences of this destitution were constantly before him; his perception of the privations of those dear to him became every day keener; and when, after the fair, during which he had filled his little purse by executing trifling commissions, he carried the amount to his mother, his heart sank as she took it from him with a melancholy smile, saying—"Poor child, your assistance comes just in time." Bitter thoughts of poverty would thus occasionally intrude; but the gaiety of youth banished them again, until one sad day the veil was wholly withdrawn, and he could no longer conceal the truth from himself. He had just reached his tenth year, and was one day playing in the square, when he saw a chair, borne along by several persons, in which was seated an old man: he looked up and recognised his grandfather, surrounded by his family. He sprang towards him, and throwing himself into his arms, exclaimed—"Where are they taking you, dear grandfather? why do you weep? why do you leave us who love you so dearly?" "My son," replied the old man, "I am going to the hospital; it is there that all the Jasmins die." A few days after, the venerable man was no more, and from that hour Jasmin never forgot that they were indeed poor. [378]

This melancholy incident closes the first canto of the poet's "Recollections." The second opens with a description of his wretched dwelling, and the scanty support gained by labour *and begging*, shared by nine persons: his grandfather's wallet, from which he had so often received a piece of bread, unknowing how it had been obtained, now hung a sad memorial of his hard life, and told the story of his trials, when he went round to his former friends, from farm to farm, in the hope of filling it for a starving family. At last, one day, the ambitious mother entered out of breath, announcing the joyous tidings that her son was admitted *gratis* into a free school. He became a scholar in a few months, a chorister in a few more, his fine voice doubtless recommending him; he gained a prize, and was in a fair way of advancement, when some childish frolic, punished too severely, caused him to be expelled. On reaching his home, he

found all in consternation, for his bad conduct had been visited on his family, and the portion of food sent to them weekly he found was discontinued. His mother tried to console him, and to conceal their real state; but while he saw his little brothers and sisters provided with food, which, his mother smilingly dispensed, he discovered to his horror that she no longer wore her ring: it had been sold to buy bread.

The second canto here finishes. The third introduces us to the hero in his capacity of apprentice to the same craft of which he still continues a member, and here his [379] comparative prosperity begins. He falls in love, writes verses, sings them, becomes popular, is able to open a little shop on his own account, and burns the old arm-chair in which his ancestors were carried to the hospital. His wife, who was at first an enemy to pen and ink, finding the good effect of his songs, was soon the first to urge him to write; his fellow-citizens became proud of him, his trade increased, and at length he was able to purchase the house on the promenade, where he now lives in comfort; with sufficient for his moderate wishes, always following his trade of hair-cutting, and publishing his poems at the same time. The first of his poems that appeared was called "The Charivari." It is burlesque, and has considerable merit: it is preceded by a very fine ode, full of serious beauty and grace of expression; this was as early as 1825. Several others of great beauty followed, and some of his songs became popular beyond the region where they were first sung. But his finest composition was a ballad, called "The Blind Girl of Castel-Cuillé," which at once crowned him with fame and loaded him with honours.

The last volume he has published is that which I now introduce to the reader: it contains, besides several already known, many new poems, and a ballad, called "Françouneto," which is acknowledged as a successful rival to "The Blind Girl." The [380] rustic character of his descriptions, and the rustic dialect in which they are conveyed, give a tone of novelty and reality to his works quite peculiar to themselves. The force and powerful effect of the Gascon language is lost in reading the French version, appended to the original; but a very little attention will make that original understood, and the reward well repays the study.

The "Abuglo" (the Blind Girl) thus opens—

"Del pè d'aquelo haouto mountagno
Oùn se pinquo Castel-Cuillé;
Altenque lou poumé, lou pruné, l'amellé,
Blanquejâbon dens la campagno,
Baci lou chan qu'on entendêt,
Un dimècres mati, beillo de Sent-Jouzèt."

"At the foot of the high mountain, where Castle-Cuillé stands in mid-air, at the season when the apple-tree, the plum, and the almond, are whitening all the country round, this is the song that was sung one Wednesday morning, the eve of St. Joseph."

Then comes the chorus, which is no invention of the poet, but a refrain of the country, always sung at rustic weddings, in accordance with a custom of strewing the bridal path with flowers:

"The paths with buds and blossoms strew!
A lovely bride approaches nigh:
For all should bloom and spring anew,
A lovely bride is passing by."

[381]

A description then follows of a rural wedding, introducing habits and superstitions, which remind one of Burns and Hallow-e'en. This picture of youth, gaiety, and beauty, is full of truth and nature; and the contrast is affecting, of the desolate situation of the young blind girl, who should have been the bride, but whom Baptiste, her lover, had deserted for one richer, since a severe malady had deprived her of her sight. Poor Marguerite (*Margarido*) still thinks him faithful, and expects his return to fulfil his vow, when the sound of the wedding music, and the explanation of her little brother, reveal to her all her misfortune. The song of hope and fear, as she sits expecting him, is extremely beautiful; and some of the expressions, in the original singular yet musical Gascon, must lose greatly by translation, either in French or English. Her lamentations on her blindness remind one of Milton's heart-rending words on the same subject:—

"Jour per aoutres, toutjour! et per jou, malhurouzo,
Toutjour ney, toutjour ney!"

"MARGARIDO'S REFLECTIONS."

"After long months of sad regret
Returned!—return'd? and comes not yet?
Although to my benighted eyes
He knows no other star may rise:
He knows my lonely moments past,
Expecting, hoping to the last.
He knows my heart is faithful still,
I wait my vows but to fulfil. [382]

Alas! without him what have I?
Grief bows my fame and dims my eye;
For others, day and joy and light,
For me, all darkness—always night!

"What gloom spreads round where he is not:
How cold, how lonely, he away!
But in his presence all forgot,
I never think of sun or day.
What has the day? a sky of blue—
His eyes are of a softer hue,
That light a heaven of hope and love.
Pure as the skies that glow above.
But skies, earth, blindness, tears, and pain,
Are all forgot, unfelt, unknown,
When he is by my side again,
And holds my hand within his own!"

When the unfortunate girl finds that her lover is untrue, despair takes possession of her mind; she causes herself to be conducted to the church, where the ceremony of the marriage is taking place; and at the moment when Baptiste pronounces the words which seal his fate with that of her rival, Angela, she rushes forward, and draws a knife to stab herself; but at the instant she falls dead at his feet, before her hand has accomplished the fatal blow. The poet here congratulates his heroine on having died *without crime*, her *intention* going for nothing, and the angels bearing her soul to heaven as immaculate.

There is little in the plot of this story—its beauty lies in the grace, and ease, and simplicity of the language, and the pathos of the situations. The same may be said of [383] the ballad of "Françouneto," the latest work of the author, which is just now making a great sensation in France. The close of both these stories is somewhat weak and hurried, and both fail in effect, except when Jasmin reads them himself,—then there appears nothing to be desired.

Françonnette is a village beauty and coquette, promised to Marcel, a young soldier, but attached to Pascal, a peasant, whose poverty and pride prevent his declaring the passion he feels for the volatile but tender maiden, who

"Long had fired each youth with love,
Each maiden with despair;"

but, unlike the Emma of the English ballad, Françonnette is too conscious of being fair, and torments her admirers to death. She becomes, at length, the object of suspicion and hatred to her fellows, in consequence of a rumour circulated by her disappointed lover, Marcel, that her Huguenot father had sold her to the evil one, and that misfortune awaited whoever should love or marry her. Some fearful scenes ensue, in which the poet exhibits great power. The quarrel of the rivals is managed with effect; and the rising of the peasantry against the supposed bewitched beauty; the discovery of Pascal's love, and the consequent revolution the knowledge effects in the [384] mind of the deserted girl; his tender devotion, her danger, and Marcel's subsequent remorse, are admirably told; and, on the whole, the story of Françonnette must be acknowledged as a great advance upon the "Aveugle;" and its superiority promises

greater things yet from the poet of Agen.

"FRANÇONNETTE'S MUSINGS.

"On the parched earth when falls the earliest dew,
As shine the sun's first rays, the winter flown,
So love's first spark awakes to life anew,
And fills the startled mind with joy unknown.
The maiden yielded every thought to this—
The trembling certainty of real bliss:
The lightning of a joy before unproved,
Flash'd in her heart, and taught her that she loved.

"She fled from envy, and from curious eyes,
And dream'd, as all have done, those waking dreams,
Bidding in thought bright fairy fabrics rise
To shrine the loved one in their golden gleams.
Alas! the Sage is right, 'tis the distrest
Who dream the fondest, and who love the best!"

But, perhaps, a better idea can be conveyed, by giving a version in prose of the whole story. [385]

The story of Françonnette.

It was at the time when Blaise de Montluc, the sanguinary chief, struck the Protestants with a heavy hand, and his sword hewed them in pieces, while, in the name of a God of mercy, he inundated the earth with tears and blood.

At length he paused from fatigue: it was ended; no more did the hills resound with the noise of carbine or cannon: the savage leader, to prop the cross, which neither then nor now tottered, had slain, strangled, filled the wells with slaughtered thousands. The earth gave back its dead at Fumel and at Penne: fathers, mothers, children, were nearly exterminated, and the executioners had time to breathe.

The exhausted tiger—the merciless ruffian—dismounted from his charger, re-entered his fortress, with its triple bridge, and its triple moat, and, kneeling at the altar, uttered his devout prayers, received the communion, while his hands were yet reeking with the blood of innocence with which he had glutted his cruelty.

Meantime, in the hamlets, young men and maidens, at first terrified at the bare name of Huguenot, devoted their hours to love and amusement as formerly. And in a village, at the foot of a strong castle, one Sunday, a band of lovers were dancing on the votive feast of Roquefort, and, to the sound of the fife, celebrated St. Jacques and [386] the month of August—that lovely month, which, by the freshness of its dew, and the fire of its sun, ripens our figs and grapes.

There had never been seen a finer fête. Under the large parasol of foliage, where the crowd were every year seen in groups—all was full to overflowing. From the heights of the rocks to the depths of the valleys, from Montagnac and Sainte Colombe, new troops of visitors arrived; still they come—still they come—and the sun is high in heaven, like a torch. There is no lack of room where they are met, for the meadows here serve for chambers, and the banks of turf for seats.

What enjoyment!—the heat makes the air sparkle: nothing is more pleasing than to see those fife-players blowing, and the dancers whirling along. Cakes and sweetmeats are taken from baskets; fresh lemonade! how eagerly the thirsty drink it down! Crowds hurry to see Polichinelle—crowds hurry to the merchant whose cymbals announce his treasures—crowds everywhere! But who is she advancing this way? Joy, joy! It is the young Queen of the Meadows. It is she—it is Françonnette. Let me tell you a little concerning her.

In towns as well as in hamlets, you know there is always the pearl of love, precious above all the rest; well, every voice united proclaim her, in the canton, the Beauty of Beauties. [387]

But I would not have you imagine that she is pensive—that she sighs—that she is pale as a lily—that she has languishing, half-closed eyes, blue and soft—that she is slight, and bends with languor, like the willow that inclines beside a clear stream. You would be greatly deceived: Françonnette has eyes brilliant as two sparkling stars; one might think to gather bunches of roses on her rounded cheeks; her chestnut hair waves in rich curls; her mouth is like a cherry; her teeth would make snow look dim; her little feet are delicately moulded; her ankle is light and fine. In effect, Françonnette was the true star of beauty in a female form, grafted here below.

All these charms, too evident to all, caused ceaseless envy amongst the young girls, and many sighs amongst the swains. Poor young enthusiasts, there was not one who would not have died for her: they looked at her—they adored her as the priest adores the cross. The fair one saw it with delight; and her countenance was radiant with pride and pleasure.

Nevertheless, she has a secret dawn of vexation; the finest flower is wanting in her circlet of triumph. Pascal—the handsomest of all the youths—he who sings the best—appears to avoid and to see her without love. Françonnette is indignant at his neglect; she believes that he is hateful to her, when she reflects on his conduct; she prepares a terrible vengeance, and waits but the moment when, by a look, she shall make him her [388] slave for ever.

Is it not always so! From all time a maiden so courted is sure to become vain and proud; and, young as she is, it is easy to see she is like the rest. Proud she was, to a certain degree, and a coquette she was becoming—a rural one, however, not artful; she loved none, yet many hoped she did.

Her grandmother would often say to her—"My child, remember the country is not the town—the meadow is not a ball-room; you know well that we have promised you to the soldier, Marcel, who loves you, and expects you to be his wife. You must conquer this fickleness of mind. A girl who tries to attract all, ends by gaining none."

A kiss and a laugh and a caress were the answer; and, while she bounded away, she would sing, in the words of the song—

"I have time enough, dear mother,
Time enough to love him yet;
If I wait and choose no other,
All Love's art I should forget:
And if all is left for one,
'Twere as well be loved by none."

All this finished by creating much jealousy, suffering, and unhappiness; nevertheless, these shepherds were not of those that make lays full of grace and tenderness, and who, dying of grief, engrave their names on poplars and willows. Alas! these shepherds could not write! besides which, though Love had turned their heads, they [389] preferred to suffer and live on: but, oh! what confusion in the workshops!—oh, what ill-dressed vines—what branches uncut!—what furrows all irregular!

Now that you know this heedless little beauty, do not lose sight of her;—there she is! see, how she glides along! now she dances with Etienne the *rigaudon d'honneur*: every one follows her with straining eyes and smiles: every one gives her glances of admiration. She loses not one of their regards; and she dances with added grace. Holy cross! holy cross! how she turns and winds, with her lizard-shaped head, and her little Spanish foot, and her wasp-like waist!—when she slides, and whirls, and leaps, and the breeze waves her blue handkerchief, what would they not all give to impress two kisses on her pretty cheek!

One will be so happy! for it is the custom to kiss your partner if you can tire her out; but a young girl is never tired till she chooses to be so; and, already, Guillaume, Louis, Jean, Pierre, Paul—she has wearied them all: there they stand, out of breath, and can boast of having gained no kiss of Françonnette.

Another takes her hand: it is Marcel, her betrothed: a soldier, in favour with the redoubted Montluc; he is tall and powerful; he wears a sabre, a uniform, and has a cockade in his cap; he is as upright as a dart; well made; bold, with a generous heart, [390] but fiery and proud. Presuming and intrusive—caring little to be invited, but ready to claim whatever he pleases; a boaster, sportive but dangerous, *like a caterpillar*.

Marcel doating on Françonnette, flirts with all, endeavours to rouse her jealousy, and has tales to tell of his successes.

Disgusted at his presumption, his betrothed dislikes, at length, to see him; he perceives her repugnance, and, to revenge himself, proclaims that he knows himself beloved; proud of having said it, he increases his boasting; and, the other day, at a meeting, as he broke his glass, he took an oath that no one but himself should have the privilege of kissing Françonnette.

It was curious to behold, as they danced together, how the crowd pressed forward, anxious to see if the handsome soldier would gain the reward which he boasted that none but he should obtain.

At first he smiled, as he led her forward, and his eyes entreated hers; but she remained mute and cold, and her activity appeared but to increase. Marcel, piqued and annoyed, resolved to conquer her; and the vain lover who would rather gain one kiss before all the world than twenty granted in secret, exerts all his powers, leaps, hurries, whirls, and, to fatigue her, would willingly give his sabre, his cap, his worsted embroidery,—aye, if it had been all of gold instead!

But when the game is displeasing, the maiden is strong to resist. Far from giving in, [391]
Françonnette confuses, tires him, till his breath is gone; passion exhausts him as much as her swiftness; his face becomes crimson—he is ready to fall—he gives in.

On goes the dance—Pascal stands in his place; he has scarcely made two steps, and changed sides, when his pretty partner smiles, reels, pauses; she is tired out, and she turns her blushing cheek to him—oh! she did not wait long for his kiss.

Instantly a shout is heard—clapping of hands in all directions: all plaudits for Pascal, who stands confused and abashed.

What a scene for the young soldier, who loved in good truth!—he shuddered as he saw the kiss given; he rose, and drew himself up to his full height. "Thou hast replaced me too quickly, peasant!" cried he, in a thundering voice; and, to enforce his insulting words, he struck the young man a violent blow.

Heavens! how ready is pain to usurp the place of the sweetest pleasure! A kiss and a blow! glory and shame! light and darkness! fire and ice! life and death! heaven and hell!

All this shook the mind of Pascal; but when a man is insulted, he can revenge himself, though he is neither gentleman nor soldier. No. Look upon him! the tempest is not more fearful. His eyes dart lightning—thunder is in his voice—he raises his arm, and it descends upon Marcel like a bolt. In vain the soldier seeks to draw his sword— [392]
stands on his guard; Pascal, whose size seems to increase with fury, seizes him by his waist, strains him in his grasp, and, with a fierce gripe, forces him to the ground, where he dashes him, crushed and senseless.

"Hold!—the peasant grants your life!" cried Pascal, as he stood over him.

"Kill him!—you are wounded—you are all blood," exclaimed a hundred voices. Pascal's blood flowed, he knew not how.

"It is enough," he returned; "I pardon him now. The wicked man when defeated excites only pity."

"No, no—kill him, tear him to pieces," howled the enraged people.

"Back, peasants, back!" cried a knight, spurring forward, to whom every one gave way. It was Montluc, attracted to the spot by the tumult, as he was passing with the Baron of Roquefort.

But the fête was over—no more amusement: the young girls, terrified, fled like hares, two by two, from the spot; the young men surrounding Pascal—the handsome, brave Pascal—accompanied him on his way, as though it was his wedding-day. Marcel, furious and discomfited, struggled to renew the contest; but his lord's voice restrained him; a word of command silenced him: he ground his teeth with rage, and cried—

"They love each other,—they will do everything to thwart me. This will be but sport to her. 'Tis well; but by St. Marcel, my patron, they shall pay dear for this jesting, and [393]
Françonnette shall be mine, and none other's!"

PART II.

One, two, three months passed away—all fêtes, dances, games, and harvest-homes; but all these gaieties must end with the falling leaves. All things, in winter, assume a mournful aspect,—all beneath the vault of heaven becomes aged.

After nightfall no one now ventured out: all grouped themselves around the bright hearth; for it was known that loup-garoux, and sorcerers whose acts make the hair stand on end, and spread terror in house and hut, now kept their sabbath beneath the naked elms, and round about the straw-rick.

At length, Christmas-morning shone, and Jean the crier hastened through the town with his tambour, calling out, "Be ready, young maidens, at the Buscou: a grand Winding meeting takes place on Friday, New Year's Eve."

Oh! how the young girls and youths proclaimed in every quarter the news of the old crier! his news was of that kind which, rapid as a bird, lends wings to speech. Scarcely, therefore, was the air warmed by the sun's rays, than his intelligence was spread from hearth to hearth, from table to table, from cottage to cottage. [394]

Friday came; and, in the dusk of the evening, seated beside a cold forge, a mother was complaining: and thus she spoke to her son:—

"Have you, then, forgotten the day when, before our shop, I saw you arrive, with the sound of music, faint, wounded, and bleeding? I have suffered much since, for the wound was envenomed; we feared you must lose your arm. Let me entreat, go not out to-night—for I dreamt of flowers—what do they always announce, Pascal?—but sorrows and tears."

"Dear mother, you are too timid; all seems gloomy in your eyes; you know Marcel comes no more amongst us; there is now no reason for your fears."

"Take heed of yourself, nevertheless. The sorcerer of the Black Wood has been wandering in this neighbourhood,—you recollect the great mischief he did last year. Well, it is said that a soldier was seen to leave his cave yesterday, at day-break. Should it be Marcel! Beware, my child. Every mother gives relics to her child—take you mine, and oh, my son, go not forth."

"I only ask one little hour, to see my friend, Thomas."

"Your friend!—ah, tell the truth, and say to see Françonnette; for you, too, love her, like all the rest. You think I see it not—away!—I have long read it in your eyes. You fear to distress me, you sing, you seem gay; but you weep in secret, you suffer, you are [395] wretched, and I am unhappy for your sake. I pine away. Hold, Pascal! something tells me a great misfortune awaits you. She has such power over those who love her, one would say she was a witch; but with her magic what does she seek? Can it be fortune?—it has been offered her twenty times, and she refuses all; however, they say she now pretends to be attached to rich Laurent de Brax, and they are soon to be betrothed. Oh, what confusion she will make this evening, vain creature! Think no more of her, Pascal; leave her, it is for your good;—hear me! she would hold a poor blacksmith in contempt, whose father is old, infirm, and poor,—for we are poor, indeed; alas! you know it well. We have parted with all; we have only a scythe left. It has been a dark time with us since you fell sick; now that you are well, go, dearest, and work. What do I say? we can suffer still; rest yourself, if you please, but, for the love of God, go not forth this evening."

And the poor mother in despair wept, as she implored her son, who, leaning against the forge, stifled a sigh which rose from his oppressed heart, and said, "You are right, mother: I had forgotten all,—we are poor, indeed. I will go and work."

Two minutes after, the anvil was ringing; but whoever had seen how often the young blacksmith struck the iron falsely, would have easily seen that he thought of [396] something besides the hammer he held in his hand.

Meantime few had failed at the Buscou, and every one came from all parts to divide their skein at the Fête of Lovers.

In a large chamber, where already a hundred windles were turning, loaded with flax,

girls and youths, with nimble fingers, were winding thread as fine as hair.

It was soon all finished; and white wine and *rimottes* were placed, boiling, in glasses and basins, from which rose a burning smoke which set the love-powder in a flame. If the prettiest there had been the most rapid, I should have pointed out Françonnette; but the Queen of the Games is the last at work, and this is the time when her reign begins.

Only listen; how she amuses every one,—how she governs and regulates all; one would say she had spirit enough for three. She dances, she speaks, she sings; she is all-in-all. When she sings, you would say she had the soul of the dove; when she talks, the wit of an angel: when she dances, you would imagine she had, the wings of the swallow: and this evening she sang, and danced, and talked—oh! it was enough to turn the wisest head!

Her triumph is complete; all eyes are upon her. The poor young men can resist no more; and her bright eyes, which enchant them, shine and sparkle as they see how the [397] spell works. Then Thomas rose, and, looking at the lovely coquette with tender glances, sang, in a flute-toned voice, this new song:

"Oh tell us, charming maid,
With heart of ice unmoved,
When shall we hear the sound
Of bells that ring around,
To say that you have loved?
Always so free and gay,
Those wings of dazzling ray,
Are spread to ev'ry air,—
And all your favour share;
Attracted by their light,
All follow in your flight.
But, ah! believe me, 'tis not bliss,
Such triumphs do but purchase pain;
What is it to be loved like this,
To her who cannot love again?

"You've seen how full of joy
We've marked the sun arise;
Even so each Sunday morn,
When you, before our eyes,
Bring us such sweet surprise,
With us new life is born:
We love your angel face,
Your step so debonaire,
Your mien of maiden grace,
Your voice, your lip, your hair:
Your eyes of gentle fire,
All these we all admire!
But, ah! believe me, 'tis not bliss,
Such triumphs do but purchase pain;
What is it to be loved like this,
To her who cannot love again. [398]

"Alas! our groves are dull,
When widowed of thy sight,
And neither hedge nor field
Their perfume seem to yield;
The blue sky is not bright:
When you return once more,
All that was sad is gone,
All nature you restore;
We breathe in you alone.
We could your rosy lingers cover
With kisses of delight all over!
But ah! believe me, 'tis not bliss,
Such triumphs do but purchase pain;

What is it to be loved like this,
To her who cannot love again!

"The dove you lost of late,
Might warn you, by her flight;
She sought in woods her mate,
And has forgot you quite;
She has become more fair,
Since love has been her care.
'Tis love makes all things gay,
Oh follow where he leads—
When beauteous looks decay,
What dreary life succeeds!
And ah! believe me, perfect bliss,
A joy, where peace and triumph reign,
Is when a maiden loved like this,
Has learnt 'tis sweet to love again."

The song is ended; and the crowd, delighted at its meaning, are full of applause, and clap their hands in praise.

"Heavens! what a song!—how appropriate! who composed so sweet a lay?"

"It was Pascal," replied Thomas. [399]

"Bravo, Pascal,—long live Pascal!" was the general cry.

Françonnette is silent; but she feels and enjoys it all,—she is proud, and exults: she has the love of all—of all now. It is told her, a song has been made for her; and she hears it sung before every one—yes, every one knows she is the person meant. She thinks on Pascal, too, and becomes grave.

"He has no equal," she mused. "How brave he is! every one holds him in esteem; all are on his side. How well he can paint love! doubtless they all love him. And what a song! what tender meaning!" Not a word has escaped her. "But, if he loves, why does he thus conceal himself?" She turned to his friend, and exclaimed:

"It seems long since we saw him. I would fain tell him how beautiful we think his song. Where is he?"

"Oh! he is obliged to stay at home," said Laurent, jealous and piqued. "Pascal has no more time, methinks, for song making. Poor man! his ruin is not far off; his father is infirm, and cannot leave his bed; he is in debt everywhere; the baker refuses to trust him."

Françonnette became very pale. "He—so amiable—so good! alas! he is much to be pitied. Is he, then, indeed so wretched?"

"Too true," said Laurent, affecting a compassionate air. "It is said he lives on alms." [400]

"You have lied," cried Thomas: "may your tongue be blistered! Pascal is unfortunate; and all has not gone well with him since he met that hurt in the arm, for Françonnette; but he is well again; and, if no envious person injures him, he will recover himself soon; for he has industry and courage." Whoever had looked narrowly would have seen a tear in the eye of Françonnette.

The games begin: they sit in a circle; they play at *cache-couteau*. Françonnette is challenged by Laurent: he claims the kiss which she has forfeited. She flies like a bird from the fowler; he pursues; but, when he has nearly reached her, he falls, and has broken his arm.

A sudden gloom succeeds to gaiety; terror takes possession of all. When suddenly a door opens, and an aged man, whose beard hangs to his girdle, appears. He comes like a spectre: they start away in alarm; the Sorcerer of the Black Wood stands before them.

"Unthinking beings!" he exclaims, "I have descended from my rock to warn you. You all fix your thoughts upon this girl, Françonnette, who is accursed; for her father, while she was yet in her cradle, became a Huguenot, and sold her to the devil. Her mother died of grief; and the demon, who watches over that which is his, follows her

everywhere in secret. He has punished Pascal and Laurent, who have sought her. Be warned; ill-fortune attends whoever would espouse her. The demon has alone a claim to her possession; and her husband would fall a victim." [401]

The sorcerer ended: sparks of fire surrounded him, and showed his wrinkled face more clearly: he turned four times round in a circle, and disappeared.

Every hearer seemed changed to stone. Françonnette alone showed signs of life: she did not give way at once to the misfortunes which threatened her: she hoped the scene would pass as a jest: she laughed cheerfully—advanced towards her friends; but all drew back with a shudder; all cried out, "Begone!" Then she felt she was abandoned; a cold tremor came over her, and she fell senseless to the ground.

Thus ended a fête which had begun so gaily. The next day—the first of the year—the rumours of this event spread from house to house and from meadow to meadow.

Oh! the terror of the evil one, which at the present day scarcely exists, at that time was fearful, particularly in the country.

A thousand things were remembered, before never dreamt of: some had heard in her cottage the noise of chains: her father had disappeared mysteriously: her mother was said to have died mad: nothing ever failed with her; her harvest always ripened first; and when hail destroyed other fields, her's were full of grapes and corn. [402]

None hesitated to believe what was said; daughters, mothers, grandmothers exaggerated the first reports; children trembled at her name; and, at length, when the poor girl, with depressed brow, came forth to seek necessaries for her aged relative, no one spoke to her: all shrunk from her; or, pointing with their fingers, cried out —"Fly! behold one sold to the demon!"

PART III.

Beside the town of Estanquet, on the banks of a sparkling stream, whose waters run bubbling all the year long over the pebbles, a beautiful girl was gathering flowers, last year, amongst the turf: she sang so sweetly and so joyously, that the birds were jealous of her voice and of her song.

Why does she sing no more? Hedges and meads are green again; the nightingales come even into her garden to invite her to join their lays. Where is she? Perhaps she is departed. But no; her straw hat lies on the accustomed bench, but is no longer adorned with a bright ribbon: her little garden is neglected: her hoe and rake lie on the ground amongst the jonquils: the rose branches stray wildly; there are thistles at their feet, and the little paths, which used to be so neat, are filled with nettles.

Something must have happened. Where is the lively maiden? Do you not see her cottage shining white through the thick hazel branches? Let us approach: the door is open; softly—let us enter. Ah! there, in her arm-chair, sits the grandmother, asleep; and I see behind the window the fair girl of Estanquet; but she is in grief—what can ail her? Tears are falling on her little hand: some dark cloud has passed over her heart. [403]

Oh yes! dark indeed! for yonder sits Françonnette: there she sits, bowed down with the blow which has overwhelmed her: she weeps in her chamber, and her heart knows no relief. Young girls often weep, and forget their sorrow quickly; but she——her grief is too deep, and it is one which tears cannot soften. The daughter of a Huguenot! one banished from the Church—sold to the demon! ah! it is too horrible!

The grandmother tells her in vain—"My child, it is false!" She does not listen: there is none but her father can resolve her doubts, and prove to her that it is not true; but no one knows his place of abode; she is alone—she is terrified—oh! so terrified, that she believes it.

"What a change!" she cries. "I who, but now, was so happy—I, who was Queen of the Meadows and could command all—I, for whom every youth would have gone barefooted amongst a nest of serpents—to be contemned, avoided, the terror of the country! And Pascal—he also flies me, as if I were a pest: yet I pitied him in his wretchedness; perhaps he has no pity to bestow on me." [404]

It was not so; and she has yet some comfort in her misery: she learns that Pascal is

her defender: this is a balm to her wounded spirit; and, as her only relief, she thinks of him often. Suddenly she hears a cry; she flies to her grandmother, who has just waked from sleep: "The fire is not here; the walls do not burn! Oh God, what a mercy!"

"What were you dreaming, dear grandmother—answer me—what is it?" "Unfortunate girl! I dreamt it was night; brutal men came to our house, and set it on fire. You cried; you exerted yourself to save me, but you could not, and we both were burnt. Oh, I have suffered much! come to my arms! let me embrace my child!"

And the aged woman strained her in her withered arms, and pressed her tenderly to her heart, her white hair mingling with the golden ringlets of Françonnette. "Dearest," said she, "your mother, the day of her marriage, came from the castle a bride; her dower came from thence; and thus we are not rich from the demon; every one must know that. It is true that while you were an infant, my angel, and yet in the cradle, we heard every night a strange noise, and we found you always out of the cradle; and on the edge of your little bed three drops of blood appeared; but we said a prayer, and [405] they disappeared; does not this prove that you are not sold to the evil one? Some envious person has invented this. Be of good cheer, and do not weep like a child; you are more lovely than ever: show yourself again: let your beauty once more appear. Those who hide from envy give the wicked more space. Besides, Marcel still loves you; he has sent secretly to say he is your's when you will—you love him not! Marcel will be your protector; I am too old to guard you. Hearken! to-morrow is Easter-day; go to mass, and pray more fervently than of late; take some of the blessed bread, and sign yourself with the cross. I am certain that God will restore your lost happiness, and will prove, by your countenance, that He has not erased you from the number of those He calls his own."

The hope she had conjured up irradiated the face of the poor woman; her child hung round her neck, and promised to do her bidding; and peace was restored for a while to the little white cottage.

The next day, when the Hallelujah was ringing from the bells of St. Pé, great was the astonishment of all to behold Françonnette kneeling with her chaplet in the church,—her eyes cast down in prayer.

Poor girl! well might she pray to be spared; there was not a young woman who [406] spared her as she passed: the less so, that Marcel and Pascal appeared to feel pity for her. They were very cruel to her; not one would remain near; so that she found herself, at last, kneeling alone in the midst of a wide circle, like one condemned who has a mark of shame on his forehead. Her mortification is not yet complete, for the uncle of Marcel—the churchwarden, who wears a vest of violet with large skirts—the tall man who offers the blessed bread at Easter—passes on when she puts out her hand to take her portion, and refuses to allow her to share the heavenly meal.

This was terrible! She believes that God has really abandoned her, and would drive her from His temple; she trembles, and sinks back nearly fainting; but some one advances—it is he who asks to-day for the offerings; it is Pascal, who had never quitted her with his looks, who had seen the meaning glance which passed between the uncle and nephew—he advances softly, and taking from the shining plate that part of the bread which is crowned with a garland of choice flowers, presents it to Françonnette.

What a moment of delicious joy to her! Her blood runs free again; she feels no longer frozen to stone; her soul had trembled; but it seems as if the bread of the living God, as she touched it, had restored her life. But why is her cheek so covered with blushes? [407] It is because the Angel of Love had, with his breath, drawn forth the flame that slept in her heart; it is that a feeling, new, strange, subtle, like fire, sweet as honey, rises in her soul, and makes her bosom beat. Oh! it is that she lives with another life. Now, she knows herself; she feels what she really is: now she understands the magic of love. The world—the priest—all disappears; in the temple of the Lord there is but a human creature she beholds—the man she loves—the man to whom she had faltered her thanks.

Now, let us quit all the envy and jealousy that might be seen exhibited on the way-side from St. Pé, and the triple scandal of cruel tongues; let us follow Françonnette, who carries home to her grandmother the blessed bread crowned with its garland, and who, having given it into her hands, retires to her chamber *alone with her love*!

First drop of dew in the time of drought, first ray of sun-light in winter, thou art not

more welcome to the bosom of the parched earth in sadness, than this first flame of affection to the awakened heart of the tender girl! Happy—overwhelmed—she forgets herself, and, by degrees, gives up all her being to the new, rapturous delight of loving!

Then, far from the noise of evil tongues, she did what we all do; she dreamt with unclosed eyes, and without stone or implements she built herself a little castle, where, [408] with Pascal, all was shining, all was brilliant, all was radiant with happiness. Oh! the sage is right—the soul in affliction loves the strongest!

She gave herself up entirely to her love; she feels she loves for ever, and all in nature seems to smile for her. But the honey of love too soon becomes bitter. Suddenly, she recollects herself—she shudders—she becomes as if frozen. At the stroke of a fearful thought, all her little castle is demolished. Alas! wretched girl, she dreamt of love, and love is forbidden to her. Did not the sorcerer say she was sold to the evil one, and that man bold enough to seek her would find only death in the nuptial chamber? She! must she behold Pascal dead before her?

Mercy, oh God! oh God, pity!

And, bathed in tears, the poor child fell on her knees before an image of the Virgin.

"Holy Virgin," said she, "without thy aid I am lost; for I love deeply. I have no parents, and they say I am sold to the demon. Oh, take pity on me! save me, if it be true: and if it is but the saying of the wicked, let my soul know the truth; and when I offer thee my taper at the altar of Notre Dame, prove to me that my prayer is accepted."

A short prayer, when it is sincere, soon mounts to heaven. She felt certain that she [409] was heard; but she thought constantly of her project, though at times she shuddered, and fear rendered her mute; still hope would come like a lightning flash in the night, and satisfy her heart.

PART IV.

At length the day arrived so feared and so desired. At day-break long lines of young girls, all in white, extended in all directions, and advanced to the sound of the bells; and Notre Dame, in the midst of a cloud of perfume, proudly looked down on three hamlets in one.

What censers! what crosses! what nosegays! what tapers! what banners! what pictures! Then come all Puymirol, Artigues, Astafort, Lusignan, Cardonnet, Saint Cirq, Brax, Roquefort; but those of Roquefort, this year, are the first—the most numerous: and to see them in particular the curious hastened forward, for everywhere, in all places, the story of the young girl sold to the demon spread, and it is known that to-day she comes to pray to the Virgin to protect her.

Her misfortune has inspired pity amongst them; every one looks at her and laments; they trust that a miracle will be operated in her favour, and that the Virgin will save her. She sees the feeling that she has inspired, and rejoices; her hope becomes [410] stronger; "the voice of the people is the voice of God."

Oh, how her heart beats as she enters the church! everywhere within the walls are pictures of the Virgin's mercy and indulgence; mothers in grief, young people in affliction, girls without parents, women without children—all are kneeling with tapers before the image of the Mother of heaven, which an aged priest in his robes allows to touch their lips, and afterwards blesses them.

No sign of ill has occurred, and they believe; all, as they rise, depart with a happy hope, and Françonnette feels the same, particularly when she sees Pascal praying devoutly; then she has courage to look the priest in the face. It appears as if love, music, the lights, the incense—all was united to assure her of pardon.

"Pardon! pardon!" murmured she, "oh, if that were mine! and Pascal"—

She lighted her taper in order, and, the light and her bouquet in her hand, she took her place. Every one, from compassion, made way that she might kneel the foremost. The silence is breathless; there is neither movement nor gesture; all eyes are turned on her and on the priest; he takes the sacred image, and holds it forth to her; but

scarcely has it touched the lips of the orphan when a loud peal of thunder shakes the church, and rolls away in the distance; her taper is extinguished, and three of those on the altar! [411]

Her taper is extinct—her prayer rejected—she is accursed!

Oh, God! it is, then, indeed true! she has been dedicated to the evil one, and is abandoned of Heaven!

A murmur of terror spread through the crowd; and when the unfortunate girl rose, pale and wild and breathless with horror, all drew back, shuddering, and let her pass. The thunder-clap had begun the storm; fearfully it burst afterwards over Roquefort; the belfry of St. Pierre was destroyed, and the hail driving over the country, swept all away but those who wept to see the ravage.

And the pilgrims returned, all ready to relate the disaster they had seen; they returned all—except one—and sang *Ora pro nobis*.

Then, to cross the perilous waters, Agen did not possess as now—to make other towns jealous—three great bridges, as though it were a royal town. Two simple barks, urged by two oars, carried persons from one side to the other; but scarcely have they reached the opposite shore, and formed themselves in lines, than the news of the terrible event reaches them. At first, they scarcely credit its extent; but when they advance, and behold the vines and the fields desolated, then they tremble and are seized with despair, and cries of "Misery!" and "Misfortune!" rend the air.

Suddenly a voice exclaims, "Françonnette is saved while we are ruined!" the word [412] acts like a spark to gunpowder.

"The wretch!—drive her out!—she brings us evil—it is true—she is the cause of all—she may do us more harm!"

And the crowd clamoured louder and grew more furious. One cried, "Let us drive her from us! cursed as she is, let her burn in flames like the *Huguenot*, her father!"

The coldest became infuriated: "Let her be driven forth!" cried all.

To see them thus enraged, with flaming eyes, clenched hands and teeth, it seemed as if Hell inspired them, and that its influence came with the breeze of night, and breathed into their veins the venom of fury.

Where was Françonnette? alas! in her cottage, half-dead—cold as marble! holding firmly in her tightened and convulsive grasp the faded wreath given her by Pascal.

"Poor garland!" said she; "when I received you from him your perfume told of happiness, and I inhaled it; relic of love! I bore you in my bosom, where you soon faded like my vain dreams. Dear Pascal, farewell! my torn heart weeps to resign thee, but I must say adieu for ever! I was born in an evil hour; and, to save thee from my influence, I must conceal my love. Yet I feel this day thou art dearer than ever; I love with an affection never to be extinguished—with a devotion which is bliss or death on [413] earth; but death is nothing to me if it could save thee!"

"Why do you moan thus, Françonnette?" cried out her grandmother; "you told me, with a cheerful air, that the Virgin had received your offering and you were content; yet I hear you sob like a soul in pain; you deceive me, something has happened to you to-day."

"Oh, no; be content, grandmother; I am happy—very happy."

"'Tis well, my love; for your sorrow wrings my heart; to-day again I passed some fearful hours; this dream of fire recurs so often in spite of myself; and the storms alarm me; hark! I tremble at every sound."

What cries are those so near and so loud? "Fire them! burn them! let them burn together!" A flash bursts through the old shutters; Françonnette rushes to the casement. Great Heaven! she sees the rick on fire, and a furious mob howling outside.

"We must drive them out—the old hag and the young one; both have bewitched us!—Hence! child of perdition! hence, or burn in thy den!"

Françonnette on her knees, with streaming eyes, exclaims, "Oh, pity for my poor old

grandmother—do not kill her!"

But the deluded populace, more confirmed than ever, by her haggard looks, that she is possessed, howl louder still—"Away with her!" and on they rush, brandishing flaming brands. [414]

"Hold—hold!" cried a voice, and Pascal sprang amongst them. "Cowards! would you murder two defenceless women! would you burn their dwelling, as if they had not suffered enough—tigers, that you are—already the walls are hot!"

"Let the Huguenots quit the country: they are possessed by the demon. If they stay amongst us God will send down punishment. Let them go instantly, or we burn them! —Who presses forward there?"

"Ha!" cried Pascal, "Marcel here! he is her enemy!"

"Liar!" cried Marcel; "I love her better than thou, boaster as thou art! What wilt thou do for her—thou whose heart is so soft?"

"I come to assist her—to defend her."

"And I to be her husband, in spite of all, if she will be my wife."

"I come for the same purpose," cried Pascal, without shrinking from his rival's regard; then turning to Françonnette, he said, with firmness, "Françonnette, you are safe no longer; these wretches will pursue you from village to village; but here are two who love you—two who would brave death, destruction, for your sake—can you choose between us?"

"Oh, no, no! speak not of marriage. Pascal! my love is death—go! forget me! be happy without me! I dare not be yours!" [415]

"Happy without you! it is in vain: I love you too well; and if it be true that you are the prey of the evil one, 'twere better die with you than live away from you!"

Doubtless, the beloved voice has power above all things over the softened heart: at the last step of misery we can dare all with desperate courage. Before the assembled crowd she exclaimed: "Oh, yes, Pascal, I do love you—I would have died alone; but, since you will have it so, I resist no longer. If it is our fate—we will die together."

Pascal is in heaven—the crowd amazed—the soldier mute. Pascal approaches him. "I am," he said, "more fortunate than you; but you are brave, and will forgive me. To conduct me to my grave,[20] I require a friend—I have none—will you act the part of one?"

Marcel is silent—he muses—a great struggle is in his heart—his eye flashes—his brow is bent strongly—he gazes on Françonnette, and the paleness of death creeps over him—he shakes off his faintness, and tries to smile. "Since it is her will," he cries, "I will be that friend."

Two weeks had passed,—and a wedding train descended the green hill. In the front of the procession walked the handsome pair. A triple range of people, from all quarters, extended for more than a league: they were curious to know the fate of Pascal. Marcel is at the head of all; he directs all; there is a secret pleasure in his eye, which none can understand. One would say that to-day he triumphs; he insists on arranging the marriage, and it is he who gives to his rival the feast and the ball—his money flows liberally, his purse is open—all is profusion; but there is no rejoicing—no singing—no smiling. [416]

The bridegroom is on the brink of the grave—his rival guides him thither, though he looks so gay—the day declines—all hearts sink with fear and pity—they would fain save Pascal, but it is too late: there they all stand motionless—but more as if at a burial than a wedding.

Fascinated by love, the pair have sacrificed all; though the gulf yawns for them, they have no ears, no eyes, but for each other; as they pass along, hand-in-hand, the happiness of loving has absorbed all other feeling.

It is night.

A female suddenly appears: she clings round the neck of Pascal.—"My son, leave her,

leave your bride—I have seen the wise woman—the sieve has turned—your death is certain—sulphur fills the bridal chamber—Pascal, enter not in—you are lost if you remain; and I, who loved you thus, what will become of me when you are gone?" [417]

Pascal's tears flowed, but he held still firmer his bride's hand within his own. The mother fell at his feet.

"Ungrateful son! I will never leave you! if you persist, you shall pass over my body before you enter the fatal house. A wife, then, is all-in-all—a mother nothing! Oh! miserable that I am!" Tears flowed from every eye.—"Marcel," said the bridegroom, "love masters me; should evil befal me, take charge of my mother."

"This is too much!" cried the soldier; "I cannot bear your mother's grief. Oh, Pascal! be blest—be content—be fearless—Françonnette is free! she is not sold to the evil one. It is a falsehood—a mere tale made for a purpose. But had not your mother overcome me by her tears, perhaps we should both have perished. You know—you can feel—how much I love her; like you, I would give my life for her. I thought she loved me, for she had my very soul—all! Yet she rejected me, though she knows we were betrothed. I saw there was no way—I devised a plan—I hired the sorcerer to raise a terror amongst all; he forged a fearful tale, chance did the rest. I thought her then securely my own; but when we both demanded her—when for you she braved everything—when she at once confessed how dear you were, it was beyond my power to bear. I resolved that we should both die; I would have conducted you to the bridal chamber—a train is laid [418] there: all three were to have been victims; I would have bid you cease to fear the demon, but behold in me your foe!—but it is past, the crime I had meditated is arrested. Your mother has disarmed me; she reminds me of my own. Live, Pascal, for your mother! you have no more to fear for me. I have now no one; I will return to the wars; it were better for me that, instead of perishing with a great crime on my conscience, a bullet should end my life."

He spoke no more, and rushed from their presence: the air resounded with shouts, and the happy lovers fell into each other's arms: the stars at that moment shone out. Oh! I must cast down my pencil—I had colours for sorrow—I have none for such happiness as theirs! [419]

Lines by Jasmin

ADDRESSED TO M. DUMON, DEPUTY, WHO HAD CONDEMNED OUR OLD LANGUAGE.

THERE'S not a deeper grief to man
Than when his mother, faint with years,
Decrepit, old, and weak, and wan,
Beyond the leech's art appears;
When by her couch her son may stay,
And press her hand and watch her eyes,
And feel, though she revive to-day,
Perchance his hope to-morrow dies.

It is not thus, believe me, sir,
With this enchantress—she we call
Our second mother: Frenchmen err,
Who, cent'ries since, proclaim'd her fall!
Our mother-tongue—all melody—
While music lives, can never die.

Yes!—she still lives, her words still ring;
Her children yet her carols sing:
And thousand years may roll away,
Before her magic notes decay.

The people love their ancient songs, and will,
While yet a people, love and keep them still:
These lays are as their mother; they recal,
Fond thoughts of mother, sister, friends, and all
The many *little things* that please the heart—
The dreams, the hopes, from which we cannot part:
These songs are as sweet waters, where we find,

Health in the sparkling wave that nerves the mind.
In ev'ry home, at ev'ry cottage door,
By ev'ry fireside, when our toil is o'er,
These songs are round us, near our cradles sigh,
And to the grave attend us when we die.

Oh! think, cold critics! 'twill be late and long,
Ere time shall sweep away this flood of song! [420]

There are who bid this music sound no more,
And you can hear them, nor defend—deplore!
You, who were born where its first daisies grew,
Have fed upon its honey, sipp'd its dew,
Slept in its arms and wakened to its kiss,
    Danced to its sounds, and warbled to its tone—
You can forsake it in an hour like this!
—Yes, weary of its age, renounce—disown—
    And blame one minstrel who is true—alone!

For me, truth to my eyes made all things plain;
    At Paris, the great fount, I did not find
The waters pure, and to my stream again
    I come, with saddened and with sobered mind;
And since, no more enchanted, now I rate
The little country far above the great.

For you—who seem her sorrows to deplore,
    You, seated high in power, the first among,
Beware! nor make her cause of grief the more;
    Believe her mis'ry, nor condemn her tongue.
Methinks you injure where you seek to heal,
If you deprive her of that only weal.

We love, alas! to sing in our distress;
It seems the bitterness of woe is less;
But if we may not in our language mourn,
What will the polish'd give us in return?
Fine sentences, but all for us unmeet—
Words full of grace, even such as courtiers greet:
A deck'd-out Miss, too delicate and nice
To walk in fields, too tender and precise
To sing the chorus of the poor, or come
When Labour lays him down fatigued at home.

To cover rags with gilded robes were vain—
The rents of poverty would show too plain.

How would this dainty dame, with haughty brow,
Shrink at a load, and shudder at a plough! [421]

Sulky, and piqued, and silent would she stand
    As the tired peasant urged his team along:
No word of kind encouragement at hand,
    For flocks no welcome, and for herds no song!

Yet we will learn, and you shall teach—
Our people shall have double speech:
One to be homely, one polite,
    As you have robes for diff'rent wear,
But this is all:—'tis just and right,
    And more our children will not bear.
Lest we a troop of buzzards own,
Where nightingales once sang alone.

There may be some, who, vain and proud,
May ape the manners of the crowd,

Lisp French, and lame it at each word,
And jest and gibe to all afford:—
But we, as in long ages past,
Will still be poets to the last!

Hark! and list the bridal song,
As they lead the bride along:
"Hear, gentle bride! your mother's sighs,[21]
And you would hence away!—
Weep, weep, for tears become those eyes."
——"I cannot weep—to-day."

Hark! the farmer in the mead
Bids the shepherd swain take heed:
"Come, your lambs together fold,
Haste, my sons! your toil is o'er:
For the morning bow has told
That the ox should work no more."

Hark! the cooper in the shade
Sings to the sound his hammer made: [422]

"Strike, comrades, strike! prepare the cask,
'Tis lusty May that fills the flask:
Strike, comrades! summer suns that shine
Fill the cellars full of wine."

Verse is, with us, a charm divine,
Our people, loving verse, will still,
Unknowing of their art, entwine
Garlands of poesy at will.
Their simple language suits them best:
Then let them keep it and be blest.

But let wise critics build a wall
Between the nurse's cherish'd voice,
And the fond ear her words enthral,
And say their idol is her choice:
Yes!—let our fingers feel the rule,
The angry chiding of the school;
True to our nurse, in good or ill,
We are not French, but Gascon still.

'Tis said that age new feeling brings,
Our youth returns as we grow old;
And that we love again the things,
Which in our memory had grown cold.
If this be true, the time will come
When to our ancient tongue, once more,
You will return, as to a home,
And thank us that we kept the store.

Remember thou the tale they tell,
Of Lacuée and Lacepède,[22]
When age crept on, who loved to dwell,
On words that once their music made:
And, in the midst of grandeur, hung,
Delighted, on their parent tongue.

This, will you do: and it may be,
When, weary of the world's deceit, [423]
Some summer-day we yet may see
Your coming in our meadows sweet;
Where, midst the flowers, the finch's lay
Shall welcome you with music gay.
While you shall bid our antique tongue

Some word devise, or air supply,
Like those that charm'd your youth so long
And lent a spell to memory!

Bethink you how we stray'd alone,
Beneath those elms in Agen grown,
That each an arch above us throws,
Like giants, hand-in-hand, in rows.

A storm once struck a fav'rite tree,
It trembled, shook, and bent its boughs,—
The vista is no longer free:
Our governor no pause allows.
"Bring hither hatchet, axe, and spade,
The tree must straight be prostrate laid!"

But vainly strength and art were tried,
The stately tree all force defied.
Well might the elm resist and foil their might,
For though his branches were decay'd to sight,
As many as his leaves the roots spread round,
And in the firm set earth they slept profound!

Since then, more full, more green, more gay,
His crests amidst the breezes play:
And birds of ev'ry note and hue
Come trooping to his shade in Spring,
Each Summer they their lays renew,
And while the year endures they sing.

And thus it is, believe me, sir,
With this enchantress—she we call
Our second mother; Frenchmen err,
Who, cent'ries since, proclaim'd her fall. [424]

No: she still lives, her words still ring;
Her children yet her carols sing,
And thousand years may roll away
Before her magic notes decay.

THE SHEPHERD AND THE GASCON POET.

To the Bordelais, on the grand Fête given me at the Casino.

In a far land, I know not where,
Ere viol's sigh, or organ's swell,
Had made the sons of song aware
That music is a potent spell,
A shepherd to a city came,
Play'd on his pipe, and rose to fame.
He sang of fields, and at each close
Applause from ready hands arose.

The simple swain was hail'd and crown'd
In mansions where the great reside,
And cheering smiles and praise he found,
And in his heart rose honest pride:
All seem'd with joy and rapture gleaming,—

He trembled that he was but dreaming.

But, modest still, his soul was moved;
Yet of his hamlet was his thought,—
Of friends at home, and her he loved,—
When back his laurel-branch be brought:
And, pleasure beaming in his eyes,
Enjoy'd their welcome and surprise.

'Twas thus with me, when Bordeaux deign'd
To listen to my rustic song;
Whose music praise and honour gain'd
More than to rural strains belong. [425]

Delighted, charm'd, I scarcely knew
Whence sprung this life so fresh and new.
And to my heart I whisper'd low,
When to my fields return'd again,
"Is not the Gascon Poet now
As happy as the shepherd swain?"

The minstrel never can forget
The spot where first success he met;
But he, the shepherd who, of yore,
Had charm'd so many a list'ning ear,
Came back, and was beloved no more;—
He found all changed and cold and drear!
A skilful hand had touch'd *the flute*;—
His *pipe* and he were scorn'd—were mute.

But I, once more I dared appear,
And found old friends as true and dear—
The mem'ry of my ancient lays
Lived in their hearts—awoke their praise.
Oh! they did more;—I was their guest;
Again was welcomed and caress'd:
And, twined with their melodious tongue,
Again my rustic carol rung;
And my old language proudly found
Her words had list'ners, pressing round.
Thus, though condemn'd the shepherd's skill,
The Gascon Poet triumph'd still.

I returned by Agen, after an absence in the Pyrenees of some months, and renewed my acquaintance with Jasmin and his dark-eyed wife. I did not expect that I should be recognised; but the moment I entered the little shop I was hailed as an old friend. "Ah!" cried Jasmin, "enfin la voila encore!" I could not but be flattered by this [426] recollection, but soon found it was less on my own account that I was thus welcomed, than because a circumstance had occurred to the poet which he thought I could perhaps explain. He produced several French newspapers, in which he pointed out to me an article headed "Jasmin à Londres;" being a translation of certain notices of himself, which had appeared in a leading English literary journal.[23] He had, he said, been informed of the honour done him by numerous friends, and assured me his fame had been much spread by this means; and he was so delighted on the occasion, that he had resolved to learn English, in order that he might judge of the translations from his works, which, he had been told, were well done. I enjoyed his surprise, while I informed him that I knew who was the reviewer and translator; and explained the reason for the verses giving pleasure in an English dress, to be the superior simplicity of the English language over modern French, for which he has a great contempt, as unfitted for lyrical composition. He inquired of me respecting Burns, to whom he had been likened; and begged me to tell him something of Moore. The delight of himself and his wife was amusing, at having discovered a secret which had puzzled them so long.

He had a thousand things to tell me; in particular, that he had only the day before [427] received a letter from the Duchess of Orleans, informing him that she had ordered a

medal of her late husband to be struck, the first of which would be sent to him: she also announced to him the agreeable news of the king having granted him a pension of a thousand francs. He smiled and wept by turns, as he told all this; and declared, much as he was elated at the possession of a sum which made him a rich man for life, the kindness of the duchess gratified him even more.

He then made us sit down while he read us two new poems; both charming, and full of grace and *naïveté*; and one very affecting, being an address to the king, alluding to the death of his son. As he read, his wife stood by, and fearing we did not quite comprehend his language, she made a remark to that effect: to which he answered impatiently, "Nonsense—don't you see they are in tears." This was unanswerable; and we were allowed to hear the poem to the end; and I certainly never listened to anything more feelingly and energetically delivered.

We had much conversation, for he was anxious to detain us, and, in the course of it, he told me that he had been by some accused of vanity. "Oh!" he rejoined, "what would you have! I am a child of nature, and cannot conceal my feelings; the only difference between me and a man of refinement is, that he knows how to conceal his vanity and exultation at success, which I let everybody see." [428]

His wife drew me aside, and asked my opinion as to how much money it would cost to pay Jasmin's expenses, if he undertook a journey to England: "However," she added, "I dare say he need be at no charge, for, of *course*, your queen has read *that article* in his favour, and knows his merit; she will probably send for him, pay all the expenses of his journey, and give him great fêtes in London." I recommended the barber-poet to wait *till he was sent for*; and left the happy pair, promising to let them know the effect that the translation of Jasmin's poetry produced on the royal mind:—their earnest simplicity was really entertaining.

END OF VOL. I.

BÉARN AND THE PYRENEES.

VOL. II.

---

[429]

CHAPTER I.

RENOWN OF PAU—LECTOURE—THE LABOURER-DUKE—AUCH—TARBES—THE PRINCESS AND THE COUNT—COSTUME—ARRIVAL AT PAU—THE PROMENADES—THE TOWN—IMPROVEMENTS-FIRST IMPRESSIONS—WALKS—BUILDINGS—HOTELS—THE MAGNIFICENT BAKER—THE SWAIN—TOU-CAI!

We left Agen on our way to Pau, where we proposed taking up our winter quarters, having so frequently heard that it was one of the best retreats for cold weather in the South of France: its various perfections casting into the shade those, long-established, but now waning, of Montpelier, Nice, &c. At Lectoure we changed horses, and remained long enough to admire the fine view from its exalted position, and a few of the humours of its population of young ragged urchins, whose gambols with a huge Pyrenean dog diverted us for some time. Lectoure is situated on the summit of an immense rock, surrounded by hills and deep valleys. It was formerly very strongly fortified, as the remains of its Roman and Middle-Age walls attest. [430]

The tower of the church, partly Roman, partly English, is a very striking object, from

its extreme height and apparent fragility, which is, however, merely imaginary; for it has resisted the efforts of time and war for centuries: it once had a steeple of stupendous height; but as it was continually attracting the stray lightnings, and was, besides, much dilapidated, it was demolished. The episcopal palace, now the Mairie, is near it, bought for the town by Marshal Lannes, Duke de Montebello. The statue of this hero of Napoleon is in the grand square, and his portrait, as well as those of other great men born in Lectoure, adorn the walls of the interior. There are many fine promenades, from whence delicious views can be enjoyed; from that of Fleurance it is [431] said that, on a clear day, the towers of the cathedral of Auch are seen; and the view is bounded by the snowy giants of the Pyrenees. Although the day was fine, we could not, however, distinguish either. This public walk was made at the time when Lannes was a simple labourer in his native place; and he, with others, received six sous a-day for his work. The Duke de Montebello is said afterwards to have sat beneath the trees which overshadow it, and told his companions in arms how his youth was passed, and what his pay was at that time. This is a trait which does the brave soldier's memory infinite honour.

The country is agreeable and diversified on the way to Auch, and the two towers of the cathedral are seen at a great distance, crowning the height on which the town stands. They have so much the aspect of a feudal castle, that it is difficult to believe that one is looking on a church. The nearer you approach, the more determined seems the form: and walls, and bastions, and turrets, and ruins, seem rising out of the hill: all, however, as you come quite close, subside into a huge mass, which gives a promise of magnificence and grandeur by no means realized; for there is more of Louis XIV. and XV., than Charles VIII., who began the building, about the architecture; and the towers, which appeared so grand at a distance, have a singularly poor and mean [432] appearance attached to the façade, and compared to the enormous bulk of the fabric.

The boast and glory of the cathedral of Auch are the series of painted windows in the choir, of remarkable beauty, and in wonderful preservation: the colours vivid, and the size of the figures colossal; but though extremely gorgeous, they cannot compare, in purity of effect, to earlier specimens, where less is attempted and more accomplished. I never saw such large paintings of the kind: the nearest approach to it being those of the same period at Epernay, amongst the vines of Champagne. There is a great deal of rich sculpture, both in the stalls and in the surrounding tombs, but the taste did not accord with mine, and, on the whole, I felt but little interest in the cathedral: we were spared the usual fearful exhibition in the winding staircase of one of the towers, where a little child, to earn a few sous, is in the habit of suspending itself by a rope, over the well, formed by the twisting steps, and sliding down to the bottom with terrific celerity.

The town of Auch did not please me enough to induce us to stay longer than to wait for the diligence, which was passing through to Tarbes; and, having secured the *coupé* we continued our journey. Before we had travelled half a league, on descending a hill, suddenly, a line of singularly-shaped objects, quite apart from all others in the [433] landscape, told us at once that the purple Pyrenees were in sight; and we indeed beheld their sharp pinnacles cleaving the blue sky before us. For some distance we still saw them; but, by degrees, they vanished into shade as evening came on, and we lost them, and all other sights, in the darkness of night; in the midst of which we arrived at Tarbes.

"Tharbes is a large and fine town, situated in a plain country, with rich vines: there is a town, city, and castle, and all closed in with gates, walls, and towers, and separated the one from the other; for there comes from the heights of the mountains of Béarn and Casteloigne the beautiful *River of Lisse*, which runs all throughout Tharbes, and divides it, the which river is as clear as a fountain. Two leagues off is the city of Morlens, belonging to Count de Foix, and at the entrance of the country of Béarn; and beneath the mountain, at six leagues from Tharbes, is the town of Pau, also belonging to the said Count."

This is Froissart's description of Tarbes, in his time; and, as far as regards its beautiful sparkling river, which is *not the Lisse*, but the Adour, might apply to it now; for the streams that appear in all directions, in and round the town, are as clear as crystal, and run glittering and murmuring through streets, roads, and promenades, as if the houses and squares had no business there to intercept its mountain-torrent. [434]

We were much struck, when we first issued from our hotel in the Place-

Maubourguet, to behold, opposite, framed, as it were, in a square opening between the streets, a gigantic mass of blue mountains shining in the sun. They appeared singularly near; and one cannot fail to regard them with a certain awe, as if a new nature had dawned, different from any one had known before. This is the most interesting spot in Tarbes; and its beautiful promenade by the river is also attractive. There are no monuments,—no buildings worth notice. The once fine castle may be traced in a few solid walls, and its moated position; but this tower was one of the first indications we had that all specimens of architectural art had ceased, and in future, with a few exceptions, it must be nature alone which was to interest us. The red *capelines* of the market-women, and their dark mantles (*capuchins*), lined with the same colour, give their figures a strange, nun-like appearance, which always strikes a stranger, and at first pleases. As these shrouded forms flit about amongst the trees, they look picturesque and mysterious; but the eye soon wearies of this costume, which is totally devoid of grace. The cloak, being so cut as to prevent its falling in folds, hangs stiffly round the wearer's limbs; concealing the shape, and producing a mean [435] effect. It is a sort of penitential habit; and the peaked hood looks like the dress of the San Benitos, or a lively image of the appropriate costume of a witch who might be an inquisitor's victim. We could not help contrasting it with the beautiful and graceful cloak worn by the charming Granvillaises,—those Spanish-looking beauties whose appearance so delighted us in that distant part of Normandy. The Granville girl has also a black camlet mantle, or *capote*; but the stiff hood is not peaked: it is lined with white, and is worn in the most elegant and coquettish manner; showing the figure to great advantage, and setting off the invariably pretty face, and its snow-white, plaited, turban-like cap, never to be seen in the South. There are so few pretty countenances in the Pyrenees, that perhaps even the Granville drapery would not make much difference; but, certainly, nothing can be uglier than to see the manner in which this scanty shroud is dragged over the form; giving more the idea of a beggar anxious to shield herself from the inclemency of the season, than a lively, smart, peasant girl pursuing her avocations. The scarlet gleams of its lining alone in some degree redeem its ugliness; as, at a distance, the vivid colour looks well amongst more sombre tints.

It is difficult, at the present day, to picture Tarbes as it was at the period when the Black Prince, and his Fair Maid of Kent, came to this city of Bigorre, in all the [436] splendour of a conqueror, to see the Count of Armagnac, who was in debt to the magnificent Gaston Phoebus, for his ransom, two hundred and fifty thousand francs.

The manner in which the count managed to get off part of his debt is not a little amusing. He had represented his case to Edward, who saw nothing in it but a very ordinary event: "You were taken prisoner," said he, "by the Count of Foix; and he releases you for a certain sum. It would be very unreasonable to expect him to waive his claim. I should not do so; nor would my father, the king, in similar circumstances: therefore, I must beg to decline interfering." The Count of Armagnac was much mortified at this straight-forward answer, and began to devise what could be done. He bethought him of the power of beauty; and applied to the right person.

Gaston Phoebus arrived at Tarbes, from Pau, with a retinue of six hundred horse, with sixty knights of high birth, and a great train of squires and gentlemen. He was received with much joy and state by the prince and princess, and entertained with infinite honour.

The fair princess chose her moment, and took occasion to beg a boon of the Count of Foix, whose gallantry was proverbial; but, just as he was on the point of granting it without condition, a momentary light made him cautious "Ah! madam," said he, "I am [437] a little man, and a poor bachelor, who have not the power to make great gifts; but that which you ask, if it be not of more value than fifty thousand francs, shall be yours."

The princess talked and cajoled, and was as charming and insinuating as possible, in hopes to gain her boon entire; but Gaston began to feel certain that the ransom of the Count d'Armagnac was the object of her demand; he, therefore, kept firm, in spite of her fascinations, and she was obliged to name her request that he would forgive the count his ransom.

"I told you," replied he, "that I would grant a boon to the value of fifty thousand francs; therefore, I remit him that sum of what he owes me."

And thus did the fair Princess of Aquitaine obtain a remission of part of the ransom of the Count d'Armagnac.

We took a carriage from Tarbes to Pau,—our intended resting-place for the winter. The drive, for several leagues, was extremely charming; the banks were covered with rich purple heath; the oak and chestnut growing abundantly and luxuriantly. But though, in our certainty of seeing some *new* growth as we approached nearer to the sunny South, we transformed the round, thick oaks into *cork trees*, we were obliged to [438] submit to disappointment when we were assured that there was not a cork-tree till the Spanish side of the Pyrenees was reached. Long before we arrived at Pau, the hitherto pleasant, bright day had changed, and a sharp, drizzling, chilly rain accompanied us on the remainder of our journey—mist shutting out the prospect, and all becoming as dreary as a wet day makes things everywhere. We were a little surprised to find that there was no amelioration in this particular, since we looked forth upon the streaming streets of Lisieux!

We drove into Pau through an ugly suburb, which gave a sufficiently mean idea of its appearance; but we imagined that the town would repay us for its approach. Still the grey, unpainted shutters of the slovenly-looking houses were not replaced by others of brighter and cleaner aspect: still ruined, barrack-like buildings, dilapidated or ill-constructed, met our view; and, when we drove through the whole of the town to the Grande Place de Henri Quatre, and paused at the Hôtel des Postes, instead of a handsome, flourishing inn, we were astonished to see a wretched, ancient, red, low-roofed tenement, adjoining a somewhat ambitious-looking house without taste or grace. Here we could not find accommodation; and, considering the appearance of what we had heard was the best inn, we did not much regret the circumstance. [439]

We were equally unsuccessful at several others; having looked at dirty, dingy, black apartments on a fifth floor as the only ones left: so full was the town of visitors returning, in all directions, from the different baths in the Pyrenees, where, as *it had rained all the summer*, invalids and tourists had been lingering for fine days, until patience was exhausted, and "all betook them home."

At length we got housed in very tolerable but desolate cold rooms, with furniture as scanty, and accommodations as meagre, as we had ever met with in towns where no English face had been seen, except *en passant*. This surprised us, as we had heard *comfort* abounded in Pau, as well as every luxury and beauty which wearied travellers would be glad to call their own; add to which, a soft, mild climate, *which could be depended on*, and the only drawback *too little wind* and too continuous warmth.

This was the third of October, and it was as cold as Christmas; the rain continued without ceasing; and, in spite of our impatience, we were obliged to remain in our inn. The next day, however, brighter skies revived us; and when we stepped forth on the rugged pavement, we felt in better spirits; no change, however, did the fine sun and sky operate on the town, which, it is sufficient to say, is one of the ugliest, worst-paved, "by infinite degrees," and most uninteresting that exist in France. The castle, of [440] course, was the first attraction; and—though without the slightest claim to notice on the score of architecture; though dirty, and slovenly, and rugged, and dilapidated, more than could possibly be expected in a region which is immortalized by the name of Henri Quatre, and being, as it is, the goal sought by all travellers, consequently forming the riches of Béarn, the cause of such a host of travellers and tourists visiting Pau; the subject of all boast, the theme of all pride; though it is neglected and contemned by the ingrates of its neighbourhood,—the castle is, from its recollections, almost worth the long journey which is to find it at its close.

We returned to the Place Royale, after lingering long, on this our *first* visit, in the chambers now in the course of restoration by the most thoughtful and beneficent of sovereigns; and there we lost no time in securing an abode in one of the beautifully-situated pavilions of the Bains de la Place Royale,—a new and well-arranged building, let in *suites* of apartments, well furnished, and perfectly clean and inviting, having been recently renovated. From the windows of the rooms allotted to us, we beheld the whole of the long chain of the magnificent Pyrenees, from the Pic de Bigorre to the giant du Midi, and the countless peaks beyond. Our first impression was almost wild delight at the prospect of living long in a spot with these splendid objects always [441] before our eyes, in uninterrupted grandeur; with a glowing sun always shining, sheltered from the north wind by the high promenade at the back of the house; with a beautiful little rapid stream running along at the base of our tower, the murmuring, sparkling, angry Gave[24] meandering through the meadows beyond; the range of vine-covered and wooded hills opposite, dotted with villas, which glittered white amidst

their luxuriant groves; and, at the back of all, the everlasting awful mountains, purple and transparent and glowing with light.

We were not deceived in the enjoyment we anticipated in this particular, for, to [442] make amends for the unwilling *discoveries* we made as to the reputation of Pau, our mountains seemed to devote themselves to our pleasure, assuming every form of beauty and sublimity to satisfy and enchant us.

When we took our first walk in the promenade, improperly called *the Park*, we were fascinated with the extreme beauty of this charmed grove, which is planted in terraces, on a *cóteau* bordering the Gave, and is *one of the most* charming possessed by any town in France: there is the same glorious view of the range of giant mountains even more developed than from the Place Royale; the paths are kept clean and clear and neat; the trees are of the finest growth, and everything combines to make it a most attractive spot, though the usual somewhat Gascon mode of describing it, adopted at Pau, as *"the most beautiful in the world,"* appears to me rather hyperbolical when I recollect those of Laon, Auxerre, Dijon, Dinan, Avranches, and others; which have not, however, the Pyrenees as a back-ground, it must be confessed.

The only part of the town of Pau which will bear mention, is that portion which borders the Gave, above a fine avenue of trees, which extends to a considerable distance along the banks of the small clear stream of the Ousse: that is to say, *the houses* which face the mountains; but the street in which their entrances are found is narrow, dirty, slovenly, and worse than *ill*-paved. These mansions—for some of them [443] are large and isolated—have a magnificent position, and, seen from the Bois Louis, as the grove below is called, have a very imposing aspect. The principal street, Rue de la Prefecture, is extremely mean, and the shops of the least inviting appearance. It is very badly paved throughout its great extent, for it reaches from one end of the town to the other; but here and there a few flagstones serve to make their absence elsewhere regretted. There is one good square, which might be fine if, as seldom happens in France, the intention had been carried out, or success had attended it. There are two rows of good houses, with paved colonnades, but very few of the shops, which should have made it a *Palais Royal*, are inhabited; consequently, the appearance of poverty and desolation is peculiarly striking. One or two houses are taken, and some windows filled with goods, very different from those, doubtless, originally expected to appear; grocers, sadlers, and wine-merchants occupy the places which should have been filled by *marchandes de modes*, jewellers, toysellers, and ornamental merchants. The Place Henri Quatre is, therefore, a half-executed project, and impresses the stranger with no admiration. Another large, desolate space, called the Place Grammont, contains the Champ de Mars, and is dedicated to the military, whose barracks form one side of the square. A walk, called the Haute Plante, is near this, [444] and, descending from it, the baths of Henri Quatre and the Basse Plante are reached, and the approach to the Park.

The great horse fair of Pau is kept in the Haute Plante; but it is by no means an inviting spot: the park is, in fact, the only place where one can walk pleasantly; for the pretty Bois Louis is principally devoted to the washerwomen of the town, and soldiers; and the drains of the streets running down in this direction, generally cause so unpleasant an odour, that a stroll there can rarely be accomplished with pleasure. To reach the park and to return from it, is a work of great pain; the pointed and uneven stones making the walk intolerable, and there is no way by which to arrive there, but through the damp, dirty streets.

If, as was once projected, a terrace walk was made to extend from the Place Royale —which is a small square planted with trees in rows, to the castle court, it would be an incalculable advantage; and such a means of arriving at the only objects of interest, would be the saving not only of many a sprained ankle, but many a severe cold, as, at all times, the streets are cold and damp; and the less a visitor sees of the town of Pau, and the more of the mountains, and *côteaux*, and streams, the less likely is he to dissatisfied with a residence in this most favoured and misrepresented of all ugly towns.

I am told that Pau is greatly *improved* from what it was seven or eight years ago; if [445] such is the case, the town must then have been in a deplorable condition indeed: that those who are residents from so early a period should be content with the changes which have relieved them from inconvenience, I can easily understand; but that persons who, in Paris or in Normandy, have been accustomed to superior

accommodation can be satisfied with Pau, surprises me. Taken in general, those who reside here all the year round, are Irish, Scotch, or from distant country towns in England, many being quite unused to London or Paris; therefore, they can make no comparisons, and from long habit get accustomed to things which must annoy others; but when persons of wealth and condition, forsaking the great capitals and beautiful watering-places at home, and their own splendid and comfortable establishments, come to Pau, to stay for some months, they must surely find that the representations they have heard of it are strangely at variance with truth. Invalids, of course, are glad to submit to whatever may tend to re-establish their health; and, as several persons speak of having derived benefit during their stay, doubtless there is a class of invalids to whom the climate does good: the only question is, would they not have been as well off nearer home, without the enormous expense of so long a journey, and enduring so complete an expatriation? [446]

If one must necessarily go to Pau to meet with charming people and hospitality and attention, I should recommend all the world to hasten thither; but, since this can be found at home or elsewhere, from the same persons, I would not, for that reason alone, counsel a residence there. The accident of finding agreeable society amongst one's own countrymen has nothing to do with the Pyrenees; and we have so usurped the place of the original inhabitants, that only a very few French are left; in the same manner as at Boulogne or Tours. Almost all advantages, therefore, to be derived from foreign society are denied, and the frequent parties at Pau are nearly exclusively English.

More than one family whom I saw arrive, amused me by their raptures, similar to our own on the first view, on a fine day, of the mountains from the Place Royale or the park; and their subsequent discontent, when the absence of the fitful sun had entirely changed the scene, leaving only the damp dirty town, and a grey space, where the concealed giants shrouded themselves, sometimes for weeks together. People generally are so impressed at first, by the fascination of the *coup d'œil*, that they hasten to take a house which they cannot engage for less than six months, or, if for three, the price is advanced; fearing to miss the opportunity of settling themselves, they seldom hesitate about the terms, which are generally very high, and, when once [447] placed, they begin to look about them, and regret that they were so precipitate; for they find themselves condemned to a long, dismal winter, in a very uninteresting, expensive town, without any resource beyond their windows, if they face the mountains; or their fire-side, if their chimney do not smoke—which is a rare happiness. There is scarcely a town in Italy, where numerous galleries are not ready to afford a constant intellectual treat, or where fine buildings cannot present objects of admiration; but in Pau all is barren: there is nothing but the mountains to look at—for the view of the hemmed-in-valley is extremely confined—and the park to walk in; which, after all, is a mere promenade, of no great length and no variety, in spite of its convenience and beauty. The ramparts of most towns in France, which are situated in a fine country, present great changes, and consequent excitement in the view; but at Pau it is always from the same spots that you must seek one prospect.

The walks out of the town are unpleasant; for almost every way you must traverse a long, dusty, or dirty suburb, and generally follow a high road to a great distance, before you arrive at the place which is to repay your toil: this is annoying, as—though climbing up *côteaux* and threading the mazes of vineyards is pleasant—two or three miles of dusty road, encumbered with bullock-carts and droves of pigs on the way and [448] *on the return*, is by no means refreshing.

If pedestrians are not to be thought of, this is of no consequence, and, indeed, it is a circumstance which frequently occurs in French towns; those who take rides on horseback and venture a long way off, are more fortunate; for they come upon beautiful spots, and can reach sublime views amongst the mountains: a mere two hours' *drive* does not change the scene from that which is beheld from Pau, and the great similarity of all the views near greatly reduces their interest.

On the Bordeaux road, as Pau is approached, the sudden burst of the mountains on the sight is very fine; but there are no meadows, no lanes, nothing but a broad, *grande route*, from which the pedestrian can behold this. To reach the pretty *côteaux* of Jurançon and Gelos, one must walk for a mile and a half along a high road, and through a slovenly suburb; to reach the height of Bizanos, where a fine view of the mountains can be obtained, it is necessary to go through the whole straggling village

of Bizanos, and run the gauntlet of a whole population of washerwomen, while every tree and hedge is hung with *drapery* bleaching in the air. Bizanos is called a *pretty village*; but those who so designate it can only be thinking of utility, like our hostess at La Rochelle, when she took us to a grand sight, which turned out to be no other than a washing-establishment. The French have, it is acknowledged, no taste for the [449] picturesque, and it appeared to me as if the complaisance of the English abroad led them to agree that anything is pretty which pleases their foreign friends.

No doubt, there is infinitely better accommodation at Pau, than at any other town in the neighbourhood of the baths of the Pyrenees, and those who really require to attend them for several seasons—for it seems that it is generally necessary to do so—are quite right to make Pau their headquarters; but that those who seek amusement should remain at Pau in preference to Italy, or even other towns in France, is inexplicable. I do not know whether many return after they have once departed; but there are seldom fewer than six hundred English and Americans here in the winter. One English family arrived during our stay, took a large house, and made every arrangement for the winter; but, frightened by the continued bad weather, they left it in haste for Paris. I confess I was surprised others did not do the same.

All modern French writers describe Pau as "a *charming town*" alluding, of course, to the *society*, which is to them the great desideratum everywhere; besides, they are accustomed to ill-paved streets, and are not fastidious about cleanliness. The guide-books of these parts cite the descriptions of early writers in order to compare its present with its former state; two are given, which are certainly as much at variance [450] as those obtained by strangers at the present day. In a work printed in 1776, the following passage occurs:

"The town of Pau is of an ordinary size; the greatest part of its houses are well-built, and covered with slate. It is the seat of a parliament, a university, an academy of *belles lettres*, and a mint. The greatest part of the *noblesse* of Béarn make it their usual abode; the Jesuits have a large college founded by Louis XIII. There is a seminary under the direction of the brothers of St. Lazare, a convent of Cordeliers, another of Capuchins, and four nunneries. At the western extremity of the town, is an ancient castle, where the princes of Béarn resided, and where King Henry IV. was born."

The intendant Lebret said of Pau, in 1700:—

"The town of Pau consists of two streets, tolerably long, but very ill-constructed; it possesses nothing considerable. The *palais* is one of the worst kept possible—the most incommodious, and the most dirty; the *maison de ville* is still worse. The parish church cannot contain a quarter of the inhabitants, and is, besides, as ill-supported and as bare of ornament as one would see in the smallest village."

Something between these two accounts might serve to give an idea of what the town is now: the public buildings are totally unworthy of mention, indeed, the only one at all [451] remarkable is the new market-place, which is very large, and solidly built. The churches are more in number, but quite as insignificant as when Lebret wrote; the protestant *"temple"* has not more claim on observation as a piece of architecture, and, being built over the bed of a water-course, is supposed to be in some danger, and is extremely chill in winter. Through the midst of the town runs a deep ravine,—the bed of a stream called the Hédas—which divides it into two, and gives it a very singular effect; a bridge over this connects the two parts; the castle rises from one side, a venerable object; which, whenever seen, excites interest from its history rather than appearance; from this point it looks like an old prison, and the host of grim, dirty houses which clothe the steeps are anything but worthy of admiration.

The quarter of the Place Royale is called by the French, *the Chaussée d'Antin* of Pau —a somewhat ambitious distinction, which must a little surprise a Parisian when he enters it, and observes a shabby row of small low houses and cafés for the soldiery, on one side of the square space planted with trees, where the *élite* of Pau are supposed to walk. On the opposite side, a large hotel spreads out its courts, and a house with unpainted shutters and weather-stained walls; at the extremity, is what seems a ruined church, but which is, in fact, a building left half-finished to fall to decay, where [452] the wood for the military is kept; nothing can be so desolate as the aspect on this side, and the stranger is amazed at the slovenly and dilapidated scene; but he must suspend his judgment, and walk along one of the short avenues till he reaches a parapet wall,

where he forgets Pau and its faults in a single glance; for there the grand prospect of the mountains bursts upon him, and its magnificence can scarcely be exceeded.

As soon as the fine weather begins, this place, on a Sunday, is crowded with promenaders, principally tradespeople of the town. A military band is stationed here, and thunders forth peals of music much to the delight of the listeners. A very gay scene is presented on this occasion; but there is little characteristic, as no costumes are to be seen, and the *élégantes* of Pau are exactly like those of any other town.

Along the rugged, damp street, which runs from the back of the Place Royale, are most of the best houses in Pau: those on the side next the valley have the same glorious view as the promenade allows, and are generally taken by the English: one or two of these are fitted up in very good style, and made extremely comfortable; indeed, from this point mansion after mansion has been built, each of which has peculiar attractions; and, though not handsome or elegant, are good, square, large dwelling- [453] houses, sufficiently convenient. These are designated by *French describers as magnifiques hótels*, &c.; and fortunate are the English families who possess them as dwellings: they have all good gardens, and may boast of one of the finest views of the mountains that it is possible to obtain.

The college, founded by Henry IV., is a large and airy building, without grace or beauty, and enclosed in high walls: it has an imposing effect, from the height of the village of Bizanos, on the opposite side of the Gave.

The Hôtel de la Prefecture, and that where the valuable archives of the town are kept, possess neither beauty nor dignity: the space opposite is now occupied by the new market-house—which appears never to be used, for all the goods are spread out on the stones before it, as if it was only there for ornament: in this space, the guillotine was erected in the time of terror, and the murders of the great, and good, and respectable inhabitants took place. Unfortunately, this is a record, too recent, which every town in France can furnish.

It appears to me that the people of Pau are quiet, honest, simple, and obliging; at least, we never saw an instance to the contrary, except on our first arrival, when our driver took off the horses from the carriage in the inn-yard, and refused to go a step further to seek for accommodation for us; but I suspect he was not a native of the town. The landlady of the inn—who came from Bordeaux—with a mysterious wink, [454] assured us we should find all the common people the same—"*Ces Béarnais sont tous brutals!*" was her remark; but we did not find her in the right.

The Gascon character, though here a little softened, prevails a good deal, as the continued boasting about their town proves, and a certain pomposity in their demeanour, which, however, is harmless and amusing. We were in the habit of employing a baker, who made what was called English bread, and the magnificent manner in which he paid his visits to our domicile was very comic. Our maid, Jeannotte, being out of the way, we were one day disturbed by a vociferous knocking at our parlour-door—for in general all the passage-doors are left open—and hurrying to admit the clamorous visitant, we beheld the baker's assistant, M. Auguste, with a tray of loaves on his head and one in his hand, which he thrust forth, accompanying the action with a flourish and a low bow, exclaiming, "De la part de César!" We were not then aware that such was the name of our baker, and were much awed by the announcement.

Another of our domestic visitors was a source of considerable entertainment to us, and became still more so through the *espièglerie* of our attendant, Jeannotte, who took occasion to mystify him at our expense. This object of mirth was a little stout [455] mountaineer, who came every week from his home in the mountains—between the valleys of Ossau and Aspe—with a load of butter and cheese, with which his strong, sure-footed horse was furnished. In the severest weather this little man would set out; and on one occasion his horse had to be dug out of the snow in one of the passes; but the desire of gain, which invariably actuates these people, and a carelessness of hardship, made him treat all his dangers lightly. He was in the habit of coming to us every week, and generally made his way to our part of the house, as he appeared amused to *look at us* as much as we were to converse with him, and ask him questions about bears, wolves, and avalanches.

His stock of French was small, and he had a peremptory way of demanding what he

required, as he divided his neat pieces of butter for our service. He could not be more than five feet high, but was a sturdy, strong-built man, though of very small proportions. One day when delivering his charge to Jeannotte, she asked him in *patois*, —her own tongue—if he was married; he started at the question, and begged to know her reason for inquiring; she informed him it was for the benefit of Mademoiselle, who wished to know. The little hero paused, and presently, in rather an anxious tone, demanded of Jeannotte what mademoiselle's reason could possibly be for requiring the knowledge. "There is no telling," said she, archly, "Mademoiselle thinks you very amiable." [456]

"Is it possible!!" said he, musing; "you don't surely imagine—*do* you think she would have me?"

The laughter of Jeannotte quite abashed the gallant mountaineer, and he replaced his load of butter on his brown *berret* and disappeared, nor would he for some time afterwards pay us a visit. At length he did so, and I found his modest confusion apparent in his forgetting to take the full change of his money, actually on one occasion abandoning *half a sous* of his just due, and retiring with a "C'est égal." When we told him we were going away he was much struck, and stayed longer than usual gazing at us, till we thought he intended to open his mind, and declare his intentions to share his mountain-home with one of our party. I therefore gave him a note of recommendation for his butter to a friend, and he retired apparently more satisfied, though with a heavy sigh and a murmured hope—expressed half in *patois*—that we would come back to the Pyrenees in the summer.

There is still a good deal of simplicity left amongst this people, and certainly but little wit. Strong affection seems to be felt by them towards their relations, and quarrels seem rare; the Béarnais are said to be drunkards; but I never remember to have seen any instances of this in the streets. They are slovenly, and the lower classes extremely dirty; the market-women, in their white flannel peaked hoods of a hideous form, or their handkerchiefs loosely tied, without grace and merely for warmth, have in the cold season a very unpicturesque appearance, and the shrill shrieking voices of those who scream hot chesnuts to sell about the streets, uttering their piercing cry of "*tou cai, tou cai*!"[25] is anything but pleasing to the ear. [457]

The servants, however, seem good, industrious, honest, and very civil; and, as far as our own experience went, we saw only good conduct; while from our hostess at the Bain Royal we met with liberality and extreme courtesy; she, it is true, is from the refined city of Toulouse, but has long resided at Pau, and I should certainly counsel any stranger, whom, they would suit, to choose her apartments as a residence; for her pavilions are situated in the most agreeable position, out of the noise and dampness of the town, and with the whole range of Pyrenees constantly in uninterrupted view.

[458]

CHAPTER II.

THE CLIMATE OF PAU—STORMS—FINE WEATHER—PALASSOU—REASONS FOR GOING TO PAU—THE WINTER.

One of the chief inducements to foreigners, particularly the English, to visit Pau for the winter, is the reputation of its climate for mildness and softness. When we arrived, in October, in a storm of rain, it was, we understood, the continuation of a series of wet weather, which, throughout the year, had made the whole country desolate, and the company at all the baths had, in consequence, left a month sooner than usual; for a fortnight after our establishment at Pau, nothing could be more agreeable than the season, precisely answering to the beautiful weather which my letters announced from different parts of England. During this time the mountains were rarely visible, and when seen appeared indistinctly. This charming fortnight, during which Pau seemed to deserve all the commendations so profusely bestowed on it, was a promise of the calm and peaceful winter which I was told was always to be found in these favoured regions; I bore the sarcasms against the fogs and, above all, the uncertainty of the climate of gloomy England, as well as I could; and my assertion that, till the first week in November, I had last year bathed in the sea at Brighton, was received with indulgent smiles of pity at my nationality, both by French and English; but of course [459]

not believed, for the air of France, I have always observed, has such a property of effacing the remembrance of sunny days passed on the other side of the channel, that, by degrees, our countrymen arrive at the belief that nothing but fog and rain are ever to be seen in our ill-fated island, and they imagine that, till they came abroad, their knowledge of blue sky or bright sun was obtained only in pictures, but had no existence on the banks of the Thames or elsewhere, in the desolate regions they had quitted.

The morning of the 18th of October rose brilliantly, and was succeeded by a burning day; in the afternoon ominous clouds suddenly appeared, and brought a storm of rain and hail, whose effects were felt in the extreme cold of the atmosphere for some days, when another change came over the face of things, which brought forth the character of this calm, quiet place, where the excessive *stillness* of the air is cited as almost wearying, in quite a different light. It has been said, and is frequently cited, that a certain sea-captain left Pau in disgust, after passing some months there, because he could never obtain a *capful of wind*. If that anonymous gentleman had had the good [460] fortune to be at Pau on the night of the 23rd of October, I think he would have fixed his domicile for the rest of his life there; for such a furious hurricane he could seldom have had the good fortune to enjoy. For four hours in the dead of night, without intermission, the howling of the wind through the gorges of the mountains, the rush and swell amongst the hills, vales, and across the plains, was perfectly appalling. Every moment seemed to threaten annihilation to all within its reach; chimneys were dashed down in every direction, trees torn up by the roots, and the triumph of the tempest fiend complete. Furious rain and hail succeeded on the following day, with occasional gleams of sun; and then came a calm, beautiful, summer day again, and the mountains shone out as brightly as possible. This gave place to thick fog and a severe frost on the very next day, lasting for several days; rain then diversified the scene, and on the 29th a wind rose in the night almost as furious as the last, which continued the whole of the day following: a cold gloomy morrow, and the next bright, hot, and pleasant, ended October.

The next day was a triumph for Pau:—"When," asked every one we met—"when, in *England*, would you see such a 1st of November?" All my vivid recollections of charming strolls on the beach and downs in Sussex, and in Windsor Park, were looked [461] upon as figments. I heard no boasting on the 2nd, nor for three more days, for it was foggy, and rained hard, and no one could stir out. On the 6th, a heavy fall of snow had clothed the whole country in white; and now, for three days, a sharp, frosty wind prevented any more remarks about the softness of the climate. The frost and snow had disappeared, as by enchantment, on the 11th, the night of which was so sultry that to keep windows shut was impossible. The Fair of Pau was ushered in by rain, on the 12th; the 13th was as hot as the hottest day in July, accompanied by a good deal of fog, for several days: then came violent wind, hail-storms, wind again—louder and more furious—fog, cold, occasionally bright; and November disappeared on a misty morning, which ended in a burning day, without a breath of air, all glare and faintness.

We were now told that, though St. Martin had failed to keep his summer at the right time, he was never known to desert his post; and as in almanacks a day before or a day after makes no difference, we were content to accept his smiles for nine days in the beginning of December. Again came the question—"When, in England?" &c. and I began to think we were peculiarly favoured, when, lo! letters arrived from that vexatious clime, speaking of "days perfectly lovely," "new summer," and all precisely like a plagiarism on Pau. Fortunately for the reputation of the Pyrenees, no one would, [462] of course, credit this fact; and the English invalids, who had been covering their mouths with handkerchiefs, and shutting themselves up from the variations of the atmosphere, breathed again, and at once generously forgot all but the bright sun and warm air which had come once more to greet them.

It was true that every leaf had long since disappeared from the trees in the park, and that the sun glared fearfully on the high, unsheltered walks; but the partisans of salubrity hastened to disport themselves in its rays, till *three cases in one week* of *coup de soleil* began to startle even the most presuming; and the expected death of one of the patients, together with *another change* of weather to wet, cold, and fog, silenced further remark.

We were assured that the extraordinary alternations of climate we had experienced for two months, was a circumstance quite unheard-of before in Pau, and we looked on

ourselves as singularly unlucky in having, by chance, chosen a season so unpropitious. A few simple persons, who ventured to remark that the winter of last year was very similar, were told that they must have been mistaken; and some who recollected high winds were considered romancers. We looked at the strong *contre-vents* placed outside the windows of our dwelling, and wondered why such a work of [463] supererogation should have taken place as to put them there, if the hurricanes we had witnessed were unusual, when I one day, during a high wind, as I sat at home, happened to take up Palassou's Mémorial des Pyrénées, and read as follows:—

"TEMPERATURE OF THE LOWER PYRENEES—ITS EFFECTS OFTEN DANGEROUS.

"It is well known that divers places differ in their temperature, although they are situated in the same degrees of latitude; the vicinity of the sea, of great rivers, mountainous chains, &c. renders the air more or less hot or cold, serene or cloudy; the modifications which these circumstances occasion are principally remarked in the countries adjacent to the Pyrenees. Snow, frost, and abundant rains, are, for instance, more frequent than in Languedoc or Provence, although these climates are placed beneath the same degree of latitude as the former.

"It is easy to believe that vegetable nature feels this influence. If we except the plains of Roussillon, and some small cantons situated at the foot of the eastern Pyrenees, where a mild temperature may be found, it is to be observed that nowhere, contiguous to this chain, are seen the odoriferous plants and trees common to the South of France. The eye seeks in vain the pomegranate, with its rich crimson fruit; [464] the olive is unknown; the lavender requires the gardener's aid to grow. The usual productions of this part are heath, broom, fern, and other plants, with prickly thorns: these hardy shrubs seem fitted, by their sterility, to the variable climate which they inhabit.

"In effect, the snows of winter, covering the summits of the Pyrenees for too long a time, prolong the cold of this rigorous season sometimes to the middle of spring; then come the frosts which destroy the hopes of the vine-grower.

"'*Storms are very frequent in Béarn*,' says M. Lebret, intendant of Béarn in 1700; he might have added," continues Palassou, "to the list of dangers to the harvests—*the frequent and destructive fogs* to which the country is subject.

"In the landes of the Pont-Long, I have often seen, in the environs of Pau, fogs rise from those grounds covered with fern, broom, and other naturally growing plants, while in parts more cultivated it was clear. * * * The agriculturists of Béarn have not attempted to till the lands in the neighbourhood of Pau, finding them too stubborn to give hopes of return, and *the climate being so very variable*; cultivated produce being peculiarly sensible to the effects of an air which *is one day burning and the next icy*.

"One might write whole volumes if it was the object to relate all the effects of storms which, accompanied with hail, devastate the countries in the neighbourhood of the [465] Pyrenees. It will be sufficient to recount what has come under my own observation. During one violent storm of thunder and lightning, the hail-stones were *as large as hens' eggs*, and desolated the whole range over which it swept. It was immediately followed by a second, less furious, but which did immense damage; and others, little less terrific, followed in the course of the month—June."

Palassou here goes on to describe several dreadful storms of peculiar fury, which were more than usually destructive, and are common in these regions. He considers, that the cutting down of the forests on the mountains, which formerly sheltered the plains and valleys, has contributed to increase the storms in latter years. Summer in the midst of winter, seems by no means uncommon, and winter in summer as little so. The *autun*, or south wind, generally brings the burning days which so much surprised me; but, according to this author, *it is extremely unwholesome* and dangerous to persons inclined to apoplexy; as, indeed, its effects during our stay at Pau led me to imagine.

I cannot feel much confidence, I confess, in a climate where you are told that so many precautions must be taken: for instance, you are never to walk in the sun; you must avoid going out in the evening, at all seasons; you must be careful not to meet [466] the south wind; in fact, you can scarcely move without danger. I ask myself, what can possibly induce so many of my countrymen to travel so far for such a climate,—to put themselves to so great an expense for such a result? for, if England is not perfect as to

climate, it has at any rate few unhealthy spots from which you cannot readily escape to a better position: we are never in terror of a *sirocco*,—nor need wrap up our mouths in handkerchiefs to avoid breathing *malaria*. Our climate is variable, but less so than in the Pyrenees; and it is scarcely worth while to go so far to find one worse, and more dangerous to life. Hurricanes are rarer with us than there. We may not often have such hot summers in winter, but neither do we *often* have such cold winters in summer. It frequently rains with us, but it rains as often at Pau; and, however annoying are the variations of which we complain at home, we assuredly do not escape them by travelling eight hundred miles to take up our abode close to icy mountains, in a dirty, damp town, in an uncomfortable house: add to which, we gain little in economy; for Pau is as dear as Paris, without any of the advantages of the capital.

Altogether, the more experience I have of the climate of Pau, the more surprised I am at the crowds of English who resort to this town for the winter: the greatest part of [467] them, it is true, are not invalids, but persons seduced into this nook by its reputation, and arriving too late in the season to leave it. They grumble, and are astonished to find themselves no better off than if they had stayed at home; but they are, it would seem, ashamed to confess how much they have been deceived, and, therefore, remain silent on the subject of climate, content to praise the beauty of the country in fine weather, and enjoy the gaieties and hospitalities which they are sure to meet with. If people came only for the latter advantages, I should not be surprised at their trooping hitherward, provided they were robust enough to bear the *mildness* of climate; but that is not the avowed reason, and those they give are altogether insufficient to account for the mania of wintering at Pau.

Perhaps the best means of ascertaining the nature of the climate is by occasionally looking over old newspapers. In a French one of Jan. 10, 1841, I was struck with this announcement: "Pau.—On Thursday last, in the night, the snow fell so abundantly that it was half-way up the legs, in the morning, in the streets. On Friday morning the *porte-cochère* of one of the *splendid hotels in our Chaussée d'Antin (!)* opened, and forth issued an elegant sledge, drawn by two *magnificent* horses, crowned with white plumes. This novel spectacle attracted the attention of the whole town. The elegant [468] vehicle darted along till it reached the Rue de la Prefecture, &c. &c. and the Pont-Long."

It must be confessed that it is seldom in any part of our *cold climate* that we have the power of such an exhibition in the streets. It is reserved for the invalids who fly to the South of France to avoid a severe winter.

"23rd Dec. 1840. A great deal of snow has fallen between Bayonne and Peyrehorade: the road is become almost impassable."

But I must continue the winter as I found it at Pau in 1842 and 1843. December, with intervals of two days' wind and rain, was extremely pleasant, bright, and clear, and the days very long; for till half-past four one could see to write or read: a circumstance which does not often occur in England during this month. Christmas Day differed but little from many I have known at home: pleasant, bright, sunny, and clear; rather cold, but more agreeable, from its freshness, than the unnatural heat which sometimes accompanies the sun. All the accounts from England proved that the weather was precisely the same. For the two next days, it was fine and very cold, with a high, *easterly* wind; two days warm and pleasant; then succeeded a sharp frost and bright sun; and December closed, dull, cold, and dark. [469]

January began cold, sharp, and gusty—some days biting, and some black and foggy; and from the 5th to the 12th it blew a perfect hurricane, with thunder, one fine day intervening, and occasionally a few bright hours in the course of some of the days. The storm on the night of the 11th was terrific, and it lasted, equally violent, with hail and thunder, all the next day—bright gleams of sun darting out for a moment, and revealing the mountains, to close them in again with mist and rain before you had scarcely time to remark the change. About the middle of the day the wind increased in violence, and the hail came down with fury, thick grey clouds gathered over the sky, the lightning flashed vividly, the thunder echoed far and near, and the gusts howled as if hundreds of wolves were abroad. King Arthur and all his *meinie* must have been out, for the appearance over the mountains was most singular. A broad space of clear *green-blue* sky was seen just above the white summits of several of the mountains, clearly showing the large fields of snow which extended along their flat surfaces, which are broken at the sides by projections, like buttresses, of purple rock, on which

dark shadows fell; gleams of sun illumined the edges of the snow on the highest peaks, for a brief space, while, by degrees, the other mountains were sinking away into a thick haze which had already covered the nearest hills. The marshy fields on the banks [470] of the murmuring Gave, and the little Ousse, now swelled to large rivers, and as thick and clay-coloured as the Garonne itself, were covered with a coating of hail, and the snow and transparent mist were seen driving along from peak to peak with amazing rapidity, as if they had been smoke. Presently, the narrow space of blue sky was dotted with small grey specks, as if showers were falling from the heavy canopy above, and, shutting closer and closer, the great mass suddenly sank down, concealing the glittering peaks which strove to shine out to the last. Then all became black; the thunder roared, the wind howled, the hail beat, and winter and storm prevailed. I watched all this with delight; for it was impossible to see anything more sublime, and I could not but congratulate myself that the abode we had chosen, just above the valley and detached from the town, at the foot of the promenade of the Place Royale, gave us an opportunity of seeing such a storm in perfection. It was true that we often thus had our rest disturbed at night, by the sweep of the wind along the whole range of the valley between the *côteaux*; but its melancholy sound, bringing news, as it were, from the mountains and the sea, was pleasant music to my ears, and startling and exciting, when it rose to the ungovernable fury with which I became so well acquainted during [471] our winter at this *quiet place for invalids*!

If Pau were recommended as a place where storms could be seen in perfection, I should not wonder at persons crowding there, who delight in savage nature. The gales from the 5th to the 15th continued furiously, night and day; the wind howled from all points, rocking the houses, and strewing the ground with ruins—then came a change to hot quiet days for a week.

In England, and in all parts of France, the season I am describing was equally violent, but this only proves that Pau has no shelter on these occasions.

January ended with fine weather, and occasional fogs, not so dense as in London, certainly, but as thick as in the country in England. The sun, in the middle of the day, being always dangerously hot. My letters from England still announced the same weather, *without the danger*.

In February, we had a few days like August, then a heavy fall of snow, which for eight days covered the ground, and was succeeded by burning days; and the month ended with heavy rain and floods. March began with cold winds and rain and sharp frost; and when I left Pau the ground was encrusted with frost in all directions. [472]

CHAPTER III.

THE CASTLE OF HENRI QUATRE—THE FURNITURE—THE SHELL—THE STATUE—THE BIRTH—CASTEL BEZIAT—THE FAIRY GIFT—A CHANGE—HENRI QUATRE.

"Qui a vist le castig de Pau
Jamey no a viat il fait."

When Napoleon, in 1808, passed through the town of Pau, the Béarnais felt wounded and humbled at the indifference he showed to the memory of their hero, Henri Quatre: he scarcely deigned to glance at the château in which their cherished countryman was [473] born; and with so little reverence did he treat the monument dear to every heart in Béarn, that his soldiers made it a barrack; and, without a feeling of regard or respect for so sacred a relic, used it as cavalierly *as if it had been a church*. They stabled their steeds in the courts of Gaston Phoebus, they made their drunken revelry resound in the chambers of Marguerite de Valois; and they desecrated the retreat where *La brebis a enfanté un Lio*—where Jeanne d'Albret gave birth to him, who, in the language of his mountains, promised that every Frenchman should have a *poule au pot*[26] in his reign.

That Napoleon should not care for a royal soldier, whose fame he desired his own deeds should eclipse; and of whom, as of all illustrious men, living or dead, the *little* great man was jealous, is not surprising. He had nothing in common with Henri Quatre; and the Revolution, which had brought him forward, had swept away antique

memories. The statue of their once-adored Henri had been cast into the Seine with ignominy, by the French, and his name was execrated, as if he had been no better than the legitimate race whom popular fury condemned to oblivion: Napoleon's policy was not to restore an abandoned worship; and he would have seen the last stone fall from the castle of Pau without notice. But that the long line of kings, who were always [474] boasting of their descent from the immortal Béarnais, should have neglected, contemned, or pillaged his birth-place, reflects little honour on the memory of any. The son of Mary de Medici came only to Béarn after his father's death, to carry off all that was precious in art, collected by the kings and queens of Navarre, for centuries—treasures which, according to the historians of the time, had not their parallel in the sixteenth century. The palace of the Louvre became rich in the spoils of Béarn: tapestry, pictures, furniture, objects of *virtu* of all kinds were borne away, and nothing left in its original place. Louis the Fourteenth and his successor occupied themselves little with the country, except to levy subsidies upon it: they knew nor cared nothing for Navarre; except as it supplied them with titles or gave them funds. Louis the Sixteenth, the last of the Bourbons who took the oath to observe the *Fors*[27] of Béarn, promised to act differently, and to occupy himself with this forgotten nook of his dominions; but the fatal events, prepared by his profligate predecessors of the last two reigns, which hurled him from his throne, prevented the accomplishment of his intentions.

As for the sovereign people, when they became rulers, the contempt with which they overwhelmed everything aristocratic, was bestowed in full measure on the abode of [475] him who had been their friend: and the triumph of vengeance, ignorance, and ingratitude, was complete, here as elsewhere.

The neglected castle of the sovereigns of Béarn,—for none of whom, except the immediate family of the brave and bold Henry, need one care to be a champion—remained then a mighty heap of ruin, which every revolving year threatened to bring nearer to utter destruction; when another revolution, like an earthquake, whose shock may restore to their former place, rocks, which a preceding convulsion had removed, came to "renew old Æson:" Louis Philippe, to whom every nook and corner of his extensive kingdom seems familiar, so far from forgetting the *berceau* of his great ancestor, hastened to extend to the castle of Pau a saving hand, and to bring forth from ruin and desolation the fabric which weeds and ivy were beginning to cover, and which would soon have been ranged with the shells of Chinon, Loches, and other wrecks of days gone by.

When the architect, employed by the king to execute the Herculean labour of restoring the castle of Pau, first arrived, and saw the state of dilapidation into which it had fallen, he must have been appalled at the magnitude of his undertaking. Seeing it, as I do now,[28] grim, damp, rugged, ruined, and desolate, even in its state of transition, after several years of toil have been spent upon its long-deserted walls; I can only feel [476] amazed that the task of renovating a place so decayed should ever have been attempted; but, after what has been done, it may well be hoped and expected that the great work will be, in the end, fully accomplished; and ten years hence, the visitor to Pau will disbelieve all that has been said of the melancholy appearance of the château of Henri Quatre.

What must have been the state of things before the pretty bridge, which spans the road and leads from the castle terrace to the walk, called La Basse Plante, existed? I am told that a muddy stream, bordered with piles of rubbish, filled up this portion of the scene; but, in less than a year, all was changed, and the pleasant terrace and neat walks which adorn this side of the castle are promises of much more, equally ornamental and agreeable.

Some of the tottering buildings attached to the strangely-irregular mass, were, it seems, condemned by the bewildered architect to demolition, as possessing no beauty, and encumbering the plans of improvement; but the late Duke of Orleans came to visit the castle, and had not the heart to give consent that any of the old walls, still standing, should be swept away. He looked at the place with true poetic and antiquarian feeling, and arrested the hand of the mason, who would have destroyed that part called *La Chancellerie*, which extends between the donjon of Gaston Phoebus to the Tour Montauzet. The prince represented to his father his views on the subject, [477] which were instantly adopted—a question of taste in that family meets with no opposition—and all was to have been arranged according to the ideas of the heir of

France, who seemed inclined to make Pau an abode at a *future day*: the King was to have visited the interesting old castle: much animated discussion and much enthusiasm prevailed on the subject in the interior of the royal circle, and the Berceau of Henri Quatre seemed destined to proud days again.

"When, hush! hark! a deep sound comes like a rising knell!"

The wail of a whole nation tells that that *anticipated future* may not come! A cloud has again gathered over the valley of the Gave, and a sad pause—the pause of blighted hopes—has chilled the expectations in which Béarn had ventured to indulge.

But the castle is not, even now, neglected: the architects are still there; workmen are still busy, chiseling and planing; the beautiful arabesques and reliefs are coming forth to view, restored with all their original delicacy: the ceilings are glowing with fresh gilding, the walls are bright with fresh tapestry, and the rooms are newly floored. But for the dreadful event which must cast a gloom over France for some years, the castle would, probably, have been sufficiently put in order for a royal visitor this year; but all the magnificent furniture, sent down from Paris to fit up the *suite* intended for use, [478] now stands unarranged, and a stop is put to embellishment. Amongst the most curious and interesting pieces of this furniture, are the bed and chair of Jeanne d'Albret, her screen—perhaps worked by her own hand—and the bed of Henry II.: all fine specimens of art in this style; the latter, in particular, is quite unique, and is one of the most curious I have ever seen: the sculpture is very elaborate; at the foot reclines, in relief, a Scotch guard, such as always lay at the threshold of the sovereign, at the period when this piece of furniture was made. An owl of *singular expression* sits watching, opposite, surrounded by foliage and poppies, quite in character with the sleepy scene: the posts of the bedstead are beautifully turned: it is so formed as to draw out and close in, forming a *bed by night*, *a cabinet by day*; and the carved arch at the back is sculptured in the most exquisite manner. A *prie-Dieu* of the same date is near; but all this furniture is merely *housed* for the present, as nothing is arranged; one, of course, looks at these specimens with an admiration which has nothing to do with Henri Quatre's castle, as they would be equally well placed in M. de Somerard's museum, at the delightful Hôtel de Cluny.

A tapestry screen, said to be of the time of Charles VII., has a place in this heterogeneous collection: it represents the Maid of Orleans, crowned by victorious [479] France, whose *lilies* are restored, and her enemies trampled under her feet; in the back-ground is the sea, with strange-looking monsters huddled into its waves, in apparent terror: these are the Leopards of England taking flight from the shores of France. The colours are well preserved in this piece of work, and the whole composition deserves to be remarked, if not for the correctness of its drawing, for the *naïveté* of its details.

It might have been better to have filled the castle with furniture belonging exclusively to the time, or anterior to that of Henry IV.; and it struck me that much which has arrived from Paris, of the period of Louis XIV., is out of keeping with the *souvenirs* of the castle of Pau. I almost hope that, if ever it is entirely restored, these pieces of furniture will be banished, and others, more antique, substituted. The tapestry with which the walls are covered is very curious and appropriate; it is chiefly of the time of Francis I.; and some beautiful Gobelins, of modern date, representing different scenes in the life of Henry, equally so.

The most, indeed the only, beautiful portions of the castle, are the ceilings of the principal staircase and passages leading from it; the medallions of which present the heads of Marguerite de Valois and her husband, Henry d'Albret, with their interlaced initials and arms on the walls: these again occur on the mantel-pieces, in the midst of [480] very exquisite arabesques, which the skill of the modern sculptor is restoring with singular delicacy.

The object which excites the most interest in the castle, is the famous shell of a tortoise, of immense size, said to have served as a cradle to the little hero whose birth was hailed with such rapture by his expectant grandfather. One would fain believe that this is indeed the identical *berceau de Henri IV.* so much talked of; but it is difficult to reconcile all the improbabilities of its being so: the substitution of another, after the real shell had been burnt in the castle-court, may do credit to those who cherish the hero's name; always provided no less generous motive induced the act; but the tale told to prove its identity is, unfortunately, not convincing.

The shell is suspended in the centre of a chamber, formerly the *salle de réception* of Henry II. d'Albret, and surrounded with trophies, in tawdry taste, which it is the intention to have removed, and the gilt helmet and feathers replaced by some armour really belonging to King Henry.

Those who contend for this being the genuine shell say, that, when on the 1st of May, 1793, the revolutionary mob came howling into the castle-court, with the intention of destroying every relic of royalty, the precious shell was hastily removed, and *another put in its place*, belonging to a loyal subject who had been induced to sacrifice his own to save the public treasure. M. de Beauregard had, it seems, a [481] cabinet of natural history, in which was a tortoise-shell of very similar size and appearance: this he gave up, and, with the assistance of other devoted persons, it was conveyed to the castle, and put into the accustomed place, while the real shell was carefully hidden in a secure retreat. The mob seized upon the substitute, and, with frantic cries, danced round the fire in the court while they saw it burn to ashes, little dreaming how they had been deceived: years after, the truth was revealed, and the cradle of the Béarnais was produced in triumph. Whether, in the midst of the terror attending the proceedings of savages athirst for blood, it was likely that such cool precautions were taken to save a *relic* when *lives* were at stake, is a question which seems easily answered; but there is such a charm about the belief, that, perhaps, *'tis folly to be wise* on the subject.

The fine marble statue of Henry, which is appropriately placed in one of the chambers, was executed soon after the battle of Ivry: it is by Francavilla, and very expressive: it belonged to the Gallery of Orleans, and was presented to the town of Pau by the King.

The room said to be that where Henry was born, and where Jeanne d'Albret sang the famous invocation, "*Notre Dame au bout du Pont*," is on the second story of a tower, from whence, as from all this side of the castle, is a magnificent view of the mountains, [482] and the valley of the Gave. There is nothing now left but bare walls; but on the chimney is sculptured the tortoise-shell cradle, and the arms of Béarn and Navarre; these rooms will be all repaired and restored; at present, the whole *suite* reminded me of the desolation of the castle of Blois, which was desecrated in the same manner by soldiery, who made it a barrack. The room which was Henry's nursery has a few of the original rude rafters of the ceiling remaining, which one would wish should not be removed; but it is said that it is necessary. The thick coating of whitewash cleared away from the chimney-piece will, probably, disclose more sculpture, similar to that in the other rooms.

Queen Jeanne had been unfortunate in losing her other children, one of whom died in a melancholy manner. While she was out hunting with her father and her husband, the nurse and one of her companions, being at a loss to amuse themselves, thought of a game, in which they threw the child from one window to the other, catching it in turns. The poor little prince was made the victim to this cruel folly, for he fell on the balcony which extended along the first-floor, and broke one of his ribs. He suffered much, and survived only a few days. No wonder Queen Jeanne sent her little son, Henry, to a cottage, to be nursed, where there was no upper story!

Nothing can be less imposing, on the interior side of the court, than the castle of [483] Pau: ruined, dilapidated buildings surround the rugged old well which stands in the centre; towers and *tourelles*, of various shapes, lift their grey and green and damp-stained heads in different angles; low door-ways, encumbered with dust and rubbish, open their dark mouths along the side opposite the red square tower of Gaston Phoebus, which frowns at its equally grim brother, whose mysterious history no one knows; other doors and windows are finely-sculptured; and medallions, much defaced, adorn the walls.

On these antique towers, it is said the thunder never fell but once—*that once* was on the 14th of May, 1610, at the very moment when the steel of Ravaillac found the heart of Henry of Navarre. The event is thus recorded:—

"A fearful storm burst over the town of Pau on this day; a thunderbolt fell, and defaced the royal arms over the castle-gateway; and a fine bull, which was called *the King*, from its stately appearance, the chief of a herd called *the royal herd*, terrified by the noise and clamour, precipitated itself over the walls into the ditch of the castle, and was killed. The people, hurrying to the spot, called out The *King* is dead! The news

of the fatal event in Paris reached Pau soon after, and they found their loss indeed irreparable."

The shades of Henry and Sully are said sometimes *to walk* along the ramparts even [484]
now; and it was formerly believed that near the great reservoir, into which it was said Queen Jeanne used to have her Catholic prisoners thrown, numerous ghosts of injured men might be seen flitting to and fro. One evening I was returning, later than usual, from the promenade in the park, and had paused so often on my way to observe the effect of the purple and rosy-tinted mountains glowing with the last rays of sunset, that it was in quite a dim light that I reached the spot beneath which the ivied head of the old, ruined, red Tour de la Monnaie shows the rents of its *machicoulis*. A double row of young trees is planted here, at the foot of the artificial mound which supports the castle walls, and at the end of the alley is the reservoir, with the square tower of Gaston Phoebus above it. I was startled by a sudden apparition, so vivid that it seemed impossible to mistake its form, passing by the reservoir, as if after descending the steep which leads to it. I *seemed to see* a grey, transparent figure in armour, the head covered with a helmet, with a pointed frontlet, such as I had seen in an old gallery, filled with rusty coats of arms, at the Château of Villebon, near Chartres, where Sully had lived for five-and-twenty years, and where he died. The figure was slight, and moved slowly, waving its head gently: it was in good proportion, but at least eight feet [485]
high. I stopped astonished, for the vision was so very plain—and then it was gone. I continued my way, and again I saw it, and it appeared as if several others, less tall, but still in armour, were by its side, by no means so distinct. I paused again, it was growing darker and darker, and I then could distinguish nothing but a row of slender trees, whose delicate leaves were shivering in the evening breeze, and whose stems waved to and fro. I went home—through the chill damp castle court, and across the bridge to the dismal street—impressed with an agreeable, though somewhat tremulous conviction, that I must have seen some of the ghosts which haunt the walks of the old castle.

I expected to hear that the memory of Queen Jeanne was venerated on this spot; but was surprised to find that she holds a place in tradition little more honourable than that occupied by our bloody Queen Mary; for there is scarcely any atrocity in history of which she is not the heroine: whatever might have been her fame with her Protestant subjects, those who succeeded them seemed carefully to have treasured the remembrance of all the cruelties executed by her orders, which, it must be acknowledged, were little in accordance with the religion of peace she professed to have adopted. Her son, whose faith was of so changeable a character that it suited all parties, is the pride and boast of the country; but the object of love appears to be the [486]
amiable Princess Catherine, his sister, for whom her mother built, in a secluded spot in the royal park, a residence, called *Castel Beziat*, the last stones of which have now disappeared, as well as the *gardens* originally planted by Gaston XI., in 1460, and said, in the time of Henri II. and Marguerite, *to be the finest in Europe*. It is difficult now to imagine where they were; but they are said to have been on the south side, and probably extended along that part now occupied by the Basse Plante and the baths of Henri Quatre, as far as the present entrance of the park.

Catherine was more sought in marriage, perhaps, than any princess of her time; but her only attachment—which was an unfortunate one—was to the Count de Soissons, who, being her brother's enemy, avowed or concealed, was an unfit match for her, and the alliance was opposed by all her friends. She seemed to possess the accomplishments of her grandmother and mother, and was very popular in Béarn, which she governed, during Henry the Fourth's absence, with great justice and judgment; the Béarnais, however, greatly offended her by their violent opposition to her marriage with the person she had chosen; and she left the Castle of Pau in anger, and never returned. She was forced into a marriage with the Duke de Bar, and her people saw her no more. [487]

There is a romantic story told of an act of the princess's, which shows her kind character, and amiable feeling. There was formerly in the gardens of Castel (or Castet) Beziat, (the *Castle of the beloved,*) a fountain, afterwards called *Des cents Ecus*, which had its name from the following circumstances:

The Princess Catherine of Navarre was one day walking in a musing mood, probably thinking of the many difficulties which opposed her union with him she loved, and almost wishing that her stars had made her one of the careless peasant-girls who

tended her flocks in the green meadows beside the murmuring Gave; for happiness was denied her, as she said in after times, when married to a man who was indifferent to her, "Qu'elle n'avait pas son *compte*," mournfully playing on her disappointment. Suddenly she heard voices, and, peeping through the thick foliage, she perceived two young girls seated by the side of the fountain. One was drowned in tears, and the other was leaning over her, with tender words and caresses, endeavouring to console her sorrows. "Alas!" said the fair distressed, "I can see no end to my sorrow, for poverty is the cause; you know, my parents have nothing but what they gain by labour, and though *his* friends are richer, their avarice is extreme; and they say their son's bride must have a dower of a hundred crowns. Ah! my dear friend, what hope then have I! I have heard that there are fairies who have the power to assist true love; if I [488] knew where they were to be found I would consult them, for never was love truer than ours, or more unfortunate."

Her friend did not attempt to combat her affection, but encouraged her with soothing words to have patience, and hope for the best. "Let us meet again here," said she, "every day, and devise some plan; perhaps Heaven will hear our prayers, and take compassion on your sorrow. To-morrow, at this hour, let us meet." "We will so," said the weeping girl, "for if I have no other consolation,—you, at least, give me that of talking of him."

The friends departed, leaving the listening princess full of interest and curiosity: she was resolved to surprise and befriend the lovers whose case was so touching. "There is, then, equal sorrow in a lowly state," she mused, "and love seems always doomed to tears; however, there are some obstacles which fortune permits to be removed—would that I could look forward to relief, as I am resolved these shall!"

The next day saw the two friends again seated on the borders of the fountain; but scarcely had they taken their accustomed place, when they observed, lying on a stone close by, a little bag which seemed to contain something heavy; they opened it, and found a paper, on which these words were written: "Behold what has been sent you by a *fairy*." The delight of this discovery may be imagined, and the pleasure of the [489] princess, by whose command, a few days afterwards, the union of the lovers was accomplished.

It appears that the Castle of Pau was originally built in 1360, or about that time, by the famous prince, Gaston Phoebus, of Foix, who called himself, when addressing the Princess of Wales, "*a poor knight who builds towns and castles.*" The great hero of Froissart is even more identified with Pau and its neighbourhood than Henry the Fourth himself, who, though he was born here, lived more at Coarraze and Nerac than in this castle of his ancestors; for he was even nursed in the village of Billières near, where his nurse's house is still shown.

Catherine de Medicis, and her beautiful and dangerous *troupe* of ladies, on the famous progress she made to Bayonne, visited the Castle of Pau, with a deep interest; she there succeeded in detaching the affections of the weak father of Henry from his noble-minded wife, and in laying the foundation of that tragedy which her dauntless and vindictive spirit had conceived. The massacre of St. Bartholomew may be said to have begun on the day that those fatal visitors crossed the drawbridge of the Castle of Pau. Her daughter, Marguerite, the victim of her schemes—an unwilling actor in the drama—suffered much sorrow and privation within these walls, after her marriage [490] with a prince who never could surmount the distaste which circumstances of such peculiar horror as attended their union had given him; and the once cheerful place—the scene of splendour for centuries—lost its glory and its happy character after the beloved family of Queen Jeanne had deserted its towers.

Everything connected with the birth of Henry IV. is in general well-known, and has been so frequently repeated, that it is almost unnecessary to relate any circumstances attending that anxiously looked-for event,—cordially hailed by his grandfather, Henry. The account, however, given by Favyn is so characteristic that it cannot but be read with interest *a-propos* of the château where it occurred:

"The Princess of Navarre, being near her term, took leave of her husband, and set out from Compeign the 15th of November. She crossed all France to the Pyrenees, and directed her steps to Pau, where her father, the King of Navarre, then was. She arrived in the town after eighteen days' journey. King Henry had made his will, which the princess was very anxious to see; because it had been represented to her that it

was to her disadvantage, and in favour of *a lady who governed* her father. For this cause, though she had tried every means to get a sight of it, it was a thing impossible; the more so, as, on her arrival, she had found the king ill, and dared not speak to him [491] on the subject. But the coming of his *good girl*, as he called her, so delighted him that it set him on his legs again. The princess was endowed with a fine natural judgment, fostered by the reading of good books, to which she was much addicted; her humour was so lively that it was impossible to be dull where she was; one of the most learned and eloquent princesses of her time, she followed the steps of Marguerite, her mother, and was mistress of all the elegant accomplishments of the age. The king, who was aware of her wish respecting the will, told her she should have it when she had shown him her child; and, taking from his cabinet a great box, shut with a lock, the key of which he wore round his neck by a chain of gold, which encompassed it five-and-twenty or thirty times, he opened the box, and showed her the will. But he only showed it at a little distance; and then locked it up again, saying, 'This box and its contents shall be yours; but, in order that you may not produce me a crying girl or a puny creature, I promise to give you all on condition that, while the infant is being born, you sing a Gascon or Béarnais song; and I will be by.' He had lodged his daughter in a room in the second story of his castle of Pau; and his chamber was immediately beneath: he had given her, to guard her, one of his old *valets de chambre*, [492] Cotin, whom he commanded never to stir from the princess night nor day, to serve her in her chamber, and to come and tell him the instant she was taken ill, and to wake him if he was in ever so deep a sleep. Ten days after the princess's arrival at Pau, between twelve and one o'clock at night, the day of St. Lucie, 13th of December, 1553, the king was called by Cotin, and hurried to her chamber: she heard him coming, and began immediately singing the canticle, which the Béarnais women repeat when lying in:

"Noustre Dame deou cap deou poun,
Adjoudat me à d'aqueste hore,"

for at the end of every bridge in Gascony is an oratory, dedicated to the Virgin, called, *Our Lady at the end of the bridge*; and that over the Gave, which passes into Béarn from Jurançon, was famous for its miracles in favour of lying-in women. The King of Navarre went on with the canticle; and had no sooner finished it than the prince was born who now reigns over France. Then the good king, filled with great joy, put the chain of gold round the neck of the princess, and gave her the box containing the will, saying, 'This is your property, and this is mine;' at the same time taking the infant, which he wrapped in a piece of his robe, and carried away to his chamber. The little prince came into the world without crying, and the first nourishment he had was [493] from the hand of his grandfather; for, having taken a clove of garlic, he rubbed his little lips with it; then, in his golden cup, he presented him wine; *at the smell of which, the child having lifted up his head*, he put a drop in his mouth, which he swallowed very well. At which the good king, full of joy, exclaimed, before all the ladies and gentlemen in the room, 'You will be a true Béarnais!' kissing him as he spoke."

Every time I pass through the court-yard of this dilapidated building, I feel that it can never revive from its ruin; the desolation is too complete; the defacement too entire. What interest can exist in restorations to effect which so much must be cleared and scraped away that scarcely a trace of what was original can remain? How restore those medallions on the outer walls, which the taste of the first Fair Marguerite, and her Henry, placed in rows at one extremity of the court? how restore those beautifully-carved door-ways, and cornices, and sculptured windows, elaborate to the very roof? or renew the *façade* next the mountains without effacing that singular line of *machicoulis* which divides the stages. How replace the terrace—once existing, but long gone—without destroying venerable morsels of antiquity, precious in their ugliness! and how render the whole place sightly without clearing away the rubbish of the old *Tour de la Monnaie*, now built in with shabby tenements? Yet this will probably [494] be done. Considering the state of the town, and the many improvements requisite in it, it would seem more judicious, perhaps, to effect, these, and to abandon the idea of *restoring* the castle. To repave the court, and clear away dirt, might be done with little time and cost; and the old fabric would not suffer by this act. At present the most neglected part is the entrance; and it is sufficiently unsightly. However, I ought to congratulate myself that I did not see it *when it was worse*—as I am constantly told when I complain of the wretched state of the streets.

It is said that part of the royal family are even yet expected to pay a visit to Pau, in the course of next spring, to be present at the inauguration of a new statue of the Great Henry, lately arrived, which is to be erected in the Place Royale.[29]

[495]

CHAPTER IV.

TROUBADOUR.

NAVARRE has not produced many poets in early times; and the only troubadour whom it claims, is the famous lover of Blanche of Castile, the accomplished Thibault of Champagne, who rather belongs to Provins, where he lived so much, and sang so many of his beautiful lays, than to the Pyrenees. All critics, ancient and modern, from Dante to the Abbé Massieu, have agreed in admiring his compositions, in which grace, tenderness, and refinement, shine out in every line, encumbered though his language be with its antique costume. His mother was Blanche, daughter of Sancho the Wise, King of Navarre; his birth took place in 1201, a few months after the death of his father; and it was with difficulty the persecuted widow could retain her government of Champagne and Brie. In 1234, he was called to the throne of Navarre, by the death of his maternal uncle, Sancho le Fort. Soon after this, he left for the Holy Land; [496] therefore, what time he spent in Navarre, does not appear. On his return from *Romanie*, he died at Pampluna, in 1253, and was buried at his beloved Provins, that city of nightingales and roses.

His songs are very numerous, and have much originality. The following will serve as specimens:

CHANSON.

———

"Je n'ose chanter trop tart, ne trop souvent."

———

"I FEAR to sing too seldom or too long—
I cannot tell if silence be the best,
Or if at all to tune my tender song—
For she denies me pity, hope, and rest.
Yet, in my lay, I might some note awake,
To please her ear more than all lays before;
Though thus, she seems a cruel joy to take,
That I should slowly suffer evermore.

"At once I'd cast my idle lute away,
If I were sure no pleasure could be mine;
But love has made my thoughts so much his prey,
I do not dare to love her, nor resign.
Thus I stand trembling and afraid to fly,
Till I have learnt to *hate* her—lovingly.

"By love and hate's alternate passions torn,
How shall I turn me from my thronging woes?
Ah! if I perish, tortured and forlorn,
But little glory from such triumph flows.
She has no right to keep me her's, in thrall,
Unless she will be mine, my own, my all! [497]

"Well does she know how to delight—inflame,
With soft regards and smiles and words at will,
And none within her magic ever came,
But learnt to hope he was the favour'd still.
She is worth all the conquests she has won:
But I may trust too far—and be undone!

"She keeps me ling'ring thus in endless doubt,
And, as she pleases, holds me in her chain,
Grants she no smiles—I can adore without;
And this she knows, and I reproach in vain!
I am content to wait my chance, even now,
If she will but one ray of hope allow."

————

JEU-PARTIE.

"BALDWIN, tell me frank and true,
What a lover ought to do;
One, who, loving well and long,
Suff'ring and enduring wrong,
At his lady's summons flies,
And presents him to her eyes,
With a welcome, when they meet,
Should he kiss her lips or feet?

"Sire, methinks he would be loth,
Not to kiss her rosy mouth;
For a kiss at once descends
To the heart and makes them friends;
Joy and sweetness, hope and bliss,
Follow in that tender kiss.

"Baldwin, nay, you ought to know,
He who dares such freedom show—
As though a shepherd maid were she,
Would never in her favour be: [498]

I would kneel in humble guise,
For I know her fair and wise,
And humility may gain
Smiles no boldness could obtain.

"Sire, though modest semblance oft
Meet a guerdon, coy and soft,
And timid lovers sometimes find
Reward both merciful and kind:
Yet to the lips prefer the feet
Seems to my mind a care unmeet.

"Baldwin—for worlds I would not lose
Her mouth, her face, her hand—but choose
To kiss her pretty feet, that she
May see how humble truth can be.
But you are bold and daring still;
And know Love's gentle lore but ill.

"Sire, he must be a craven knight,
Who, with her lovely lips in sight,
Is all content and happy found,
To kiss her foot-print on the ground!

"Baldwin, quick gains are quickly o'er,
Got with much ease, and prized no more.
When at her feet, entranced, I lie,
No evil thought can hover night.
And she his love will faithful call,
Who asked no boon, and gave her all."

[499]

CHAPTER V.

ROAD FROM PAU TO TARBES—TABLE-LAND—THE PICS—THE HARAS OF TARBES—AUTUMN IN THE PYRENEES—MONT L'HÉRIS—GABRIELLE D'ESTRÉES—CHASSE AUX PALOMBES—PENNE DE L'HÉRIS—PIC DU MIDI—CHARLET THE GUIDE—VALLEY OF CAMPAN—LA GATTA—GRIP—THE TOURMALET—CAMPANA DEL VASSE—BARÈGES-LUZ—CAGOT DOOR—GAVARNIE—THE FALL OF THE ROCK—CHAOS—CIRCUS—MAGNIFICENCE OF NATURE—PONT DE NEIGE—ROLAND—DURENDAL—IZARDS—LES CRÂNES—PIEREFITTE—CAUTERETZ—CERIZET—PONT D'ESPAGNE—LAC DE GAUBE—ARGELEZ.

THE road between Pau and Tarbes,[30] like most of the roads south of the Garonne, is an extremely fine one; it is perfectly macadamized, and admirably well kept; indeed, in this respect, the improvement that appears all over France is quite remarkable; but if [500] superiority can be claimed anywhere it certainly belongs to Béarn and Bigorre. It is not, however, the *condition* of the road between the two towns that forms the attraction; it is the exquisite scenery that meets the eye wherever a break in the woods, or an inequality of the ground reveals the magnificent chain of the Pyrenees. For some distance after leaving Pau the road is nearly level; but about half-way to Tarbes, after passing through a thick wood of oak, and having been rendered impatient by occasional glimpses of the mountains, the traveller climbs a long and winding ascent, and reaches the summit of a fine table-land, from whence an uninterrupted view of this glorious country is obtained. Rich forests of chesnut clothe the steep sides of this table-land, and stretch far away to the southward, mingling with the well-cultivated plains that border the Gave de Pau; beyond these rise, in gradual succession, the lower ranges of the mountains, whose real height is entirely lost in the grandeur of the more stupendous Pyrenean giants, extending as far as the eye can reach, from the Mont Perdu at one extremity, and far beyond the Pic du Midi of the Vallée d'Ossau, at the other. The general colour of these noble mountains is a deep purple, which becomes even more intense, and approaches almost to blackness, until it melts away in the misty valleys beneath. The outline is not only irregular in form, [501] but various in its hue; some of the loftiest heights of the foremost range being patched with snow, while, still more distant and shining in the sun, appear the dazzling peaks of eternal ice, piercing the deep blue sky wherein they dwell.

This table-land is traversed for several miles over a broken common, variegated with heath and fern, and intersected here and there by brawling streams, which take their course to swell the tributaries of the distant Gave. At the eastern extremity of the common, another wide forest of chesnut appears, where the road rapidly descends with many windings to the plain of Bigorre. One of these turns offers the loveliest picture it is possible to imagine. The foreground is formed of steep, rough banks, through which the road winds its sinuous track, the thick yet graceful foliage of the chesnut rises like a frame on either hand, and spreads also in front, while the Pic du Midi de Bigorre, with snow on its summit, and the Pic de Montaigu, with its sharp, dark outline, complete the distance. To give life to the scene, there are the peasants and market-women on their way to the fair of Tarbes,—the former wearing the characteristic brown *berret*, and the latter the black or scarlet-peaked hood, which gives quite a clerical air to their costume. Indeed, to see the women carelessly bestriding their active Bigourdin horses, which they manage with infinite ease, one [502] might readily fancy, at a slight distance, that it was rather a party of monks of the olden time wending to their monastery, than a group of peasants laden with their market-ware. A little further, the road abruptly turns again, and Tarbes lies before us, distant about four or five miles, supported by another range of mountains, amongst which the Pic d'Orbizan is most conspicuous. The plain of Bigorre is now soon gained, and in half an hour we stand in the Place de Maubourguet, in the centre of Tarbes.

Tarbes, as a city, has little to recommend it beyond its situation, in the midst of a fertile plain, watered by the Adour, some of whose tributary streams run through the streets, imparting freshness and securing cleanliness. It has nothing to reveal to the lover of antiquity—no vestige remaining of the architecture of the period when Tarbes was celebrated as the place where the Black Prince held his court.

The cathedral is a modern building, possessing no claim to notice; and, except the royal *Haras*, there is nothing to detain the traveller. Here, however, are some fine horses,—the best amongst them English, except, indeed, a superb black barb, named

Youssouf, once the property of an ex-foreign minister more famous in the Tribune than on the Champ de Mars. In consequence, as I was informed by one of the grooms, of [503] the minister's indifferent equitation, his majesty, Louis-Philippe, purchased the barb and sent it hither. The most noticeable steeds besides, are Rowlestone, Sir Peter, Windcliffe, and Skirmisher—the last thirty-seven years' old—whose names bespeak their origin; there is also a fine Arab from Algiers, named Beni. The Haras is beautifully kept, and is surrounded by a fine garden, from whence the view of the distant mountains, beyond Bagnères de Bigorre, is exceedingly grand.

In that direction I decided upon bending my steps, and, returning to my hotel in the Place Maubourguet, my preparations for departure were soon made.

The distance from Tarbes to Bagnères de Bigorre is not more than five leagues, and the road thither would seem to be perfectly level, were it not for the impetuous flow of the Adour, along the left bank of which we travel, reminding us of the gradual ascent. The country is everywhere highly cultivated; and the peasants were busily employed with their second crops of hay, and securing their harvest of Indian corn. One historical site attracts attention on leaving Tarbes;—the old Château of Odos, where died, in 1549, "La Marguérite de Marguérites," Queen of Navarre, the sister of Francis the First, whose name will ever be associated with that of her adopted country. On this spot we lay down our recollections of the past, absorbed, as we approach the [504] mountains, in the thoughts which their magnificence inspires,—which, while they, too, speak of the past, are ever appealing to the present, in their changeless forms and still enduring beauty, their might, their majesty, and their loneliness.

The watering-place of Bagnères has been described by so many tourists, that I spare the description here; and the more readily as it was nearly deserted when I arrived. This was no drawback to one whose desire was to enjoy the last days of autumn amongst the mountains while the weather yet continued fine,—and lovely that autumn weather is, atoning by the richness of its colours for the absence of beauties which belong to an earlier season.

I accordingly made all the necessary arrangements for a guide and horses to cross the Tourmalet on the next day, and devoted the remainder of a lovely afternoon to the ascent of Mont L'Héris—a mountain that supplies the botanist with treasures almost inexhaustible. Crossing the Adour by a rude bridge of only one plank, and traversing some fields, filled with labourers busily employed in getting in their harvest of Indian corn, I reached the pretty little village of Aste, which lies buried in a deep gorge, at the south-eastern base of the mountain. Aste has associations connected with Henri Quatre; for in the castle, now a mere shell, once resided the beautiful Gabrielle [505] d'Estrées, who used here to receive her royal lover. The Seigneur du Village is the Duc de Grammont—a name which appears singularly out of keeping with this romantic and secluded spot.

The ascent of Mont L'Héris is steep but not difficult, for the profusion of flowers and richly-scented plants, scattered over the short elastic turf, beguile the climber's path, and lure him pleasantly upward. The first pause I made was on a bold projection, skirting the forest of Haboura on one side, and on the other hanging over the beautiful valley of Campan. Beneath me lay the town of Bagnères, and, far as the eye could reach, extended the plain of Bigorre, with the clear waters of the Adour marking their track like a silver thread. On the slope of a neighbouring mountain the wild-pigeon hunters were spreading their nets; for the *Chasse aux Palombes* is nowhere so successfully followed as in this part of the Pyrenees. It is a simple sport; but highly productive to those engaged in it. I pursued my route towards the summit of the mountain, the "*Penne de l'Héris*," as it is still called, retaining its Celtic name. To do so, it was necessary to plunge into the thicket, and for a long time I made my way scrambling over the slippery surface of mossy rocks, as best I might, by the aid of the roots and lower branches of the forest-trees. At length I emerged from the wood, and stood upon the fertile pastures of the mountain; from whence the ascent to the [506] immense block of marble which crowns Mont l'Héris, is tolerably easy. It is a singular mass, on the southern side of which is an enormous excavation; amongst the *débris* of which was a path that led to the top. If the view below was lovely, this was magnificent; my eyes were, however, riveted on one object—the towering height of the *Pic du Midi*, which seemed almost immediately above my head; though the mountain on the other side of the valley of Campan at our feet, showed us how far distant it really was. Directed by the peasant-guide, who had volunteered his services at Aste, I

contrived to form a tolerable notion of the track which I was to pursue on the morrow; and it was only the warning shadows which began to creep over the valleys, and the clear tones of the church bells, at Bagnères, marking the hour at which I had promised to join the *table d'hôte* at the Hôtel de France, that expressively told me to loiter no longer on the mountains, lest darkness should entangle my feet before I had cleared its steep declivities. I made haste, therefore, to return to Bagnères, crossing the Adour this time by a bridge no less picturesque than the former, but somewhat more secure.

On the following morning I rose at daylight, and, at the moment fixed upon, Charlet, the guide, whom I had agreed with, rode up to the door of the hotel, leading another [507] small, sturdy, mountain horse, and accompanied by the inseparable companion of his wanderings, a bull-dog named Pluto, which, had sex been considered, should have been called Proserpine, though not for beauty.

We were soon clear of the town, and jogged pleasantly along the road, which lay through the lovely valley of Campan—a scene whose beauty cannot be too highly extolled. On the left hand flowed the rapid waters of the Adour, beneath heights which seemed perpendicular, though Charlet pointed to certain irregular lines which marked the track by which the mountaineers descend on horseback, the very idea of which was enough to make one shudder; on the right hand, the valley spread out into a fertile district, whose gentle slopes gradually blended themselves with the hills which formed the spurs of lofty mountains, and finally shut in the view. In front, was constantly visible the snowy height of the *Pic d' Orbizan*, towering 9,000 feet above the level of the valley.

It was a delicious morning, and the freshness of the air, the beauty of the scenery, and the novelty of the situation, made me fain to linger in this lovely spot; but there was too much before us to admit of delay, and we trotted on merrily, every pause, as the road became steeper, being filled up by the conversation of Charlet.

It is not undeservedly that the Pyrenean guides have acquired the reputation they [508] enjoy for intelligence and civility; and Charlet, of the Hôtel de France, is certainly a most favourable specimen: frugal in his habits, modest in his demeanour, and of great activity of body, he forms the *beau ideal* of a mountain cicerone. I asked him what superstitions were still current in the mountains: he replied, but few; the increasing intercourse with towns and travellers gradually effacing them from popular belief. One, however, he named, which is curious:—Any one who suddenly becomes rich without any visible means to account for it, is said by the peasants to have found "*la gatta*;" in other words, to have made a compact with the evil one, the evidence of which is afforded by the presence of a black cat, whose stay in the dwelling of the contracting party is productive of a gold coin, deposited every night in his bedchamber. When the term has expired, the cat disappears, and ruin invariably falls upon the unwary customer of the fiend. Charlet accounted for the superstition in a very simple way. As smuggling is constant amongst the mountaineers, so near the Spanish frontier, large fortunes, comparatively speaking, are often made; and accident or envy often deprives the possessor of his suddenly-acquired wealth, who may lose his all by an information, or an unsuccessful venture.

Two leagues from Bagnères brought us to Sainte Marie, where the roads separate,— one leading to Luchon, the other, to the right, across the Tourmalet, to Barèges; the [509] latter, which we followed, here makes a very sensible ascent, but continues passable for carriages till we arrive at the little village of Grip—the last cluster of habitations on this side of the chain which divides the valley of Campan from that of the Bartan.

It is a wild and lonely place, and the loneliness of its position is increased by our being able to mark with precision the spot where cultivation ceases and nature asserts her uncontrolled dominion. Here the road ceases altogether, a bridle-path alone conducting across the still-distant ridge, called the Tourmalet, which is crowned by the remoter heights of Neouvièlle and the Pic d'Espade, from whose base flows the Adour—a slender but impetuous stream, whose course becomes visible only as it issues from a dense forest of black fir, which stretches half-way up the mountain.

The ascent to the Tourmalet occupied about two hours; and at high noon we dismounted on the ridge, with the Bastan before us; on every side innumerable peaks, and, winding along the valley, the road which leads to Barèges. Besides those already named, the most conspicuous heights are the Pic de l'Epée, the Pic de Bergons, and, at the further extremity of the valley, the Monné, which overhangs Cauteretz, and is yet

visible from this point. The Valley of the Bastan is singularly desolate, presenting [510] nothing to the eye but the rugged flanks of mountains, scored, as it would seem, by the rush of torrents, and massive rocks, whose *débris* lie scattered below, often obstructing the course of the Gave, which finds its source in the melted snows of the Neouvièlle. Some of the peaks near the Tourmalet are of peculiar form: one of them, pointed out to me by Charlet, is called the *Campana de Vasse*—the Bell of the Valley—which the mountaineers believe is to awaken the echoes of the Pyrenees on the day of judgment, and call the dead before the last tribunal.

After resting about an hour on the ridge of the Tourmalet, enjoying the solitude of a scene which was interrupted but once—by a soldier, a convalescent from the waters of Barèges, on his way back to join his garrison at Tarbes,—we remounted, and rode slowly down the Bastan, every turn of the road disclosing some fresh object to excite admiration or surprise. When we reached Barèges, the place was entirely deserted by visitors—even the houses were gone,—for the greater part of those erected for the company who throng the valley in the summer, being merely of wood, are removed to places of greater security than Barèges, where they run the risk of being destroyed by the floods and "moving accidents" of the mountains. We made no stay, therefore; but, like the Lady Baussière, "rode on" at a leisurely pace, the more fully to enjoy the [511] wondrous beauties of the road between Barèges and Luz, where we arrived about four o'clock in the afternoon.

There is only one hotel at Luz; but it is the best in the Pyrenees,—not only for the nature of the accommodation, but the civility and attention of the host, the hostess, and their pretty *protegée*, Marie, who acts as waiter, *femme-de-chambre*, and *factotum* to the establishment. A good dinner was promised, and the promise was faithfully kept,—bear witness the delicate blue trout, which I have nowhere met with so good, except, perhaps, at Berne. But as there yet remained an hour or two of daylight, I employed the interval in visiting the ruins of the old feudal castle of St. Marie, and in sketching the church built by the Templars, which resembles a fortalice, rather than a place of worship. I examined the building carefully, but could not satisfy myself that I had really discovered the walled-up entrance, by which alone, *it is said*, the wretched cagots were formerly permitted to enter the church. The figures which flitted near, pausing, occasionally, to inspect my work, habited, as they were, in the long cloak and *capuchon* of the country, might well have passed for contemporaries of the superstitious fear which excluded the unfortunate victims of disease from an equality of rights with their fellow-men; but the cagot himself is no longer visible. Here I loitered, till it was too dark to draw another line; and then wended back to the [512] *Hôtel des Pyrénées*, to recruit myself after the fatigues of the day, and prepare for those of the morrow.

Long before the day broke, we were again in the saddle, and, as we passed St. Sauveur, its long range of white buildings could only be faintly traced; but, as we advanced, the snowy peak of Bergons, glowing in the rays of the rising sun, seemed to light us on our way, and coily the charms of the valley revealed themselves to my eager gaze. I have wandered in many lands, and seen much mountain-scenery; but I think I never beheld any that approaches the beauty and sublimity of the road to Gavarnie. There is everything here to delight the eye, and fill the mind with wonder,—

"All that expands the spirit, yet appals."

For some miles the road continues to ascend; in many places, a mere horse-track, cut in the mountain side, and fenced by a low wall from an abyss of fearful depth, in whose dark cavity is heard the roar of the torrent which afterwards converts the generic name of Gave into one peculiar to itself. The sides of the mountains are thickly clothed with box, which grows to a great height; and at this season the Autumn tint had given to it the loveliest hues, contrasting well with the dark pines which climb to the verge of vegetation on the far-off slopes. Suddenly, the character of the scene is [513] altered,—the road descends—the foliage disappears, or shows itself only in patches in the ravines, and masses of dark grey rock usurp its place; the noisy waters of the Gave make themselves more distinctly heard, and a few rude cottages appear. This is the village of Gèdre: and here I witnessed one of those mountain-effects which are often so terrible. A week before, two houses stood by the way-side—the homes of the peasants whom we saw at work in a neighbouring meadow. They were then, as now, employed in cutting grass for hay, when a low, rumbling noise was heard in the valley, which soon grew louder; and the affrighted labourers, casting their eyes upwards, saw

that an enormous rock had suddenly detached itself from the mountain, and was now thundering down the steep. They fled with precipitation, and succeeded in saving their lives; but when they ventured to return to the spot, they found that an immense block had fallen upon one of the cottages, crushing it into powder, and leaving nothing standing but one of the gable ends. So it still remained,—and so, no doubt, it will continue till the end of time; for the mass is too ponderous to be moved by anything short of a convulsion of nature.

I could have wished to have turned aside at Gèdre to visit the Cascade of Saousa, but Gavarnie beckoned onwards to greater attractions; so again we pursued our route, [514] and I speedily lost all thought for other wonders in the tremendous passes which bear the name of Chaos, and of which the best description can give but a faint and imperfect idea. The huge masses of rock, looking like fallen buildings, which are strewn along the valley in inextricable confusion, defy calculation. There they lie, the consequence of some terrific *déboulement*, which must have shaken the mountains to their centre when the mighty ruin was effected. It is supposed that the accident may have occurred in the sixth century, when a fearful earthquake disturbed the Pyrenees; but no written record remains to attest it. On the first view of this scene of disorder, it seems as if all further progress were stopped; but as we descend amongst the enormous blocks, a path is found winding through them, which the perseverance of the mountaineers has formed. Emerging from this terrific glen, the pastures and fields which surround the village of Gavarnie smile a welcome to the traveller, which is but ill-confirmed when he reaches the gloomy inn—the last and worst in France. Here we abandoned our horses, and after glancing at the cascade of Ossonne, I passed hastily through the village, and, mounting on a flat rock, threw myself down to gaze upon the stupendous Circus of Gavarnie, which, though still a full league distant, appears, at the first glance, to be within a quarter of an hour's walk. I was all impatience to reach [515] the foot of that cascade of which I had so often read, but which I scarcely ever hoped to *see*, and, as soon as Charlet had stabled his steeds, we set out. For the first mile the road lay between narrow meadows, which owe their freshness to the Gave; these then gave place to a stony plain, the dry beds of some ancient lakes; and having traversed their expanse, we crossed the last bridge, constructed by the hands of man, over the river, and then climbing a series of sharp, irregular ascents, which would have passed for very respectable hills elsewhere, but here seemed mole-heaps only, we stood, at length, on the perpetual snow, which forms a solid crust at the foot of the circus of Gavarnie.

It seemed as if I had at length realised one of those dreams which fill the mind when first we read the wondrous tales of old romance: it was, indeed, the very spot described in one of the most celebrated of the earliest cycle; but my thoughts were less of Charlemagne and his paladins—though the Brèche de Roland was now within reach—than of the stupendous grandeur of the scene. It required very little exercise of fancy to imagine that we had arrived at the end of the world—so perfectly impassable appeared the barrier which suddenly rose before us. The frowning walls of granite which form the lowest grade of this vast amphitheatre, rise to a height of twelve [516] hundred feet perpendicularly, and extend to nearly three-quarters of a league, increasing in width as they ascend to the regions of eternal snow; where may be traced a succession of precipices, until they are lost in the bases of the Cylindre and the Tours de Marboré, themselves the outworks of the Mont Perdu, from whose glaciers flow the numerous cascades which, in summer, shoot from the lower ridge of the Circus.

The great waterfall of Gavarnie—the loftiest in Europe—pours its slender stream from a height of upwards of thirteen hundred feet, on the eastern side of the Circus, and in its snow-cold water I dipped my travelling-cup, qualifying with veritable Cognac the draught I drank to the health of distant friends.

My great desire was to make the ascent of the Brèche de Roland; but Charlet had learnt, in the village where he made inquiry, that the snow had fallen heavily on the mountains only the day before, and that, consequently, it would be a matter of extreme difficulty and danger to make the attempt. It was now past mid-day, and the time necessary for accomplishing the ascent with the prospect of returning by daylight, was too limited; so, with reluctance, I gave up the idea. The season at which I visited Gavarnie was, indeed, too late (it was the 9th of October,) to admit of being very excursive, for long days and steady weather are absolutely necessary to enable [517] one to do justice to mountain-scenery. I resolved, however, to remain within the Circus

as long as I could, and, after descending to the *Pont de Neige*, from whose blue depths rushes the Gave de Pau, I climbed a rock at the edge of the snow, and sat there lost in admiration of the glorious scene. As I looked in the direction of the Brèche, itself invisible from the spot where I was, I observed an eagle soaring majestically above the cleft where tradition points to the last exploit of the valorous nephew of Charlemagne, whose type the imperial bird might well be deemed. It was here, according to the *veracious* chronicle of Archbishop Turpin, that, after defeating the Saracen king, Marsires, in the pass of Roncesvalles, Roland, grievously wounded, laid himself down to die, the shrill notes of his horn having failed to bring him the succour he expected from his uncle. It is in Roncesvalles that poets have laid the scene of his death, where —

"On Fontarabian echoes borne
The dying hero's call"

resounded; and, if truth attaches to the received story of his death, Roncesvalles is, no doubt, the site. But the legend has shed its romance on the immortal heights of the towers of Marboré; and, to account for the fissure in the rock, it must be with these in [518] our recollection, that we read that quaint apostrophe to his sword which the chronicler has preserved:—

After laying himself down beneath a rock, Roland drew his sword, Durendal, and regarding it *"with great pity and compassion,"* he exclaimed, in a loud voice, "plorant et larmoyant:"—

"O très beau cousteau resplendissant, qui tant as duré et qui as ésté si large, si ferme et si forte, en manche de clere yvoire: duquel la croix est faicte d'or et la supface dorée decorée et embellye du pommeau faiet de pierres de beril; escript et engravé du grand nô de Dieu singulier, Alpha et OO. Si bien tranchant en la pointe et environné de la vertu de Dieu. Qui est celluy qui plus et oultre moy usera de ta saincte force, mais qui sera desormais ton possesseur? Certes celluy qui te possédera ne sera vaincu ny estonné, ne ne redoubtera toute la force des ennemys; il n'aura jamais pour d'aucunes illusions et fantasies, car luy de Dieu et de la grace sérôt en profection et sauvegarde. O que tu es eureuse espée digne de mémoire, car par toy sôt Sarrazins destruictz et occis et les gens infidèles mis a mort; dont la foy des Chrestiens est exaltée et la louenge de Dieu et gloire partout le môde universel acquise. O a combien de fois ay je vengé sang de vostre seigneur Jesu-christ par ton puissât moyen, et mis à mort les ennemys de la nouvelle loy de grace en ce nouveau temps acceptable de [519] salut; côbien ay je tranché de Sarrazins; combien de Juifs et aultres mescréant infidèles batus et destruictz, pour exaltation et gloire de la saincte foy Chrestiennie! Par toy noble cousteau tranchant Durendal de longue durée, la chevalerie de Dieu le Créateur est accomplye et les pieds es mainz des larrons acoustuméz qui gastoyent le bien de la chose publicque, gastéz et separéz de leurs corps. J'ay vengé par autant de foys le sang de Jesu-christ respendu sur terre que j'ay mis-à-mort par ton fort moyen aucun Juif et Sarrazin. O, o espée très eureuse de la quelle n'est la semblable n'a esté ne ne sera! Certes celluy qui t'a forgée jamais semblable ne fist devant luy ny après; car tous ceulx qui ont esté de toy blesséz n'ont pu vivre puis après. Si d'aventure aucû chevalier non hardy ou paresseux te possède après ma mort j'en seray grandement dolent. Et si aucun Sarrazin mescréant ou infidèle te touche aucunement j'en suis en grant dueil et angoisse."

Having made this lamentation, the valiant Roland, resolving that his weapon should never pass into other hands, raised his arm, and, with the last effort of expiring nature, clove the massy rock in twain, breaking the good sword, Durendal, into a thousand shivers by the force of the blow.

The voice of Charlet roused me from the reverie into which I had fallen, desiring me to look in the direction of the great cascade at a troop of izards that were bounding up the rocks. I turned and saw the graceful little creatures scaling, with inconceivable [520] agility, heights which seemed absolutely perpendicular, so slight is the hold which they require for their tiny hoofs. It was but for a minute that I beheld them; in the next they were lost behind a projecting rock, and I saw them no more.

We now turned our faces down the valley, often, however, pausing to look back; and before we again entered the village of Gavarnie we stopped at the little old church to inspect the sculls called "Les crânes des douze Templiers," who are said to have been beheaded by order of Philippe le-Bel. Whether true or false, they are the only

antiquities here—the church being comparatively modern. At the unpromising inn we found our horses refreshed by rest; and, without more ado, we remounted and returned by the road we came to Luz, which we reached soon after nightfall.

Quitting Luz the next morning, with much regret at being unable to remain longer to explore the beauties which surround it, we took the road to Pierrefitte, and, after a pleasant ride of about two hours, in the course of which we passed through the most lovely scenery—the most remarkable features of which are the depth and narrowness of the mountain gorges, and the boldness of the bridges which span them, one in particular bearing the characteristic name of the *Pont d'Enfer*—we arrived at the Hôtel de la Poste at Pierrefitte, where my carpet-bag was deposited, to lighten the [521] load of Charlet's horse, for we had many miles that day to travel. We then pushed on towards Cauteretz, ascending by the old road, which, though steep, saves much time to those lightly mounted; from its point of junction with the new one, it is as fine as any in Europe, and the variety which it offers makes the valley as beautiful as any in the Pyrenees, while it retains its own distinctive character, caused by the greater quantity of foliage, thus gaining in softness what it loses in grandeur. After crossing a fine bridge, about half-way up the valley, the road takes a spiral direction, called *Le Limaçon*, the buttresses which support it being remarkable for the solidity and excellence of the masonry; and having made our way to the summit, the peak of the Monné above Cauteretz became visible for the first time since leaving the Tourmalet.

At Cauteretz we merely stopped to breakfast, my object being to visit the Lac de Gaube, at the foot of the Vignemale. It was Sunday morning, and a fair was being held in the market-place, the principal articles for sale being the many-coloured chaplets manufactured at Betharram: there were many pretty faces in the little stalls, and many sweet voices offered their wares for sale; but I resisted the temptation—the more readily, perhaps, from knowing that the glass beads would have very little chance of [522] remaining unbroken in a scrambling mountain-ride. About half-a-mile from Cauteretz we fell in with a party of dragoons, bringing their horses from the mineral springs, whither they are sent—like other invalids—for cure, from the Haras of Pau and Tarbes. The fine animals looked in excellent condition and spirits, and seemed to have benefited wonderfully by the visit. Passing the baths, we ascended the bridle-road above the Gave de Marcadaou, with dark forests of pine on either hand—a favourite resort for bear-hunters. The great charm of this road consists in the numerous cascades which mark the course of the Gave; they are, without question, the most beautiful in the Pyrenees, where the mountain-falls are, for the most part, deficient in volume. The finest of these, where all are striking, is the cascade of the Cerizet, which bears a greater resemblance to the falls of the Aar, in the canton of Berne, than any I remember. It is not so massive a fall, but it gave me the impression of being more picturesque, from the effect produced by the superb pines which hang over it, whose branches, covered with the spray which rises from the cascade, like vapour,

"Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinal gum——."

Charlet told me that we saw the Cerizet at the most fortunate hour; for it is at mid-day that the "sun-bow rays," at this season,

"——Arch
The torrent with the many hues of heaven,"

[523]

and a lovely iris was settled on it at the moment we descended to a huge rock, on which we stood to watch "the roar of waters."

Beyond the Cerizet are two other fine falls—the *Pas de l'Ours* and the *Coussin*—which we pass on the way to the Pont d'Espagne, where the roads separate; the one in front leading into Spain by the Val de Jarret, and the other—which turns suddenly to the left—crossing the bridge, and conducting to the Lac de Gaube. The Pont d'Espagne is a most picturesque object: two torrents unite a little below it, one of which is the Marcadaou, the other the Gave that issues from the lonely lake; the Marcadaou rushes over a broad, flat rock—foaming and boiling, as if with rage to meet an expected enemy—while the deeper Gave throws itself from its narrow bed, and twists and turns, apparently falling back on itself, as if it sought to avoid the collision: they meet, however, and after the first concussion they flow on, smoothly enough, till a sudden turn hides them from our view, and we hear only their angry voices, caused by some

fresh interruption to their course. But to have the finest view of the general effect, the bridge must be seen from below, where a rock stands boldly out, intercepting the heady current. It is constructed of fir-trees, felled on the spot, whose light stems, standing out in relief against the clear blue sky, seem almost too fragile to withstand the concussion caused by the "hell of waters" beneath. Nowhere does the pine appear [524] to so much advantage as beside the Pont d'Espagne; some are the "wrecks of a single winter," others display a profusion of dark foliage, and the branches of all are thickly covered with grey parasitic moss, that hangs to them like hair, and gives to them a most picturesque appearance, like bearded giants guarding the romantic pass.

The narrow pathway through the forest, which leads to the Lac de Gaube, is excessively steep, and turns at least twenty times as it pursues its zigzag course. For the first half-hour nothing was visible but pine-trees, firs, and blocks of granite; and the road was difficult even for the sure-footed beasts which we bestrode; at length, we cleared the wood, and at once the Vignemale rose in awful splendour before us, its glaciers glittering in the sun, ten thousand feet above the bed of the dark blue lake, itself at a vast elevation above the level of the sea. Next to Gavarnie, this view of the Vignemale struck me as the most impressive object I had seen, the presence of the still lake reminding me of similar scenes in Switzerland; none of which, however, imparted the sense of solitude so completely as this. It might possibly arise from the associations belonging to the Lac de Gaube, the mournful evidence of which was before my eyes, in the little tomb raised to the memory of the unfortunate husband [525] and wife who were drowned here in the year 1832. It stands on a small, rocky promontory, enclosed by a light iron rail, and the tablet bears the following inscription in French and English, on opposite sides. I transcribed both, and give the latter:—

"This tablet is dedicated to the memory of William Henry Pattisson, of Lincoln's Inn, London, Esq., barrister at law; and of Susan Frances, his wife, who, in the 31st and 26th years of their age, and within one month of their marriage, to the inexpressible grief of their surviving relations and friends, were accidentally drowned together in this lake, on the 20th day of September, 1832. Their remains wore conveyed to England, and interred there at Witham, in the county of Essex."

The account given me of the manner in which the accident occurred was, that Mr. and Mrs. Pattison visited the lake from Cauteretz in *chaises à porteurs*, and that Mr. Pattison went first of all alone in the boat, having vainly urged his wife to accompany him: after pulling some distance out, he paused, and, by his voice and gestures, intimated how charmed he was with the effect; he then returned to the shore, and overcame Mrs. Pattison's repugnance to enter the boat. She stepped in, and he again rowed about half a mile, when suddenly he was seen by the men on shore to rise in the boat, and in an instant it was overset, and both were plunged in the lake. Mr. Pattison [526] sunk at once, but his wife's clothes buoyed her up for a considerable time; ineffectually, however, for none of the bearers of the *chaises à porteurs* could swim; her cries were in vain, and she, too, perished. How the accident arose, none can tell, and a mystery must for ever hang over the fatal event.

On seeing the wretched apology for a boat, which is still used by the fisherman who keeps a little *auberge* beside the lake, and is the same in which the sad catastrophe occurred, no one can be surprised that an accident should have happened; the only wonder is that it did not founder altogether, for it is little better than the trunk of a tree hollowed out, and turned adrift to take its chance of sinking or floating. Into this crazy contrivance I had no desire to venture, the lake appearing too cold for an impromptu bath.

Reluctantly, from hence, as from every other spot which I visited in the Pyrenees, I turned away, longing to have ascended the Vignemale, but knowing too well how few were the days allotted to my mountain excursion.

We returned by the same route to Pierrefitte, and then bid adieu to the sublimities of the *Hautes Pyrénées*; for, beautiful as the country is at the foot of the mountains, its beauty is tame, and produces, comparatively, little effect on the mind until time has effaced the first impression. It was late that night before we reached Argelez, where [527] the *Hôtel du Commerce* received us.

For fertility, and all the softer charms that render a landscape pleasing, there is, perhaps, no place on earth that exceeds the valley of Lavedan, in which Argelez is situated. It is "a blending of all beauties," tempting the traveller to pause upon the

way, and set up his rest in a region where everything seems to speak of peace and happiness. The inhabitants, however, can scarcely be happy, for the disease of *crétinism* is more widely spread here than in any other place in the department. The valley is famous for the breed of Pyrenean dogs, which are to be met with everywhere in the mountains, guarding the flocks and herds. It was my fortune to acquire a very fine specimen, only a fortnight old, which travelled with me in a basket to London, and six months afterwards, the largest kennel could scarcely contain it. These dogs are excessively strong, and are esteemed fierce; but their fierceness belongs rather to the wild life they lead amidst bears and wolves, to whom they prove formidable antagonists.

On one of the hills which skirt the valley of Castelloubon, between Argelez and Lourdes, I once more obtained a view of the Mont Perdu, distant now upwards of forty miles; it was the last glimpse of the wonders of the Hautes Pyrénées that was vouchsafed to me. [528]

The garrisoned fortress of Lourdes,—the picturesque bridge and convent of Betharram, and the smiling plain which borders the Gave de Pau, were all passed in turn, and on the evening of the fifth day from my departure I was again in the streets of Pau. [529]

CHAPTER VI.

VALLÉE D'OSSAU—LE HOURAT—THE RIO VERDE—EAUX CHAUDES EAUX BONNES—BIELLE—IZESTE—SACCAZE, THE NATURALIST.

———

"Salut Ossau, la montagnarde,
La Béarnaise, que Dieu garde!
Avec bonheur je te regarde,
Douce vallée!—et sur ma foy
Parmi tes sœurs que je desire,
De Leucate à Fontarable
Je te dis que la plus jolie
Ne peut se comparer à toi."

Ancienne Balade.

———

On rather a cold morning, early in October, we set out from Pau for the Vallée d'Ossau; the road between the hills covered with vines of Jurançon. Gan and Gelos are extremely pretty. We passed a house which was pointed out to us as belonging to the [530] Baron Bernadotte, nephew to the King of Sweden, who, being a native of Pau, divides the honours of the town with Henry IV. Formerly, in this spot stood a castle, where a singularly Arcadian custom prevailed; every shepherd of the Vallée d'Ossau who passed by that spot with his flock, was required to place a small branch of leaves in a large ring fixed on the portal. If their lords insisted on no heavier homage than this, their duty was not very severe.

We passed through Gan—a wretched-looking village, once of great importance; one of the *thirteen towns* of Béarn; originally surrounded by walls and towers, of which nothing now remains except a few stones, which have served to build the houses. A *tourelle* is shown in the place as having formed part of the house of Marca, the historian of Béarn: there is an inscription on it, and arms, with the date of 1635.

The further we advanced the more the scenery improved, and as we followed the course of the beautiful, rapid, and noisy river Nès, which went foaming over its shallow, stony bed, making snowy cascades at every step, we were delighted with the gambols of that most beautiful of mountain-torrents, which appears to descend a series of marble stairs of extraordinary extent, rushing and leaping along the solitary gorge like a wild child at play.

The village of Sévignac opens the Vallée d'Ossau; and a host of villages, and a wide [531] spread of pasture-land, with high mountains stretching far away into the distance,

were before us. We breakfasted at Louvie, and then continued our route, the road becoming wilder, and having more character, than hitherto; we seemed now to have entered the gorges, and to be really approaching the great mountains, which, in strange and picturesque shapes, rose up in all directions around us. The most striking object here, is an isolated mount, on the summit of which stand the ruins of a feudal tower, called Castel Jaloux, built by Gaston Phoebus, for the convenience of holding the assemblies of Ossau, there to meet the viscounts who were independent of the kingdom of Béarn. The village of Castets is at the base of the rock, concealed amidst thick foliage: this situation is charming, in the midst of gigantic steeps and rich valleys, with the Gave foaming at its foot.

Laruns, the chief town of the canton, is a long, straggling town, almost Swiss in the construction of its houses: it has a small antique church, where there is a *bénitier*, curiously ornamented with figures of *syrens*: this is a favourite ornament in this part of the world, difficult to be explained, unless it is intended to represent some water-nymphs of the different Gaves, for it is too far from the sea to have any allusion to an ocean spirit. The road divides here, one route leading to the Eaux Bonnes, the other to [532] the Eaux Chaudes; we proposed visiting the former on our way back, our intention being, if possible, to attempt the ascent of the Pic du Midi d'Ossau.

We continued to mount by a fine road, having magnificent views before and around, in order the better to enjoy which, we chose to walk for some distance up the height, between walls of rock, of all colours and shapes, covered with purple heath, and changing leaves, and delicate flowers of various hues. When we reached the summit, we found ourselves in a narrow defile, where a party of peasants were endeavouring, by main force, to assist a huge cart, drawn by labouring and straining horses, up the precipitous ascent—a perilous and painful work, which, however, they accomplished very well. We heard beyond a hoarse murmur, which told us we should soon rejoin the Gave, which here runs under the rocks, and reappears in a bed, upwards of four hundred feet deep. The high rocks seemed nearly to meet, and form a way exactly like the approach to a fortified castle: this pass is called *Le Hourat*. A little chapel is built at the other end of the opening, enclosing a figure of the Virgin—an object of great veneration in the neighbourhood. There was formerly here a long inscription in honour of the visit to the baths of the Princess Catherine, sister of Henry the Fourth; but every trace of it has disappeared, though there are many travellers whose eyes are so [533] good as to be able to discern it, notwithstanding the fact of its having been carefully erased at the time of the great Revolution, when no royal *souvenir* was permitted to remain.

From this point, to the village of the Eaux Chaudes, the way is the most savage, wild, and beautiful that can be imagined: the torrent raving along its rocky bed, and foaming cataracts tumbling into its waters from numerous woody heights; at length we saw the little nest where the baths lie concealed; and descended between steep rocks, which shut the valley in so closely, that it appears almost possible to touch the two sides, which incline as if to form a canopy over the houses. We secured rooms for the night at the hotel—a very large one, and, in moderately warm weather, no doubt pleasant enough; but at this period all was as chill and dreary as if it had been in December. With much delay and difficulty we procured horses, and lost no time in setting out for Gabas, though the ominous appearance of the sky promised but little for our attempt; however, for the seven miles we rode along the exquisite valley—unequalled in its kind—nothing could exceed the delight and admiration I felt at the grandeur of the unexpected scenery; piles of naked rocks rose on one side of the road —which is as good as possible—while on the other they were covered with trees of every growth, with, as we advanced higher, a few pines appearing here and there; the [534] torrent met us, rushing down impetuously over large and more encumbering blocks of stone, which, impeding its course, caused the waters to leap and struggle and foam and dash, till clouds of spray filled the valley, and its thundering voice echoed through the hollow caverns on the banks: its rich *green* colour, as clear as crystal, came out brilliantly from its crest of foam, so that the stream looked really a *Rio Verde*.

Long silver lines of shining water came trickling or rushing down from every height amongst the trees and shrubs, sometimes splashing across our path, and joining a little clear course which was hurrying forward to throw itself down the rock into the bosom of the mother Gave, on the other side. We stopped our horses so often to contemplate the beautiful *accidents* of rock and torrent, that by the time we reached the village of Gabas the day was closing in, and we found that it would take us two

hours to reach the summit of the great mountain, which we scarcely remembered, in our pleasure at the beauties of the ride, had never been visible to us for a moment; in fact, a heavy mist hung over the snowy peaks, all of which were shrouded. Scarcely regretting the necessity for retracing our steps, we turned back, and had another view of the wonders of the lovely valley. The mountains now wore a more sombre hue, and [535] the deepened shadows gave a severer character to the ravines. An eagle sailed majestically over our heads, much to my delight, as it was the only incident which we seemed to want to render the scene complete in lonely grandeur. That which is unaccustomed has a greater power over the imagination; and to me, who had never seen Switzerland or Italy, and to whom eagles were almost a fable, the solemn flight of one of these monarchs of the air, so peculiar in its movements, sailing along the peaks above the cataracts, was very impressive. It was then, by the shaking I experienced at every step, that I was aware how very steep had been our ascent the whole way from the Eaux Chaudes; our little sturdy mountain-ponies had cantered on so gaily, that I imagined we were on even ground: so far from which, we found on the return the motion so painful, that most of us got off our horses and walked. It was nearly dark when we arrived at the hotel, and we were not sorry to crowd round a blazing fire, and find all prepared for our refreshment.

The night was like winter, and the incessant roaring of the torrent prevented anything approaching sleep; but the sun rose brightly, and the next day was perfectly warm and genial. We took our way to Bonnes, and found the beauty of the journey increased by the fine effects of light and shade which the improved weather allowed; and, as we mounted the steep hill leading to the village, nothing could exceed the [536] splendour of the view; the snowy top of the Pic de Ger, which the day before was not visible, now came out from a canopy of clouds; and huge rocks and verdant mountains, at different heights, descended in steps to the rich and glowing valley beneath, dotted with white cottages and thick groves: the Gave, on one side spanned by a beautiful picturesque bridge, rushes down on the other into a profound ravine, through which its waters run a subterranean course, till they reappear below the Hourah.

The brilliant sun which favoured us exhibited the Eaux Bonnes in its best light, and it seemed a delightful contrast to the chilly gorge we had left at the Eaux Chaudes. The hotels are well furnished, and there appears every convenience for the numerous visitors who crowd here in the summer. We walked to a fine waterfall just behind the inn where we stopped,—formed by the Valentin and the Sonde,—which is grand in the extreme. There are several other fine cascades in the neighbourhood, but this was the only one I saw. A way by a pretty, narrow, winding path to the top of a heathy hill is charming, and here a rustic temple is erected from whence the view is enchanting. Behind rises the majestic Pic de Ger, rugged and hoary, crowned with snow, the first that had shown itself in this region. The rocks and mountains are quite close, pressing in upon the village, and its establishment of baths; but, as the situation is on a height, [537] it has a less confined appearance than the valley of the rival baths, and was, on the day we visited it, like another climate,—warm and genial: it must be extremely hot in the summer, as, indeed, all these gorges cannot fail to be. We talked to a lively young woman at the window of one of the now deserted boarding-houses, who told us she was a native of the Eaux Chaudes, whose merits she considered so superior to those of the Eaux Bonnes, that she had never deigned to cast her eyes, she said, up towards the paltry mountain of Ger, which the people of this gorge had the presumption to compare to that of the Pic du Midi: "One is here buried alive," said she, "with no walks, no mountains, no torrents; it is quite a waste of life, and I am resolved never to go to the top of that mole-hill of Ger, about which they make such a fuss: how disgusted you must be with it after the other!" She had once been to Pau, which she considered another Paris, but not so gay as the Eaux Bonnes; so that we learnt another lesson, which convinced us that every person sees with different eyes from his neighbours, and "proudly proclaims the spot of earth" which has most interest for him, the best.

We were free to differ with this fair Ossalaise; for, much as we admired her beautiful valley, we could not but give its rival nearly as much praise; admiring in particular the stupendous waterfall of the Valentin, where we lingered some time, climbing about the rocks, almost stunned by the roar of the waters, which break from the rock in three [538] divisions; and so rushing over the projecting buttresses till they subside in the broad, cold, pebbly lake below.

The Vallée d'Ossau is said to combine all the beauties of the Pyrenees; and is

certainly one of the most enchanting spots in nature: the scenery reminded me, in some degree, of that at the Mont Dore, in Auvergne; but, though superior in some respects, the magnificent *plateaux* of gigantic pines were wanting. It is necessary, in the Pyrenees, to ascend much higher than we did to behold this growth,—a few straggling firs of insignificant size are all that are to be seen in the lower range; but I believe they are very fine in some parts.

We stopped at Bielle to visit the Roman pavement, which has only lately been discovered; it was shown to us by a woman who was surrounded by five little children with black eyes and rosy cheeks; for this region is the Paradise of children; they all look so healthy and handsome. The mother, though still young, looked ten years older than she really was,—worn and tanned, like all I had hitherto seen; her remarkably small feet were bare, and she wore the fringed leggings peculiar to this part, which have a singularly Indian appearance. Beauty is said to be common in this country; but we had not met a single female who deserved to be called so; nor did the costume strike us as otherwise than coarse and ungraceful: in this particular forming a great contrast to the peasantry of Switzerland, with whose mountains there is here a [539] parallel. The *patois* spoken by this family sounded very musical and pretty; and we remarked that the villagers in general seemed gentle and civil: a little boy, who constituted himself our guide, was a strange figure, actually covered with rags and tatters, which hung about him in the most grotesque drapery, as if it had been studied to create laughter: the village looked the very picture of poverty, desolation, dirt, and ruin: the church is a piece of antiquity of great interest. It has evidently been a pagan temple; and, ranged in an outer court, surrounded by circular arches, are placed some stone coffins, which excite wonder and interest; three of them have the lid of the ridged form, called *dos d'âne*: the other is flattened, and all are uninjured. They might seem to belong to the period when Charlemagne's knights required so many tombs in this land. It was in re-constructing a new vestry-room that these treasures were discovered beneath the worn stones which had been removed: no inscriptions give a hint to whom they may have belonged, and there they lie, side by side, mysterious relics of the times of chivalry.

The pillars inside the church are very celebrated for their extreme beauty: they are of white and blue jasper, found in a quarry near Bielle. A story is told of Henry IV., who greatly admired these pillars, having sent to request the town to make him a present of them, as he found nothing in his capital that could compare with their beauty; he received this answer: "Bous quets meste de noustes coos et de noustes [540] beés; mei per co qui es Deus pialars diu temple, aquets que son di Diu, dab eig quep at bejats." "You may dispose of our hearts and our goods at your will; as for the columns, they belong to God; manage the matter with Him."

The Ossalais in this showed no little wit; or, if the tradition is not founded on fact, the story still exhibits their powers of setting a due value on their possessions in a striking light. Bielle was once a place of great importance, and its church belonged to an abbey of Benedictines: there was formerly a stone on the façade, on which was engraved the arms of the Valley—a *Bear and a Bull*, separated by a beech tree, with this device: "*Ussau é Bearn. Vive la Vacca*." The ancient archives of Ossau are kept in a stone coffer at Bielle; and the dignitaries of the country repair to this spot at certain periods of the year to consult on the affairs of the communes. What habitation they find wherein to meet, suitable to their dignity, it would be difficult to say.

We stopped an hour at Izeste, and strolled along the one street of this wretched bourg while our horses rested: over almost every house we were surprised to see sculptured stones, with half-effaced arms, showing that once persons of condition inhabited these now degraded dwellings. One in particular, in a singular state of preservation, represented the cognizance of the house of Lusignan, and here we did indeed see the effigy which we had failed to find at the castle near Poitiers, of the [541] serpent-tailed Fairy Melusine. We went into the house of the proprietor, who, with his mother and several of his neighbours, hurried out, after peeping from their windows to watch the operation of the sketching of Melusine, and invited us to see another head of a woman which he had found in the garden of his tenement. We passed along several dim, dark passages, and through large, square, dungeon-like rooms, apparently serving as stables, to the garden, where we found numerous remains of ancient Roman wall and bricks and broken columns, and the head of a statue much defaced. Every house seemed capable of exhibiting similar remains, and on many were dates in stone of 1613, 1660, 1673. One tower of defence is tolerably perfect; and

walls and remnants of gates here and there prove how strong and how important Izeste once must have been.

We entered a court-yard, where a tailor was sitting working close by a curious door-way, which appeared like the entrance to a church, and was built into a wall, forming part of what was formerly a large mansion. We were so much struck with the extraordinary sculpture round the arch, that we inquired if there was any record of what it had been. The tailor looked up surprised: "Well," said he, "I have lived here all my life, and never took notice of this door-way before: we have plenty of old stones here; but they are worth nothing, and mean nothing, that I know of." [542]

The carving which so excited our curiosity was a series of medallions: some circular, some square, very much mutilated, but still traceable. On one compartment were the figures of a bear *rampant*, and—what might be—a bull: they seemed in the act of combat, and possibly might represent the arms of Béarn and Ossau, though I confess I look upon them as of *very early* date—perhaps the work of the Gauls or Goths, *selon moi*; another enclosed a Sagittarius and a dog; another, an animal like a wolf, holding a club; another, an ape: the rest are too much worn to enable an antiquarian to decide what they were; but the whole offered a very singular and interesting problem, which we found it impossible to solve: the medallions are on stones which have evidently belonged to some other building, and been thus placed over a modern portal.

There is a cavern in the neighbourhood of Izeste, which is said to be worth visiting; but the weather was not propitious to our seeing it.

We stopped on the way from the Eaux Bonnes, on our return, at a place where our driver purchased us some ortolans, and we were almost stunned with the noise and clamour of a crowd of little urchins, with flowers and without, who, in whining accents, insisted on sous; but there was nothing either pretty or romantic about them or their costume; and we were very glad when, having procured the delicate little birds we waited for, we could resume our route. This was just at the season of *La Chasse des Palombes*—a time of much importance in the valley, when hundreds of a peculiar sort of pigeons are sacrificed. [543]

Many of the peaks which had been concealed from us the day before, came forth from their circling mists, at intervals, on our return, and were pointed out to us by their different names; but as we came back in the evening to Pau, the range which was most familiar to us re-appeared in all its splendour, much clearer than when we were nearer to them.

At Beost, in the midst of the valley, lives a man, whose industry and genius have made him an object of curiosity and interest in the country, and whose fame must probably cause considerable interruption to his studies in the season of the baths; for it has become quite the fashion to visit him. He is called Pierrine, or Gaston Saccaze; is a shepherd who has always lived in these mountains, and has made himself so thoroughly acquainted with the botany of the district as to have become a valuable correspondent of the members of the Jardin des Plantes at Paris: he taught himself Latin, by means of an old dictionary which he bought for a few sous, and, by dint of extraordinary perseverance, has made himself master of the whole Flora of the Pyrenees. [544]

CHAPTER VII.

GABAS—POPULAR SONGS—PONT CRABE—THE RECLUSE OF THE VALLÉE D'OSSAU —MARGUERITE—THE SPRINGS.

I made another excursion to the Vallée d'Ossau in the February of 1843, when the weather was singularly mild—infinitely more so than when I was first there in October, and the clearness of the sky enabled me to see all the mountains which were before concealed in clouds. With an adventurous party, all anxious to take advantage of the propitious moment, I undertook a long *walk*—for at this season it is difficult to procure horses—towards Gabas, having this time the Pic du Midi bright and clear and close in view. The carriage was able to advance along the steep road which extends above the foaming Gave de Gabas, nearly half way to the desired spot; for the snow had fallen in [545]

very small quantity during the winter, and there had been no interruption to the roads.

From a certain place, however, where two paths diverged, we found that the height we had reached had brought us to the snows, and that it was too slippery for the horses to proceed; accordingly we alighted and performed the rest of the journey on foot. The walk was very exciting and amusing, our feet sinking deep in snow at every step, while a burning sun, *gaümas*, as the guide said, was shining over our heads, glittering on the white peaks above, and sparkling in the deep, clear, green torrent at the foot of the box-covered hills, over which silver streams of water were flowing from the summits into the murmuring wave, which churlishly received their tributary visits, and disputed the place they took, dashing, foaming, and springing over the enormous masses of rock in their course, till all the valley re-echoed with their ceaseless quarrelling.

Every now and then we stopped to look back at the sublime scenery, and to make a hasty sketch of the peaks, which tempted us to pause. Summer and winter seemed combined in our stroll, and it appeared as if we were realizing the fable of "*the man, the sun, and the cloud*," not knowing whether to yield to the heat or the cold. We met two Spaniards hurrying along, who had crossed the mountains from Saragossa: they [546] were fine, strong-looking men, and sufficiently wild; but too dirty and slovenly to excite much admiration *here*; if we had seen them on the opposite side of the ravine they might have passed for picturesque, in the same manner as the singing of our guide might have delighted our ears had we heard him from a distance: as it was, he indulged our request by intoning some of the pastorals of Despourrins, which, if the spirit of the poet of the Pyrenees is wandering amongst the mountains, must have greatly *perturbed* it.

A long, loud, unmelodious drawl, like a dirge, with many a dying fall, was the vehicle in which the tender expressions of the poet were conveyed to our ears; and I was reproached by my companions for having injudiciously praised the verses of the Swan of Béarn: certainly heard in mutilated fragments, and sung by such a musician—"*La Haüt sus las Mountagnes*" and "*La Plus Charmante Anesquette*," were not calculated to excite much admiration.

A lady of our party, who was acquainted with the popular songs of Languedoc, repeated a few verses to our guide, who took up the strain, which was not new to him: it is singular how widely these simple songs are spread from one part of France to the other; indeed, they are scarcely confined to any country, and, like traditions, seem to [547] have wandered up and down into all regions. For instance, I was very much surprised, a short time ago, to see in a work on Persian popular literature, an almost literal version of a song, well-known on the Bourbonnais, which I had met with at Moulins.

I questioned the guide on the subject of the superstitions of the valley, and found that he had himself *seen* the fairies called *Les Blanquettes*: those charming mountain-fairies who roam along the peaks singing mournful songs. "I had often heard of them," said he, "and many of my friends had seen them hovering about the mouths of caverns on the highest points of the mountains. I wished, therefore, to satisfy myself, and went to the spot where others had beheld them, and sure enough there they were, figures in white, like women, in a circle round the entrance of a cavern."

"And were these fairies?" I asked.

He paused a moment, and then said—"As for fairies, that is an old story, which some people believe: these that I saw *were only shadows*."

It appears to me that superstition is fast wearing out in the Pyrenees, as well as everywhere else.

As we continued our way, we observed, along the snowy path, tracks of the feet of animals—a troop of wild-cats had evidently been before us, and here and there we [548] remarked a print, which could be nothing less than the foot-mark of a wolf. The flight of a large bird, which I believe to have been a vulture, added to the solemnity of the scene; but there were less of these indications of solitude than I hoped to experience, for all was sunshine and gaiety around.

We observed near the Pont Crabe, *i.e.* Pont des Chèvres, on the opposite side of the ravine, a desolate-looking mill, placed in so wild and rugged a position, that one could not but pity those whose fortune might have condemned them to a residence there all

the year round: a story attached to the cottage made it still more sad.

It appears that a young girl, the very flower of maidens in the Vallée d'Ossau, had been deceived and deserted by her lover, and on the point of becoming a mother, when she consulted the priest of her parish, confessing to him her weakness, and entreating his aid to enable her to propitiate offended Heaven. The virtuous and holy man, shocked at the infirmity and want of propriety exhibited by the unfortunate girl, was very severe in his censures, and informed her that there was no way left for her but by penance and mortification to endeavour to wipe away her sin. He condemned her, therefore, to take up her abode in that solitary cottage, far away from all human habitation, to spend her life in prayer and lamentation, and to endeavour, by voluntary affliction, to win her way to heaven. [549]

She did so; and she and her child lived for ten years in that secluded spot, where the constant sound of murmuring waters drowned her sighs, and where no intruding foot came to disturb her solitude, except when the good priest, from time to time, visited her, to afford the consolation of his pious prayers. At the end of that time her spirit departed, and her little son was received into the convent, of which he became a member.

THE RECLUSE OF THE VALLÉE D'OSSAU.

"Say, ye waters raging round,
Say, ye mountains, bleak and hoar,
Is there quiet to be found,
Where the world can vex no more?
May I hope that peace can be
Granted to a wretch like me!

"Hark! the vulture's savage shriek—
Hark! the grim wolf scares the night,—
Thunder peals from peak to peak,
Ghastly snows shroud ev'ry height.
Hark! the torrent has a tone,
Dismal—threat'ning—cold—alone!

"Was I form'd for scenes like this,
Flattered, trusting, vain and gay—
In whose smile *he* said was bliss,
Who to hear was to obey?—
Yes! weak idol! 'tis thy doom,
This thy guerdon—this thy tomb! [550]

"When I from my heart have torn
All the mem'ries cherish'd long;
When my early thought at morn,
And my sigh at even-song,
Have not all the self-same theme,
Peace upon my soul may gleam!

"When no more I paint his eyes,
When his smile no more I see,
And his tone's soft melodies
Wake not in each sound to me;
When I can efface the past,
I may look for calm—at last.

"When resentment is at rest,
Scorn and sorrow, rage and shame,
Can be still'd within my breast—
And I start not at his name;
When I weep, nor faint, nor feel,
Then my heart's deep wounds may heal.

"Years, long years, it yet will take,
Spite of pain and solitude,
Ere this heart can cease to ache,

And no restless dreams intrude:
Ere I crush each fond belief,
And oblivion vanquish grief.

"It might be—but in my child
All his father lives the while;
Such his eyes—so bright, so wild—
Such his air, his voice, his smile—
Still I see him o'er and o'er,
Till I dare to gaze no more!

"Is it sin to love him yet?
Was it sin to love at all?
Is my torture, my regret,
For his loss—or for my fall?
Change, oh Heaven!—thou canst, thou wilt—
Thoughts that sink my soul in guilt! [551]

"Teach me that regret is crime,
That my past despair is vain,
And my penance through all time
Shall be ne'er to hope again,—
Only in His pardon trust—
Pitying, merciful, and just."

It is said that La Reine Marguerite, sister of Francis I., wrote the greatest part of her celebrated stories during a sojourn at the Eaux Chaudes: there, surrounded with a brilliant court of ladies and poets, she passed several joyous months, and recruited her health, while she amused her imagination, in wandering amongst the rocks and wild paths of Gabas and La Broussette: in her train were "*joueurs, farceurs, baladins*, and *garnemens de province*," and nothing but entertainment seemed the business of the lives of those fair and gay invalids, who, so long ago, set an example which has not failed to be well followed since.

The pompous inscription which once appeared in a chapel at La Hourat, in honour of the passage of the Princess Catherine, sister of Henri IV. is now replaced by a modern exhortation to the traveller to implore the aid of the Virgin before he tempts the perils of the pass: and our guides very reverently took off their *berrets*, as they went by the little niche, where stands the image, which is an object of their adoration and hope. Poor Catherine, always disconsolate at her separation from the object of her choice, found but little relief from the waters—they could not minister to a mind diseased— [552] and she had not the joyous, careless mind of her predecessor and grandmother; nor are we told that she attempted to compose amusing histories to distract her thought, nor could exclaim—

"I write—sad task! that helps to wear away
The long, long, mournful melancholy day;
Write what the fervour of my soul inspires,
And vainly fan love's slow-consuming fires."

All was sad and solitary to her; for the only companion she desired was not there to give her his hand along the rugged paths, to support her amongst the glittering snows, and smooth her way through the pleasing difficulties of the abrupt ascents. Cold ceremony, and, at best, mere duty, attended her whose heart sighed for tenderness and affection which she was never destined to know. At that period, there was neither hotel nor street, and the rudest huts sheltered that simple court; but they might perhaps afford, after all, as much comfort as may at the present day be found, in cold weather, in the irreclaimably smoky rooms of the principal inn at the Eaux Chaudes.

The accommodation is much superior—at least, *out* of the season—at the Eaux Bonnes, the situation of which is, as I before observed, infinitely more cheerful; but in hot weather it must be like an oven, closed in as the valley is with toppling mountains, [553] which one seems almost to touch. Rising up, and barring the way immediately at the top of the valley in which the waters spring, is the isolated mountain called *La butte du Trésor*, on the summit of which is erected a little rustic temple, doubtless the favourite resort of adventurous invalids, during their stay at the waters. I cannot

imagine the sojourn agreeable at that period to persons in health, who are led there only by curiosity; for often, while balls and parties are going on in the saloons below, some unfortunate victim of disease is being removed from the sick chambers above to his last home. Nothing but insensibility to human suffering can allow enjoyment to exist in such a spot, under such circumstances. I rejoiced that, at the period of both my visits, we had the scenery all to ourselves, with no drawback of melancholy to spoil the satisfaction we experienced.

These waters were first used, it is said, by Henri II. of Navarre, after his return from the fatal fight of Pavia, where he was wounded by a musketshot. They, from hence, took the name of Eaux des Arquebusades, as they were found efficacious in cases similar to his own.

Michel Montaigne was one of the illustrious visitors to these healing springs, which he calls *Grammontoises*.

Jacques de Thou came to the Eaux Bonnes in 1582; and recounts that, in the week which he passed there, he drank twenty-five glasses of water a day; but in this he was exceeded by a German companion, who took no less them *fifty*. [554]

These springs were forgotten for more than a century after this; and Barèges was preferred to them. The great physician, Bordeu, of whom Béarn is justly proud, restored their reputation in a great measure: but it is rather within the last thirty years that they have reached the celebrity which they now enjoy.

It is generally said that the Vallée d'Ossau combines all the beauties and grandeurs of the Pyrenees; and that the traveller, who has only time to visit this part, has had a specimen of all that is most admirable in this beautiful chain of mountains. For myself, I endeavour to believe this, not having been able to see so much of the Pyrenees as I desired. [555]

CHAPTER VIII.

PEASANTS OF OSSAU—CAPTIVITY OF FRANCIS THE FIRST—DEATH OF JOYEUSE—DEATH OF THE DUKE DE MAINE—DANCES.

A great deal has been said and written about the peasants of the Vallée d'Ossau; and most persons appear to have been guided rather by enthusiasm than truth, exaggerating and embellishing facts as it suited their views or their humour. It is the custom to admire the young girls and children who pester travellers with shabby, faded little bouquets, which they throw into the carriage-windows, and to see something peculiar in the custom; but it does not strike me that there is the slightest difference in this, or any other usage, between the Pyrenees and all parts of France, through which I have passed. On the road from Calais, as well as in the Vallée d'Ossau, ragged dirty groups, eager for sous, place themselves in your way, and endeavour to obtain money: on fête-days they may look better; but on ordinary occasions there is certainly but little to admire, either in their dress or manners. [556]

A lively but sarcastic French writer has observed on the proneness of tourists to exalt the peasants of Ossau into the Arcadian beings of Virgil and Theocritus, representing them as assembling together to sing the verses of Despourrins: that—"it is, perhaps, better to see romance than not to see at all; but those who have discovered these pastoral heroes and heroines, can assuredly never have met with them on the Ger or the Pic du Midi: the only songs that one can hear in that neighbourhood are drawling, monotonous lines, without either rhyme or reason,—a sort of ballad like that of the wandering Jew. As for their occupations, they are commonly employed in knitting coarse woollen stockings, or in preparing, in the dirtiest manner in the world, the poorest and most insipid cheese that ever was made. The youths and maidens are by no means Estelles and Nemourins. I am aware that this account will be considered profane, and the writer of these facts, a morose, disagreeable person; but the truth is, nevertheless, better than false enthusiasm, which causes misrepresentation; and, having always before our eyes so much that is glorious and sublime, it cannot be necessary to inflate the imagination for ever *à propos de rien*.

"Let those who would form an idea of the singing of the Ossalois observe them on a fête-day, in some of their villages, when the young people are returning home. They separate in two bands: some holding each other by the waist, some round the neck. [557] The foremost party go about thirty steps in silence, while those behind sing a couplet in chorus; the first then stop, sing the second verse, and wait till those behind have joined them; and the latter sing the third verse as they arrive at home. This chant is called, in the country, *Passe-carrère*. Every now and then the song is intermingled with sharp, wild cries, called *arénilhets*, peculiar to the mountaineers; which prove the strength of their lungs, if not their ear for melody. All this is performed slowly and heavily, without any appearance of joyousness or gaiety, and seems singularly ill-adapted to a fête."

It must be allowed that, whenever a good voice occurs in this part of the country, it is an exception to the general rule; but this happened not long since, in the case of a young and very handsome girl of Ossau, whose melodious voice and fine execution attracted the notice of an amateur, by whom she was introduced to the theatre at Berlin, and obtained great applause and success. She may be considered as a nightingale who had lost her way amongst a wood of screech-owls; for her talent was quite alone. She used to sing an old historical romance of the valley, composed on the captivity of Francis I., which has seldom since found a voice capable of giving it effect. [558]

There is something in this old ballad very like those of Spain, both in character and rhythm; and there exist several others, on historical subjects, which have the same kind of simple merit:

THE CAPTIVITY OF FRANCIS I.

———

"Quan lou Rey parti de France," &c.

———

When the king, from France departing,
Other lands to conquer sought,
'Twas at Pavia he was taken,
By the wily Spaniard caught.

"Yield thee, yield thee straight, King Francis,
Death or prison is your lot;"
"Wherefore call you me King Francis?
Such a monarch know I not."

Then the Spaniards raised his mantle,
And they saw the fleur-de-lys;—
They have chained him, and, full joyous,
Bore him to captivity.

In a tower, where sun nor moon-light
Came but by a window small;
There he lies, and as he gazes,
Sees a courier pass the wall.

"Courier! who art letters bringing,
Tell me what in France is said?"
"Ah! my news is sad and heavy—
For the king is ta'en, or dead." [559]

"Back with speed, oh, courier, hasten—
Haste to Paris back with speed,
To my wife and little children;
Bid them help me at my need.

"Bid them coin new gold and silver,
All that Paris has to bring,
And send here a heap of treasure,
To redeem the captive king."[31]

———

The following is also a favourite ballad on the battle of Coutras and the death of Joyeuse, the magnificent favourite of Henry III., whose contemptuous remark on his effeminacy was the cause of his exposing himself in the *mêlée*. The episode of the fate [560] of Joyeuse is an affecting one in the life of the valiant and generous Henry of Navarre. The treasure was immense that was taken from the gorgeous army destined to overthrow the harassed Huguenots, but literally cut to pieces by the stern and bold, though ragged warriors. The gold, silver, and jewels that were brought to Henry's tent, after the victory, were heaped on the floor, and the dead body of the beautiful and admired Duke de Joyeuse was brought to him. Henry turned away, sick at heart, and commanded the corpse to be covered with a cloak, and removed carefully; and desired that all the spoil should be divided amongst the soldiers; holding it beneath him to accept any: nor could he restrain his tears at the sight of so much carnage of those whom he looked upon as his subjects.

THE DEATH OF JOYEUSE.

Between La Roche and Coutras
Was heard our battle cry;
And still we called—"To arms! to arms!"
Our voices rent the sky.

Our king was there with all his men,
And all his guards beside,
Within, the Duke de Joyeuse,
And to the king he cried: [561]

"Oh, yield, King Henry, yield to me!"—
"What simple squire art thou,
To bid King Henry yield him,
And to thy bidding bow?"

"I an no simple squire,
But a knight of high degree;
I am the Duke de Joyeuse,
And thou must yield to me."

The king has placed his cannon
In lines against the wall,—
The first fire Joyeuse trembled,
The next saw Joyeuse fall.

Alas! his little children,
How sad will be their fate!—
A nurse both young and pretty,
Shall on them tend and wait:
And they shall be brave warriors,
When they come to man's estate.

————

The next ballad is in the same strain:

THE DEATH OF THE DUKE DE MAINE.

The noble Duke de Maine
Is dead or wounded sore;
Three damsels came to visit him,
And his hard hap deplore.

"Oh! say, fair prince, where is your wound?"
"'Tis in my heart," he said,
"'Twill not be many moments
Ere you will see me dead."

"Oh! call my page, and bid my squire;—
They ink and paper bring;—
For I must write a letter
To my cousin and my king." [562]

And when the king the letter read,
Tears from his eyelids fell;
"Oh! who shall lead my armies now.
Who shall command so well!"

"Oh! who shall guide my valiant bands
To conquest in the fight!—
The Duke de Vendôme[32] must succeed,—
He is a gallant knight."

————

It is seldom now that the tamborine or pipe, celebrated by Despourrins, is heard as an accompaniment to the dances of the peasants. A violin is the usual music; and the antique and pastoral character is at once destroyed.

Sometimes it is possible to see a real mountain-dance, which is certainly picturesque, if not graceful, and belongs peculiarly to the spot, and the objects which inspired it; as, for instance, *"The Dance of the Wild Goat," "The Dance of the Izard," "La Gibaudrie," "La Ronde du Grand Pic."*

The young men are very agile in these exercises; but, in general, the woman's part is very inferior: they, indeed, seldom dance together, and usually are only spectators. This seems to indicate an Eastern origin. There is one exception to this rule in a *ronde*, executed by both sexes, hand-in-hand; but in this the men leap and cut, while the women move their feet slowly and heavily: in fact, they look half asleep, while the young men seem much more occupied with their own feats of agility than with their [563] partners.

As I have not seen any of these dances, nor the peasants in their holiday costumes, I have some difficulty in imagining that there is either beauty or grace amongst them. At the Eaux Bonnes, our female attendant wore her red-peaked *capeline* in the house, which had a singular effect, but was by no means pretty: indeed, the only impression it gives me is, that it is precisely the costume which seems to suit *a daunce o' witches*; and cannot by possibility be softened into anything in the least pleasing to the eye. All the peasants I saw at different periods of the year had a remarkably slovenly, dirty, squalid appearance; and, except in the instance of one little girl of about thirteen, I saw none who had the slightest claim to beauty, or could excite interest for a moment. There is a humble, civil air about the people in the Vallée d'Ossau, which propitiates one: the *berret* is always taken off as a stranger passes, and a kind salutation uniformly given. But, beyond this, there is nothing worthy of remark as respects the common people, who appear to be a simple race, content to work hard and live poorly.

Our guide pointed out to us a village, from the valley, perched up on a height in the midst of snows, where, he said, the inhabitants, who were all shepherds, *were very* [564] *learned*. "Not one of them," said he, "but can read and write; and, as they are always in the mountains with a book in their hands, and have nothing to interrupt their studies, they know a great deal, and are brave *gens*." Probably Gaston Saccaze the naturalist belongs to such a fraternity. [565]

CHAPTER IX.

COARRAZE—ORTON—THE PONT LONG—LES BELLES CANTINIÈRES—MORLAAS—THE CURÉ—RESISTANCE TO IMPROVEMENT—UZAIN—LESCAR—REFORMATION IN NAVARRE—TOMBS—FRANÇOIS PHOEBUS—THE MOTHER.

————

"A très lègues de Pau, a cap à las mountagnes
Aprés abé seguit gayhaventes[33] campagnes,
Sus û Pic oûn lou Gabe en gourgouils ba mouri
Lou Castel de Coarraze aüs oueils qu'es bien ouffri."

————

WITHIN a pleasant drive of Pau is the Castle of Coarraze, where the youth of Henry

IV. was passed, under the guardianship of Suzanne de Bourbon-Busset, Barronne de Miossens. Of this castle nothing now remains but one tower, on which may still be traced the motto, "*Lo que ha de ser non puede faltar*," from whence is a magnificent view *into* the mountains.

Of the Castle of Coarraze, it will be seen that more marvellous things are told than that Henri Quatre passed much of his childhood there.

Froissart has immortalized it as the scene of one of his romances of Orthez; and this [566]
is the tale he tells of its lord:

It seems, Count Gaston Phoebus had such early knowledge of every event, that his household could only account for the fact by supposing that he possessed some familiar spirit, who told him all that had happened in the country, far and near. This was considered by no means unusual; and when Sir John Froissart expressed his surprise on the subject, a squire belonging to the count related to him a circumstance of a similar nature.

"It may be about twenty years ago," said he, "that there reigned, in this country, a baron, who was called Raymond, and who was Lord of Coarraze. Now, Coarraze is a town and castle, about seven leagues from this town of Orthez. The Lord of Coarraze had, at the time of which I speak, a suit before the Pope, at Avignon, respecting the tithes of the church, which were claimed by a certain clerk of Catalonia, who insisted on his right to a revenue from them of a hundred florins a-year. Sentence was given by Pope Urban the Fifth, in a general consistory, against the knight, and in favour of the Churchman; in consequence of which, the latter hastened, with all speed, back to Béarn with his letters and the Pope's bull, by virtue of which he was to enter into possession of the tithes. [567]

"The Lord of Coarraze was much incensed at this; and, in great indignation, went to the clerk, and said, 'Master Peter,' or 'Master Martin,'—it matters not for his name —'do you suppose that I shall be content to lose my inheritance for the sake of those letters of yours? I do not believe you to be so bold as to lay your hands on a thing which belongs to me; for, if you do, it is as much as your life is worth. Go elsewhere, and get what you can; as for my inheritance, you shall have none of it, and I tell you so once for all.'

"The clerk stood much in awe of the knight at these words, for he knew him to be a determined man, and dared not persevere in his demand; he found it safe to retire to Avignon, or, at all events, out of the count's reach; but, before he departed, he said to him, 'Sire, by force, and not by right, you have taken and kept from me the dues of my church, which in conscience is a great wrong. I am not so strong in this country as you are; but I would have you know, and that soon, that I have a champion, whom you will have cause to fear more than you do me.' The Lord of Coarraze, who cared nothing for his menaces, replied: 'Go, in Heaven's name, and do your worst. I value you as little dead as living; and, for all your words, you shall not get my property.'

"Thus they parted: the clerk either to Avignon, or into Catalonia; but he did not forget what he had said to the knight, for soon after there came to his castle of [568]
Coarraze, and into the very chamber where he and his lady slept, invisible messengers, who began to riot and overturn everything they found in the castle; so that it seemed as if they would destroy all they came near; so loud were the strokes which they struck against the doors of the bed-rooms, that the lady shook as she lay, and was greatly terrified. The knight heard all; but he took no sort of notice, for he would not seem to be moved by this event, and was bold enough to wait for stranger adventures.

"The noise and uproar continued for a long space in different chambers of the castle, and then ceased. The domestics and squires represented what had happened to their master; but he feigned to have heard nothing, and to believe that they had been dreaming: but his lady one day assured him that she had heard the noise but too clearly.

"That same night, as he was sleeping in his bed, came the uproar again as before, and shook the windows and doors in a wonderful manner. The knight then could not but rouse himself; and, sitting up, cried out, 'Who knocks so loud at my chamber at such an hour?'

"'It is I—it is I!' was the answer.

"'And who sends you?'

"'The clerk of Catalonia, whom you have wronged out of his property; and I will never leave you in peace till you have reckoned with him for it, and he is content.' [569]

"'And what is your name, who are so good a messenger?'

"'I am called Orton.'

"'Orton,' said the knight, 'the service of a clerk is beneath you; you will find it more trouble than profit; leave it, and serve me—you will be glad of the exchange.'

"Now, Orton had *taken a fancy* to the Lord of Coarraze; and, after a pause, he said,

"'Are you in earnest?'

"'Certainly,' replied the knight; 'let us understand each other. You must do evil to no one, and we shall be very good friends.'

"'No, no,' said Orton, 'I have no power to do evil to you or others, except to disturb them when they might sleep.'

"'Well, then, we are agreed,' said the knight; 'in future, you serve me, and quit that wretched clerk.'

"'Be it as you will,' said Orton, 'so will I.'

"From this time, the spirit attached himself with such affection to the lord, that he constantly visited him at night; and when he found him asleep he made a noise at his ear, or at the doors and windows; and the knight used to wake and cry out, 'Orton, let me alone, I entreat!'

"'No, I will not,' was the reply, 'till I have told you some news.' [570]

"Meantime, the lady used to lie frightened to death—her hair on end, and her head covered with the bed-clothes. Her husband would say:

"'Well, what news have you?—from what country do you come?'

"The spirit would answer:

"'Why, from England, or Germany, or Hungary, or other countries. I set out yesterday, and such and such things happened.'

"In this manner was the count informed of all that occurred in every part of the globe for five or six years: and he could not conceal the truth, but imparted it to the Count of Foix, when he came to visit him. The count was greatly surprised at what he told, and expressed a wish that he possessed such a courier.

"'Have you never seen him?' said he.

"'Never,' answered the knight.

"'I would certainly do so,' said the Count de Foix; 'you tell me he speaks Gascon as well as you or I. Pray see him, and tell me what form he bears.'

"'I have never sought to do so,' said the knight; 'but, since you wish it, I will make a point of desiring him to reveal himself.'

"The next time Orton brought his news, his master told him he desired to behold him; and, after a little persuasion, he agreed that he should be gratified. 'The first thing you see to-morrow morning,' said he, 'when you rise from your bed, will be me.' [571]

"The morning came, and when the knight was getting up, the lady was so afraid of seeing Orton that she pretended to be sick, and would not rise. The knight, however, was resolved, and leapt up with the hope of seeing him in a proper form, but nothing appeared. He ran to the windows, and opened the shutters to let the light in, but still there was no appearance in his room.

"At night Orton came, and told him he had appeared in the form of two straws, which, he might have observed, whirled about on the floor.

"The knight was much displeased, and insisted on not being thus played with: 'when I have seen you once,' said he, 'I desire no more.'

"'Tis well,' replied Orton. 'Remark, then, the first object which meets your eye when you leave your chamber, that will be me.'

"The next day the Lord of Coarraze got up, as usual; and when he was ready, he went out of his room into a gallery, which overlooked a court of his castle. The first thing which attracted his notice was a large sow, the most enormous creature he had ever beheld in his life; but she was so thin, that she seemed nothing but skin and bone, and she looked miserable and starved, with a long snout and emaciated limbs.

"The lord was amazed and annoyed at seeing this animal in his court-yard, and cried [572] out to his people to drive it away, and set the hounds upon it. This was accordingly done, without delay; when the sow uttered a loud cry, turned a piteous look upon the knight, and disappeared: nor could any one find her again.

"The Lord of Coarraze returned to his chamber in a pensive mood; and was now convinced, too late, that he had seen his messenger—who never afterwards returned to him: and the very next year he died in his castle."

Beginning almost from the entrance to Pau, extends an immense district of uncultivated land, called the Pont Long. This *lande* is covered with coarse fern and heath, and is intersected with wide marshes; thirty-two communes have a right in this ground; but it chiefly belongs to the Vallée d'Ossau. It was formerly much more extensive than it now is; but, even yet, a very inconsiderable portion has been reclaimed: its extent is about twelve leagues in length, and one and a half in width.

In the centre of this wild country is the ancient town of Morlàas, whose name, tradition says, was derived from the circumstance of a prince—Gaston Centulle—having been there assassinated; from whence it was called *Mort-là*, a derivation, probably, as likely as any other that can be found.

We chose a very bright, warm, and beautiful day—during the continuance of fine [573] weather, in November—to drive to Morlàas. Our carriage was stopped, just as we got out of the town, by a regiment of soldiers who were marching out, and, but for the courtesy of the colonel, we should have been impeded for nearly a league: he, however, kindly ordered the ranks to open, and we were allowed to go on between the two lines. This regiment—the 25th of the line—is a remarkably fine one, and appears to be kept in constant activity by its commanders, going out to great distances to exercise in every weather. It is attended by a pretty troop of young women, whose appearance reminded me of Catherine's *petite bande*, so attractive did it seem. I do not know whether this is a common thing, but I never saw such a troop before in company with a regiment. They wear a costume, half feminine half military; have short dresses of grey cloth—the colour of the men's great coats—sitting close to their shape, very full in the skirt, and with cuffs turned up with red facings, red trowsers, and military boots, a white plaited ruff and habit-shirt, a white—neatly frilled and plaited—cap, surmounted with a small, smart glazed hat, round which is the word *Cantinière*: across their shoulder is slung a canteen, and in this equipment they step along with a military air, and in a dashing style which would be invaluable on the stage. I never saw anything more singular and pretty, and to me so new: almost every one of the women [574] was young and very good-looking, extremely well made, and active and strong; as, indeed, they require to be, for they accompany the soldiers on all their expeditions, and remain out all day. It is something as amusing to behold as the troop of *savans and asses*, taken care of by Napoleon in his Egyptian campaign.

The road to Morlàas is rather monotonous, and that part which crosses the marsh very bleak and desolate: with the gigantic mountains bounding the horizon, it seems as if the marsh-fiend might here well establish his abode; and the salubrity of the air of the neighbourhood I should somewhat doubt. After a considerable distance, the road quits the *Lande*, and mounts a hill, along and from the summit of which is a very agreeable view, which improves at every step. From this point the Lande below appears cultivated, and vines and fields are seen in all directions. You descend the hill, and Morlàas is in sight: that town was once regal, and of old renown, but is now in the very perfection of ruin and desolation.

It was the great market, and our driver was so delighted at the circumstance, that it was with the utmost difficulty we could prevent him from taking us to a plain outside

the town, where the horse-fair was going on, as he assured us that there we should see all the *monde*. As we were quite aware of the style of gentry assembled, by the quantity of blue frocks and berrets which we saw from a distance, and by the neighing [575] of steeds which reached our ears, we declined joining the commercial party, and contented ourselves with being jostled and crowded by the assemblage in the streets of Morlàas, whose avenues were blocked up with market-folks, not only from every village and commune round, but from Pau, and Orthez, and Peyrehourade, and Lescar.

We stopped at the once magnificent church of Sainte Foix, before a little low porch, where we had to endure much persecution from beggars, *en attendant* the arrival of the curé who was to show us the interior. We were amused at one of these people, who continued his whining cry of "Charita madama, per l'amor de Déieux!"—half French, half *patois*; till our driver asking him to point out the curé's abode, he answered briskly, in a lively tone; and, having given the required information, resumed the accustomed drawl.

The curé seemed very cross, and little propitiated by our apologies for having disturbed him: he looked sleepy and flushed, and had evidently been enjoying a nap, after a hearty meal and a bottle of Jurançon. He hurried us through the ruined church, from which almost every vestige of its early character has disappeared. On a pillar are still seen some Gothic letters, which may be thus read: "In the year of God 1301, this pillar and this altar were made by Téaza, whom God pardon! in honour of God, St. [576] Orens, and Sainte Foi." A picture of the sixteenth century adorns the choir. It represents the Judgment of our Lord; each of the judges is in the costume of the period; and his opinion is expressed by a label attached to his person.

One little chapel alone remains of all that must have adorned this church: the sculpture of this is very beautiful, and the grimacing heads introduced amongst the foliage sufficiently grotesque. There is a very large antique baptismal font, and near it is a mutilated statue of the Virgin sustaining the Saviour on her knees, which the curé insisted upon was Nicodemus. His scriptural knowledge seemed about equal to his historical; but he evidently had no mean opinion of his own acquirements, which, he almost told us, were of too high a character to be wasted on mere travellers and foreigners, who knew nothing about Notre Dame or the saints. He would not let us see the belfry-tower, which he assured us was unsafe, and was displeased at our stopping him to remark on the extreme antiquity of two of the huge pillars which support the roof, and which, though much daubed with whitewash, have not lost all their fine *contours*. Having got rid of us, the curé hurried back to his siesta, and we strolled round the church. Beautiful circular arches, with zigzag mouldings, almost perfect, adorned several towers, and showed how admirable must once have been the form of [577] the building. We found ourselves carried away by the crowd into the street again, and were obliged to pause and take breath by the side of the clear rivulet, which, as in most of the towns here, runs swiftly through the streets, rendering them much cleaner than they would otherwise be. Here we were accosted, from an open window, by a female who had been watching our proceedings, from the time of our driving into the town, and who seemed quite distressed to see three ladies alone, without a cavalier. "However," she said, "three of you are company, to be sure, and can take care of each other." She was very eloquent on the subject of Morlàas, and had no idea but that we had purposely chosen the market-day for our visit, in order to be *gay*.

We made our way, with some difficulty—through the throng of persons which filled the market-place, and who were busy buying and selling coarse stuffs and mérinos, coloured handkerchiefs, and woollen goods—to the principal façade of the church, against which the ruinous old *halle* is built; and there we contrived to get a sight of the remains of one of the most splendid portals I ever beheld. Of gigantic proportions, circle within circle, each elaborately carved, with figures, foliage, and intersecting lines, the magnificent door-way of the church of Sainte Foi presents a treasure to antiquarians: equal in riches to, but more delicate, and larger and loftier, than that of [578] Malmsbury Abbey, in Wiltshire, it has features in common with that fine structure; but I never saw so wide a span as the arch, or more exquisite ornaments.

It appears that the town of Morlàas, which, ruined as it is, is said to be *rich* (!) is about to restore this fine entrance. A new town-hall and market-place are being built, and, when completed, the miserable huts which disfigure the church will be cleared away, and the façade allowed to appear. Above this door is a fine steeple, crested with figures, which we could scarcely distinguish, but which we found were the *Cows of*

Béarn clustered round the summit.

When Morlàas was the residence of the Viscounts of Béarn, it possessed a sovereign court, and a mint of great celebrity, where copper, silver, and even *gold* coins were struck. Money seems to have been coined at Morlàas in the time of the Romans; its pieces were much coveted in the country for their purity, and were considered far superior to any other in Gascony. There was a *livre Morlane* as there was a *livre Tournois*, and it long preserved its celebrity. It was worth triple *the livre Tournois*, and was subdivided into *sols*, *ardits*, and *baquettes*, or *vaquettes*, *i.e. little cows*. A very few of those remarkable coins are still preserved; some exist, in private museums, of the time of the early Centulles and Gastons, of François Phoebus, of Catherine d'Albret, Henry II., Henry IV., and Queen Jeanne. The device they bear is—*"Grâtia Dei sum id quod sum."* [579]

Some Moorish coins, with Arabic inscriptions, have been found in this neighbourhood, which are also preserved in the cabinets of the curious.

The Hôtel or Palace of the Viscounts was formerly called the Hourquie, or Forquie: from whence the money was called *moneta Furcensis*: the town itself was occasionally called Furcas. The *patois* name by which it is known is Morlans. No vestige is left of this magnificent palace; and Morlàas presents, altogether, a most wretched aspect, being literally a heap of stones and ruin. Its situation offers no inducement to its restoration; for, being placed in the midst of marshes, it has no beauty of country which should make it a desirable residence. From time immemorial, prejudice and custom have prevented any attempt being made to cultivate these dismal swamps; or if a few energetic persons have tried to ameliorate their condition, and have taken possession of parts of the waste with such a view, at once the Ossalois have descended from their mountains, with sticks and staves, and driven the invaders from their ground. Even at the present day, as the right remains to the people of Ossau, they have the power, which they are sure to enforce, of preventing any incursions on the *landes* along the valley of Pau; and, if they please, they can pasture their sheep by the [580] banks of the Gave, and pen them in the lower town, beneath the castle, asking "no bold baron's leave." There is no fear, now, of these fierce mountaineers "sweeping like a torrent down upon the vales," as in the days when Lescar, Morlàas, and Pau, were obliged to shut their gates in terror, when they saw their advance.

It is related, that, in 1337, a lord of Serres erected a castle in the midst of the Pont Long, and in a short time nearly two hundred houses were nestling under the protection of his turrets. All was going on well; the ground began to be drained and cultivated, and everything promised a happy result to the undertaking; but a storm of wrath rose in the mountains, the haughty owners of a useless marsh, unwilling that it should serve a good purpose to others, though of no importance to themselves, roused their followers, and, to the number of several hundreds, rushed from their snowy retreats, and, in one night, ravaged and destroyed all they met with. The new settlers fled in consternation, while the Ossalois burnt and threw down their dwellings, leaving a heap of ruins, which may still be traced in the midst of the Pont Long. They took refuge at some distance, where their dangerous neighbours had no right, and built themselves a village, which is that of Serres-Castel at the present time.

At one period Henry II., the grandfather of Henry IV., was desirous of forming a park [581] for deer, and, taking possession of a track of ground, he surrounded it with walls. The Ossalois consulted together, and discovered that this ground was one of the dependencies on the Pont Long. Without condescending to remonstrance they assembled in bands, and marching down with flags flying, demolished the enclosures and took back their possession.

In the same year, 1543, the sovereign of Béarn was obliged to solicit of these tyrants of the valley permission for his cousin, the Dame d'Artiguelouve, to send her cattle to feed in the Pont Long, to which they consented "*for a consideration*"—*i.e.* by being paid the *baccade*, such as is demanded of the shepherds.

The Princess Magdelaine, governess of Prince François Phoebus, in 1472, obtained, *as a favour*, the permission for her physician, Thomas Geronne, to introduce *seven mares* to feed in the marsh. A letter of the princess entreats, also, at another period, the same grace for the cattle of her treasurer-general.

For more than eight centuries the possession of this *precious* marsh has been the

subject of litigation, and it has remained in its barren state.

The Vallée d'Ossau has had to defend its rights sometimes against the viscounts of Béarn, sometimes against the monks of Cluny, and the *Poublans* of Pau. Law or combats have been always necessary to enable them to retain their rights. It was on [582] occasion of a decision in their favour by Gaston IV., that the Ossalois made a gift to that prince of the sum of two thousand four hundred florins, to aid him in finishing the castle of Pau, which was then in the course of erection.

This Pont Long, which has so long been an apple of discord to Béarn, is at the present hour likely to have settled bounds; for, in 1837, the members of the Cour-Royal of Pau occupied themselves on the subject, and a chance exists of something useful being done with the ground: there is a project for encouraging mulberry-trees and silk-worms there, and of making a canal to carry off its waters, and render it fit for cultivation. This is the more necessary, as fever and ague are sufficiently common in its neighbourhood. But, even within a very few years, when an enlightened agriculturist, M. Laclède, endeavoured to clear the ground, and plant and improve, the fury of opposition he experienced was disgracefully extraordinary. Under the pretext that their pastures were invaded, the people came with fire and hatchet, and burnt his trees, and cut away his bridges and aqueducts.

A spot is shown in the Pont Long, called Henri Quatre's marsh; for it is said that this prince being one day out shooting snipes, got so entangled in the mud that it was with the greatest difficulty he was rescued from his unpleasant predicament. [583]

There is an oasis in this desert, the village of Uzein, which is a standing proof of the possibility of effecting all that industry can desire in this condemned place: the people of this flourishing village owe their success to the determined perseverance of their curate, who exhorted and persuaded his parishioners to bring manure for their fields from Serres, and, at the end of a few years, all was brilliant and smiling, and Uzein is considered to produce the best maize in Béarn.

There are a few towers still standing, where castles have been erected on the Pont Long; an old grey tower of Navailles, and one of Montaner, so strong as to have proved indestructible: it was built by Gaston Phoebus, at the same time as that of Pau, and what remains of the walls of its donjon are upwards of ten feet thick!

Lescar was once an important town of Béarn, and in its fine cathedral princes were buried, whose ashes even rest there no longer, and whose tombs have long since been destroyed. Most of its magnificence disappeared at the period when Queen Jeanne declared her adherence to the new doctrine, and gave her sanction to the enemies of Catholic superstition to pull down the *Pagan images*. Angry and fierce was the discussion which took place between the Queen and the Cardinal d'Armagnac, her former friend, on the occasion of the attack on the cathedral of Lescar: the following extracts from their letters, given by Mr. Jameson in his work on "the Reformation in [584] Navarre," are characteristic on both sides.

The cardinal's courier, it seems, waited while Jeanne, without pause or hesitation, wrote her reply to his representation. His letter ran thus:

"Madam,—The duty of the service in which I was born, and which I have continued faithfully to fulfil, both to the late sovereigns, your father and mother, as well as to the late king your husband, has so complete an influence on my conduct, that I must ever be attentive to the means of sustaining your welfare, and the glory of your illustrious house. Moved by the zeal which attaches me to your interests, I will never conceal from you whatever it is desirable that you should learn, and which I may have previously heard, trusting that you will receive in good part the representations of your long-tried, most attached, and faithful servant, who will never offer to make them for his own private advantage, but solely for the sake of your conscience, and the prosperity of your affairs. I cannot, then, Madam, conceal from you the deep affliction which penetrates me on account of the information I have received of the overthrow of images and altars, and the pillage of ornaments, silver, and jewels, committed in the cathedral of Lescar, by the agents of your authority, as well as the severity of those agents to the chapter and people, by the interdiction of divine service. This proceeding [585] appears to me to be the more monstrous, since it took place in your presence, and resulted from evil counsels which must lead to your ruin. It is in vain for you to conceive that you can transplant the new religion into your dominions at your

pleasure. The wishes of the ministers who have assured you of this are at variance with those of your subjects. They will never consent to quit their religion, as they have declared by their protest at the last meeting of the estates of Béarn. * * * And, even supposing that they were reduced to accept your faith, consider what you would have to fear from the two sovereigns whose territories surround you, and who abhor nothing so much as the new opinions with which you are so delighted. Their policy would lead them to seize your dominions, rather than suffer them to be the prey of strangers. To shelter you from these dangers, you have not, like England, the ocean for a rampart. Your conduct perils the fortunes of your children, and risks the beholding them deprived of a throne. * * * You will thus become worse than an infidel, by neglecting to provide for those of your own house. Such is the fruit of your Evangelism. * * * Has not God, who worked so many miracles through them, (*i.e.* the saints,) manifestly directed us to regard those holy personages rather than Luther, Calvin, Farel, Videl, and so many other presumptuous men, who would desire us to [586] slight those reverend names, and adopt their novelties? Would they have us hold an open council to hear them, or unite in one common opinion against the Catholic Church? * * * Without wasting time in further reflections, let me entreat you to place in their former condition the churches of Lescar, of Pau, and other places, which have been so deplorably desolated by you. This advice is preferable to that given you by your ministers, which it imports you to abandon, &c. &c.—Your loyal and very obedient servant,

"THE CARDINAL D'ARMAGNAC.

"*Vielleperite*, *Aug*. 18*th*, 1563."

To this Queen Jeanne replied in the following terms:—

"My Cousin,—From my earliest years I have been acquainted with the zeal which attached you to the service of my kindred. I am not authorized by ignorance of that zeal to refuse it the praise and esteem it merits, or to be prevented from feeling a gratitude which I should be desirous of continuing towards those who, like you, having partaken of the favour of my family, have preserved good-will and fidelity towards it. I should trust you would still entertain those feelings towards me, as you profess to do, without allowing them to be changed or destroyed by the influence of I know not what [587] religion, or superstition. Thanking you, at the same time, for the advice you give me, and which I receive according to its varied character, the dissimilar and mingled points it touches being divided between heaven and earth, God and man! As to the first point, concerning the reform which I have effected at Pau, and at Lescar, and which I desire to extend throughout my sovereignty, I have learnt it from the Bible, which I read more willingly than the works of your doctors. * * * As to the ruin impending over me through bad counsel, under the colour of religion, I am not so devoid of the gifts of God or of the aid of friends, as to be unable to make choice of persons worthy of my confidence, and capable of acting, not under a vain pretence, but with the true spirit of religion. * * * I clearly perceive that you have been misinformed, both respecting the answer of my estates and the disposition of my subjects. The two estates have professed their obedience to religion. * * * I know who my neighbours are; the one hates my religion as much as I do his, but that does not affect our mutual relations: and besides, I am not so destitute of advice and friends as to have neglected all necessary precautions for the defence of my rights in case of attack. * * * Although you think to intimidate me, I am protected from all apprehension; first, by my confidence in God whom I serve, and who knows how to [588] defend his cause. Secondly, because my tranquillity is not affected by the designs of those whom I can easily oppose, * * * with the grace of Him who encompasses my country as the ocean does England. I do not perceive that I run the risk of sacrificing either my own welfare or that of my son; on the contrary, I trust to strengthen it in the only way a Christian should pursue; and even though the spirit of God might not inspire me with a knowledge of this way, yet human intellect would induce me to act as I do, from the many examples which I recall with regret, especially that of the late king, my husband, of whose history you well know the beginning, the course, and the end. Where are the splendid crowns you held out to him? Did he gain any by combating against true religion and his conscience? * * * I blush with shame when you talk of the many atrocities which you allege to have been committed by those of our

faith; cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the moat in thy brother's eye: purify the earth that is stained with the innocent blood which those of your party have shed, a fact you can bear testimony to. * * * You are ignorant of what our ministers are, who teach patience, obedience to sovereigns, and the other virtues of which the apostles and the martyrs have left them an example. * * * You affirm that multitudes draw back from our belief, while I maintain that the [589] number of its adherents increases daily. As to ancient authorities, I hear them every day cited by our ministers. I am not indeed sufficiently learned to have gone through so many works, but neither, I suspect, have you, or are better versed in them than myself, as you were always known to be more acquainted with matters of state than those of the church. * * * I place no reliance on doctors, not even Calvin, Beza, and others, but as they follow Scripture. You would send them to a council. They desire it, provided that it shall be a free one, and that the parties shall not be judges. The motive of the surety they require is founded on the examples of John Huss and Jerome of Prague. Nothing afflicts me more than that you, after having received the truth, should have abandoned it for idolatry, because you then found the advancement of your fortune and worldly honours. * * * Read again the passages of Scripture you quote, before you explain them so unhappily on any other occasion: it might be pardonable in me, a female, but you, a cardinal, to be so old and so ignorant! truly, my cousin, I feel shame for you. * * * If you have no better reasons for combating my undertaking, do not again urge me to follow your worldly prudence. I consider it mere folly before God; it cannot impede my endeavours. *Your* doubts make me tremble, *my* assurance makes me firm. When you desire again to persuade me that the words of [590] your mouth are the voice of your conscience and your faithfulness, be more careful; and let the fruitless letter you have sent me be the last of that kind I shall receive. * * * Receive this from one who knows not how to style herself: not being able to call herself a friend, and doubtful of any affinity till the time of repentance and conversion, when she will be

"Your cousin and friend,

"JEANNE."

We drove to Lescar, which is within a short distance of Pau, anxious to discover some remains of its former grandeur; but, like almost all the towns in this part of France, the glory is indeed departed from it. The situation is remarkably fine; it stands on a high *côteau*, by the side of the road to Bayonne, and from the terrace of the cathedral a magnificent view of the snowy mountains spreads along the horizon. Nothing but dilapidated, ugly stone houses, and slovenly yards, are now to be seen in the town; though it is said the people are by no means poor, as, indeed, the rich gardens and vineyards around testify.

There is not a tomb or monument of any kind left in the cathedral; but it is entirely paved with inscribed stones, few of them earlier than the beginning of the seventeenth [591] century. The church itself has been so much altered as to be scarcely the same; it is still of great extent, and is imposing as to size: a few strange old pillars, with grotesque capitals, remain of its earliest date; but, from these specimens, it is plain that there could never have been much architectural grace displayed in its construction. The organ was playing as we walked through the aisles, and is a very fine one: we could not but regret that, at Pau, there should not be a single church where we could have the advantage of hearing similar music; and that the chief town of Béarn should be denuded of every attraction common to even the most neglected French town. No thanks, however, are due to the arms of Montgomery, that one stone remained on another of the cathedral of Lescar; and that all in Pau should have been destroyed in his time, is not surprising. When one thinks on the former magnificence of this town and cathedral, and the pomp and circumstance of all the royal funerals which took place here; of all the gorgeous tombs and splendid ceremonies; and, looking round, beholds only ruined towns and crumbling walls, the contrast is striking to the mind.

In the ninth century, this part of the country was covered with a thick forest, called Lascurris. The Duke of Gascony, (Guillaume Sance,) about 980, having excited a knight to murder one of his enemies, was seized with qualms of conscience, and, to [592] relieve his mind, rebuilt the church, which was *then* fallen to decay, and founded a

monastery in the solitude, which he dedicated to Notre Dame. The assassin, sharing his remorse, became a monk, and afterwards abbot there, and is known as Lopoforti.

The future abbots seem to have been men of valour; for they armed themselves, when occasion called, against the followers of Mahound, who ventured from the passes of Spain into their territories.

The bishops of Lescar had the jurisdiction of 178 parishes, and the diocese comprised two abbeys: it is contended that this was the most ancient bishopric of Béarn; and the town the capital of the country in former days. In the seventeenth century it was certainly a place of importance, and was well defended by walls, gates, and fosses, of which a few picturesque ruins alone remain.

In the choir of the cathedral there are still the sculptured stalls of oak, executed in the time of Louis XIII., which are bold and graceful, and in excellent preservation; some mosaic pavement has lately been discovered, which was laid down by Bishop Guy in very early times; and it is to be expected more discoveries could be made if more zeal were roused in the cause. The chapels are richly adorned, and in better taste than usual, and the church is, on the whole, extremely well kept: the vault-like [593] chill one feels, however, on entering does not say much for its salubrity.

The most important tombs which once adorned this sanctuary, were those of the young Prince of Béarn and King of Navarre, (François Phoebus,) who died in 1483. Jean II. d'Albret in 1516, and his wife, Catherine de Foix. Marguérite de Valois—the Fleur des Marguérites,—in 1548; and Henry II., her husband—the *immortal grandfather* of the great Béarnois. It has been said that the body of their daughter, Jeanne d'Albret, was brought here; but this appears to be incorrect, as her tomb is at Vendôme.

The death of young François Phoebus is one of the most melancholy episodes in the history of the country. It is thus recounted:

He was under the guardianship of his mother, Magdelaine of France, Countess of Foix, a woman of superior mind and qualities, who devoted herself to his interests and those of his kingdom, and spared no pains to foster the noble dispositions which were in her son.

The time *was out of joint*, in consequence of civil dissensions, and the unjust claims on Navarre of the King of Arragon; and her position was very critical; but her wisdom and prudence had greatly calmed the turbulence of those with whom she had to deal, and her subjects looked forward with hope and delight to the majority of her son, who [594] was as amiable as he was transcendently beautiful, and whom, in imitation of the title of their hero, Gaston, they had surnamed Phoebus. Magdelaine was aided in her good intentions by her brother-in-law, the Cardinal de Foix, whose sage advice greatly relieved and guided her, and when she saw her beloved son, then aged fifteen, enter his territories in triumph, apparently received with friendly interest by all contending parties, her heart became joyous, and the future seemed all hope and pleasure to her.

Several marriages were proposed for him; but she was desirous that as much delay as possible should take place before that important step should be decided. Numerous powerful princes came forward, offering their alliances. Amongst others, Don Ferdinand, of Castile, named his second daughter, Doña Juana, who afterwards inherited all his possessions; but the Countess of Foix rejected this, as it would have given umbrage to Louis XI. of France, whose friendship it was necessary to secure; and whose wily mind was working at his own interest, which prompted him to desire that a young nun of Coimbra should be drawn from her sacred retreat, and made the bride of the young king: this was another Doña Juana, for whose claim to the kingdom of Castile the artful monarch of France chose to contend. Louis, therefore, wishing to avoid the vicinity of Spain for his young *protégé*, persuaded his mother to withdraw [595] him from Pampeluna to his castle at Pau, where he went on with his studies, and, by his amiable and conciliating disposition, won the affection of all his subjects, by whom he was quite adored, as well as by his mother, and his sister, the Princess Catherine, to whom he was tenderly attached.

One morning, as they were all three together engaged in their different occupations, a flute was brought to the young prince, who, after a time, took it up with the intention of practising some music; for in this accomplishment he excelled. He had been playing but a short time when his sister observed him turn pale, and the next moment the

instrument fell from his hand: he uttered a deep sigh, and dropped senseless on the ground. They lifted him up, used instant means for his recovery, but all was vain; their hope, their joy, their treasure, was gone: François Phoebus—the young, beautiful, and good—was dying. Poison had done its work, and treason was successful: he lived but a few minutes, and his last words were suitable to his pure life. When he saw his distracted mother and sister hanging over him in agony, he whispered, "Do not lament, my reign is not of this world: I leave the things of earth, and go to my father."

What a scene of desolation ensued to the country and the bereaved mother, who had so long struggled with accumulated misfortune! To add to the difficulties of her [596] position, her only support, Louis XI., just then died, and, beset by ambitious ministers and selfish counsellors, betrayed, deceived, and thwarted, the unfortunate Magdelaine sunk under her sorrows, and soon followed her fair son to the grave.

He was buried in great pomp at the cathedral of St. Marie of Lescar, and his young sister, Catherine, was left to reign in his place. Of her Providence made its peculiar care, and her fate, which threatened ill, was happily turned aside.

Olhagaray, the historian of Béarn, gives the affecting answer of the Countess Magdelaine to the ambassador of Spain, who, immediately after her son's death, came to her Court to treat for the hand of the young Queen Catherine. It was thus she spoke, "with an infinity of sobs and tears:"

"Gentlemen,—You find me in poor condition to receive you according to your merits: but you see my desolation and misery, and the ruin which is come upon me. This last torrent of misfortune is as a deluge which overwhelms me—a deep abyss of evil in which I am engulphed. Alas! when I consider the just grief which environs me, I know not where I am! Gaston, the brave Gaston, my lord and my husband, while yet I was in the early joy of his sweet society, and was happy in his precious affection, was torn from me. My woes were softened, and the dark night of my widowhood enlightened by [597] the brightness of my Phoebus. Poor, desolate mother that I am! Heaven envied my content, and has hidden him from my eyes. In this sad spot he expired: here, raising his eyes above, he exclaimed, 'My reign is not of this world!'

"Did we not, nevertheless, expect much of him! would he not, had he lived, have healed the wounds of his country, have applied salutary remedies to all her evils! He saw the difficulties, he prepared himself to thread the intricate mazes belonging to his crown of Navarre; yet, when he held it in his hands, he said, it was not that crown that he expected.

"What means have I now left me in the world that permit me to speak to you of the state of Spain, of the health of the king, the queen, or the court. I have no words but these, no reply but this: go, therefore, and for all answer tell the king of Spain how you found me; say, that my sadness and my tears but ill permitted me to read the letter with which he honoured me; and thank him that he has kept so kind a remembrance of me, praying him to continue me his friendship while I live his humble servant." [598]

CHAPTER X.

THE ROMANCES OF THE CASTLE OF ORTHEZ—TOUR DE MONCADE—THE INFANTS —THE SON OF GASTON PHOEBUS—- LEGENDS—THE OATH—THE BAD KING OF NAVARRE—THE QUARREL—THE MURDER—DEATH OF GASTON PHOEBUS—PARADISE THE REWARD OF HUNTERS—THE CAPTIVE—THE STEP-MOTHER—THE YOUNG COUNTESS—THE GREAT BEAR—THE RETURN—THE REAL CAUSE—THE MEETING IN THE FOREST—THE MASS.

THE most interesting place on the road to Bayonne is Orthez, once the seat of the counts of Foix. We proposed remaining there a short time, in order to visit its remains on our way to Bayonne, and alighted at the hotel of *La Belle Hôtesse*, which is on the site of *La Lune*, where the historian, Froissart, stopped some centuries before us, and where he heard so many stories and legends which he has immortalized in his charming *romantic* chronicle. The soldiers of Marshal Soult occupied this inn in 1814, when the pale old lady, who is still mistress, then deserved the title which her beauty gave to her house of entertainment.

On approaching Orthez we were struck with the appearance, on a height above the town, of the castle ruins, whose battered walls seem so fragile that a breath of wind might blow them away: the upper part of the great tower is much injured, and its irregular stones project in a manner which threatens their fall: the blue sky shone through the arrow slits and windows, and the whole mass gave us an idea of its hastening to immediate dissolution. It has an imposing and venerable effect, and excited in our minds considerable interest: we therefore hastened up the rugged way to the hill on which it stands, and there found ourselves in the midst of the remains of one of the strongest castles of which this part of Béarn could boast, from the earliest time. [599]

It is called the castle of Moncade, having been, in 734, the abode of a Catalonian knight of that name, who was accustomed to issue forth from this strong-hold to combat the Moors of Spain. In after times the fortress was possessed by a warlike lady, called La Grosse Comtesse Garsende de Béarn, who, in 1242, offered her services to Henry III. of England; and, after having fought in his cause with her knights and vassals, and received a large sum of money in requital, she returned home, and expended it on the castle, which she rendered impregnable. It was probably a ruin in the time of Garsende; for the reparations she made in the great tower are very evident; the lower part being more discoloured than the upper story, in which there are windows, at a great height, of trefoil form. The shape of the tower itself is very unlike any I had before seen, and seemed to me extremely curious; it is five-sided, each side presenting an acute angle, and one being flattened at about a quarter of the height by a two-sided projection, which is not a tower but probably a recess within from whence to send arrows; yet there are no openings now visible; nor is there, on any side, a means of entrance, except that a square-headed window opens very high up in the wall towards the part where the rest of the castle joined this donjon. A large hole in the wall, towards the open country, made, perhaps, originally by English cannon in 1814, and enlarged since, allows ingress to the interior. There are arches and recesses, and some ornamental architecture to be traced within, but no doors in any direction; and my idea of the fragility of the building was quickly dispelled when I discovered that the solid walls were at least nine feet thick, the angles sharp as a knife, and the apparently tottering stones as firm in their rocky cement as if just built. [600]

All round, for some extent, are remains of ruined walls, with a few circular and pointed arches here and there; the clear stream flows beneath where once was the moat, in one part, and on the other sides bushes and brambles fill up the defences. A huge, fearful-looking well, of enormous depth, is in the midst of all; where, perhaps, was once the inner court-yard, and here we saw a group of peasants drawing water; for Orthez is so badly supplied that the townspeople have to mount this steep height, and fill their brass-bound pails, from which they dispense the fine clear water to the inhabitants. This must have been long a great inconvenience and trouble; but we discovered afterwards that another fountain has been found in the town, not far from the bridge, where we saw numerous visitors busy in the same occupation. [601]

The view from the castle-height is very fine; the last of the range of snowy mountains seen in such perfection from Pau rises in great majesty, and closes the scene; while the luxuriant plain and hills around are seen to a great distance. The valiant Catalonian, and the fierce countess, must have been dangerous neighbours to their foes, commanding as they did the country, for leagues round.

One of the lords of Moncade was father to a chosen Viscount of Béarn, known in the annals of the country, amongst their numerous Gastons, as Le Bon.

The story told respecting him is as follows: In the year 1170, Marie, Viscountess of Béarn, a young princess of only sixteen, was induced by interested counsellors to do homage for her domains to Alphonso the Second, King of Arragon. This act, which took place at Jaca, required to be confirmed by the barons of Béarn; but the latter, indignant at the infringement of their rights, and attack on the independence of their country, solemnly protested against the transaction, and proclaimed the young viscountess unfit to govern, deprived her of her power, and proceeded to the election of a new ruler. [602]

Their choice fell on a lord of Bigorre, who, not proving himself worthy of his election, but endeavouring to violate the laws, was put to death in open assembly, falling, like Cæsar, by the hand of a patriot. Another took his place, but the Béarnais, it appeared, were particularly unfortunate in their selection, for he turned out no better than the

former, and was deposed.

It became necessary to fix on a governor, and the great men of the kingdom, consulting together, came to the following conclusion: The young viscountess, after her banishment, married William de Moncade, one of the richest lords of Catalonia, and the issue of this union was twins, both boys. It was agreed that one of these should fill the vacant seat of sovereignty of Béarn, and two of the *prudhommes* were deputed to visit their father with the proposition. On their arrival at his castle the sages found the children asleep, and observed with attention their infant demeanour. Both were beautiful, strong, and healthy; and it was a difficult matter to make an election between two such attractive and innocent creatures. They were extremely alike, and neither could be pronounced superior to the other; the *prudhommes* were strangely puzzled, for they had been so often deceived that they felt it to be most [603] important that they should not err this time. As they hung in admiration over the sleeping babes, one of them remarked a circumstance that at once decided their preference, and put an end to their vacillation; one of the little heroes held his hand tightly closed; the tiny, mottled palm of the other was wide open as it lay upon his snowy breast. "He will be a liberal and bold knight," said one of the Béarnais, "and will best suit us as a head." This infant was accordingly chosen, given up by his parents to the wise men, and carried off in triumph to be educated amongst his future subjects. The event proved their sagacity, and Gaston le Bon lived to give them good laws and prosperity.

A descendant of this chief was a Gaston, who opposed Edward I., of England, and was thrown into prison by that terrible warrior, who revenged his defeat in Santonge by fearful reprisals, and gave up the town of Orthez to his soldiers, to pillage and destroy as they pleased. Gaston was obliged to agree to a composition with the English prince; and he was released from his dungeon in a castle in Gascony. An appeal to the King of France was agreed on; and, when both were in presence of the suzerain, Gaston threw down his glove of defiance against the King of England, calling him a traitor and felon knight. Edward, starting forward, and commanding his people, who heard the charge with rage, to stand back, picked up the glove himself, and [604] entreated that a single combat might be allowed between them. The King of France, however, opposed this; and the question of their dispute was decided by law—rather an unusual thing in those days.

This tower of Moncade,—rendered, it appears, by Gaston, the father of the little open-handed hero, as like as possible to his château in Catalonia,—is the scene of several tragedies; and every stone could tell some tale of sorrow and oppression. There is something singularly fearful in the aspect of its strong walls and donjon, without an outlet. In this very tower died, by his father's hand, the unfortunate son of Gaston Phoebus, whose touching story is recounted by Froissart. Although well-known, it is impossible to pass it over here, or to forget that equally melancholy history of the young Queen Blanche, poisoned by her sister.

The Son of Gaston Phoebus.

FROISSART, after describing the splendours of the castle of Orthez in glowing terms, continues: "Briefly, and, considering all things, before I came to this court I had visited those of many kings, dukes, princes, counts, and ladies of high quality, but I never was in any which pleased me so well, for feats of arms and gaiety, as that of the Count de [605] Foix. You might see, in the saloons and the chambers and in the courts, knights and squires of honour going and coming; and you might hear them speak of war and of love. All honour might there be found. There I was informed of the greatest part of those feats of arms which took place in Spain, Portugal, Arragon, Navarre, England, Scotland, and the frontiers and limits of Languedoc, &c.; for I met there, on various missions to the count, knights and squires of all these nations.

"Once, on a Christmas Day, I there saw at his table four Bishops, two *Clémentins*, and two *Urbanists* (partisans of the rival popes). There were seated the Count de Foix, and the Viscount de Roquebertin d'Arragon, the Viscount de Bruniquil, the Viscount de Gousserant, and an English knight sent by the Duke of Lancaster, from Lisbon, where he then sojourned. At another table were five abbés and two knights of Arragon; at another, knights and squires of Gascony and Bigorre; and the *sovereign master of the*

hall was Messire Espaign de Lyon, and four knights *maîtres d'hôtel*. And the count's two natural brothers, Messire Ernould Guillaume and Messire Pierre de Béarn, served him, together with his two sons, Messire Yvain de l'Escale and Messire Gratien. I must tell you that there was a crowd of minstrels, as well belonging to the count as strangers, who filled up every interval with specimens of their art. And this day the [606] count gave to both minstrels and heralds the sum of five hundred francs; and habits of cloth of gold, furred with *menu vair*, he gave to the minstrels of the Duke of Touraine; the which dresses were valued at two hundred francs. And the dinner lasted till four hours after noon."

One figure is wanting in this brilliant account—the only legitimate son of the magnificent Count of Foix, his child by Agnes of Navarre, whose place, as well as that of her son, is vacant at her husband's table.

What might, even then, be the pangs of remorse that shot along the mind of the mighty chief, as he looked round that brilliant assembly and felt that his honours would end with himself? "No son of his succeeding." Where was the young, blooming, accomplished, and promising heir, so loved by his people, and once the object of his pride and hope? Brilliant and gorgeous as was the present scene, what would have been that which should have welcomed the affianced bride of his son to his court? and many such would have hailed the happy events which might have ensued. His two *natural* sons, Yvain and Gratien, are there, full of beauty, grace, and health; but, as the first approaches, and hands him a cup of wine, he trembles and sets down the goblet, untasted, for an instant. He recovers, however, and quaffs the wine to the health of his [607] friends: the minstrels strike their harps; and one—the chief—bursts forth in a strain of adulation, lauding to the skies the glories and the virtues of the most liberal and magnificent prince of his time. Gaston listens with pride and satisfaction; and, by degrees, the low moaning which had seemed to sound in his ears dies away, and he laughs loud, and dispenses his gracious words around, endeavouring to forget that so great a prince could ever know care, or feel remorse, for what it was his will to do. But it is necessary to tell why Gaston Phoebus felt remorse in the midst of his splendid court.

At the conclusion of a long war between the houses of Foix and Armagnac, it was agreed between the chiefs of the contending parties, that a marriage should take place between Gaston, the young heir of Béarn, and the fair Beatrix d'Armagnac. A temporary house was constructed on the confines of the two territories, between Barcelone and Aire, where now a wooden pillar indicates the division of the departments of Les Landes and Gers; and there everything was settled. The Bishop of Lectoure said mass; and an oath of the most terrible description passed between the two princes, that they would never infringe the treaty. Part of the *formula* ran thus: "And, in case of failing in this promise, they would deny God, *that he might be against them*; and, utterly to damn both their bodies and souls, they would take the devil for [608] their lord, and have their sepulchres in hell, now and for evermore."

The young bride, in consideration of twenty thousand francs of gold, which were given her as a dower, renounced all her rights, both paternal and maternal; and the pope, to stop the effusion of blood caused by the quarrels of the two houses, gave all the necessary dispensations required in consequence of parentage. Then the Bishop of Lescar celebrated the betrothment, that same day, in the Château de Monclar.

Both bride and bridegroom were very young, full of hope, and with every prospect of happiness. *La gaie Armagnoise*, as the young princess was called, lively and happy, and, according to all historians, a lady of the greatest amiability; the Prince of Béarn affectionate, brave, and handsome. With the whole assembly at Monclar,

"All went merry as a marriage bell;"

but they had reckoned without Charles the Bad, King of Navarre!

Like one of those fell enchanters of romance, who appear suddenly in the midst of rejoicings where they have not been invited, and cast a spell upon the guests, changing joy to mourning, Charles of Navarre's influence blighted the

"——bud of love in summer's ripening breath,"

that

"should prove a beauteous flower——."

[609]

Agnes of Navarre, Countess of Foix, had become the victim of the disputes between her husband and brother: she had been sent from Gaston's court to that of Charles, in order to induce the latter to pay a ransom which he owed the count, and which he treacherously and dishonourably withheld. The unfortunate wife remained at her brother's court, soliciting in vain that he should do justice to the severe husband, to whom she dared not return empty-handed. Her son, attached to his mother, and anxious to receive her blessing on his marriage, entreated permission to visit her in Navarre. He was received there with great demonstrations of honour and affection. Charles the Bad lamented to him the feud between his father and himself, and expressed his regret at the manifest dislike which Count Gaston showed to his wife, and dwelling much on this last cause of sorrow, in which the young prince heartily joined, he gave it as his opinion that the feeling must be occasioned by supernatural means, and could only be combated by a similar power. He had, he said, in his possession a medicine of such virtue that, if it were administered properly, it would counteract any evil influence, and restore the mind of the person to whom it was given to a right tone.

"Take, my beloved nephew," said he, "this bag of powder, and when an opportunity presents itself, pour it into your father's cup, or strew it over the meat he eats: it is a love potion—and no sooner shall he have swallowed it, than all his former affection for [610] your dear mother will return. Think, then, what happy days are in store for us all! Agnes will once more take her place amongst you; will bless you and your fair wife; and I, who am banished from that society I most prize, shall once more embrace my friend and witness his happiness."

This picture was too flattering to the ardent young boy of fifteen: with all the credulity of his time and the simplicity of his age, he caught at such a means of restoring his family to peace and joy, and, gratefully accepting the present of his uncle, he suspended the little bag containing the wondrous drug round his neck by a ribbon, and departed from the Court of Navarre full of hope and expectation.

On his arrival in Béarn he could scarcely refrain, in spite of his uncle's injunctions to the contrary, from communicating his secret to his favourite brother, Jobain (Yvain), his father's natural son, who shared his confidence as well as his couch. Jobain, however, was not long before he observed the ribbon round his brother's neck, and pressed him to explain the meaning of the little bag which he saw suspended there. Young Gaston, confused at finding his secret so nearly discovered, bade him inquire no further,—that there was a mystery attached to it which he dared not tell; "but you will soon see," he added, cheerfully, "a great change in my father: and he and my dear [611] mother will be well together."

A few days after this, the brothers were playing at the *jeu de paume*, and a dispute arose between them which grow more and more violent, till Gaston forgot himself so far as to strike Jobain on the face: it was but a childish quarrel, which the next moment might have healed, but Jobain's passion was so excited, that in his first fury he rushed to his father, and accused Gaston of concealing in his bosom a bag of poison, intended to be administered to the count, in order to cause his death.

Count Gaston, on hearing this accusation, without giving himself time for a moment's reflection, which would have shown him the improbability of the story, burst into so ungovernable a fury that he became almost frantic, and it was with the utmost difficulty his knights prevented his instantly putting his son to death. The states of Foix and Béarn, to whose judgment he was at length induced to refer the sentence of this involuntary parricide, were more moderate. "My lord," said they, "saving your grace, we will not that Gaston should die: he is your heir, and you have no other."

It is even asserted, that those of Foix in particular would not consent to retire until they had received a promise from the count that he would not attempt his son's life. It was, therefore, on the servants of young Gaston that the weight of his fury fell; and he [612] caused no less than fifteen to suffer the utmost extremity of torture, under which they died. As for the unhappy prince, he had already condemned himself. Confined in his tower of Orthez, he had taken to his bed, and there lay, concealing himself in the clothes; and for several days refused all nourishment, giving himself up altogether to despair. Those whose business it was to serve him, finding this, became alarmed, and, hastening to his father, related the fact:

"My Lord," said they, "for the love of God, take heed to your son; for he is starving in the prison, where he lies, and has not eaten since he entered there, for his meat remains untouched as when we first took it into the tower."

Thereupon the count started up, without uttering a word, and, quitting his chamber, hurried to the prison where his son was, says Froissart, and, "by ill fortune, he held in his hand a *small, long knife*, with which he was cleaning and arranging his nails. He commanded the door of the dungeon to be opened, when he went straight to his son, and, still holding the knife in his hand by the blade, *which did not project from it more than half an inch*, he caught him by the throat, calling out, 'Ha! traitor!—why will you not eat?' and by some means the steel entered into a vein. The count, on this, instantly departed, neither saying or doing more, and returned to his chamber. His poor child, [613] terrified at the sight of his father, felt all his blood turn, weak as he was with fasting, and the point of the knife having opened a vein in his throat, *however small it might have been*,—turned him round—and died!

"Thus," continues the chronicler, "it was as I tell you: this was the death of young Gaston de Foix. *His father, in truth, killed him*; but it was the King of Navarre who directed the blow."

The agony of remorse or affection of the inhuman count, it is but just to say, was extreme, on finding how all had ended; "and the body of the child was taken away with cries and tears to the *Frères Mineurs*, at Orthez, and there buried."

What now remained to the brilliant Gaston Phoebus? He had no legitimate child, and he hated the next heir, Mathieu de Castelbon, "because he was not a valiant knight at arms." His intention was to leave his large possessions to his two natural sons; but, before he had made the proper dispositions to secure it to them, he was surprised by death in the hospital of Orion, two leagues from Orthez, as he was washing his hands on his return from his favourite pursuit of hunting the bear, about which he is eloquent in his work on the Chase; and all that Yvain, the betrayer of young Gaston, could do, was to take possession of his father's ring, and his *little long knife*—that fatal [614] instrument!—and by those tokens procured that the gates of the castle of Orthez should be opened to him; hoping to obtain *a part of the treasures* of the count, who had not less than a million of crowns of gold in his coffers.

It was in the month of August, under a hot sun, that Gaston Phoebus had hunted the bear half the day; and on arriving at Orion, about two leagues from Orthez, he appeared delighted at the coolness of the fresh strewn room, where the dinner was prepared: "This verdure," said he, "does me good, for the day has been fearfully hot!" They brought him water to wash, but no sooner did he feel its coldness on his fingers—which were "*fine, long and straight*"—than he was seized with a fit, probably of apoplexy, and was dead almost immediately, to the extreme terror of all with him. Yvain, it seems, was at first full of grief, but listened to the advice of those who recommended him instantly to repair to the castle of Orthez, and secure what treasure he could. Accordingly he rode off, and by showing the count's ring and knife, was admitted; but the coffer, bound with iron and closed with many locks, was opened by a key, which the count always wore round his neck, in a little bag, and that key was found by the chaplain on his master, after Yvain's departure, who was vainly striving to force open the strong chest. The news, in spite of precaution, soon spread in [615] Orthez; and the citizens, who were all greatly attached to their lord, came in crowds to the court of the castle, demanding news of him. Yvain was obliged to speak to them from a window, and declare the truth; appealing to them to protect his right, and not suffer the castle or its contents to be injured. To this they all agreed, as they deplored his being illegitimate, and consequently incapable of succeeding his father.

Then the air rung with lamentations. "Alas!" cried they, "all will go ill with us now! we shall be attacked by all our neighbours: no more peace and safety for us; nothing but misery and subjection, for we have none to defend us now, and none to answer the challenger. Ha, Gaston! unfortunate son! why did you offend your father? We might still have looked to you; for beautiful and great was your beginning, and much comfort were we promised in you. We lost you too young, and your father has left us too soon. Alas! he had seen but sixty-three years—no great age for a knight so powerful and so strong, and one who had all his wishes and desires. Oh, land of Béarn! desolate, and lamenting for thy noble heir, what is to be thy fate? Never shall be seen the peer of the gentle and noble Count of Foix!"

With such cries and tears was the body of Gaston Phoebus, "uncovered on a bier," brought through Orthez to the church of the Cordeliers, and there laid in state; with forty-eight squires to guard it, and four-and-twenty large tapers burning by it, night [616] and day. Then came the burial, where knights and lords and bishops assisted; and the new Count of Castelbon, the heir of all the possessions of the magnificent Gaston, showed becoming honour to his remains. Castelbon then took possession; and his first act was to provide for the two sons, who had no inheritance, and to release the prisoners in the tower of Orthez,—"of which," says Froissart, "there were many; for the Count of Foix, of excellent memory, was *very cruel in this particular*, and never spared man, how high soever, who had offended him: nor was any bold enough to plead for the ransom of a prisoner, for fear of meeting the same fate: *they were put in the fosse, and fed on bread and water*. This very cousin, Castelbon, had been his captive in such a dungeon for eight months, and was ransomed only for forty thousand francs, and he held him in great hatred; and, had he lived two years more, he would never have had the heritage."

The famous work of the count, on Hunting, he dedicated to the King of France; and in it he endeavours to prove the advantages, both to body *and soul*, of the manly exercise of which he was a passionate lover. His own death appears to disprove his arguments, which are curious enough. He thus expresses himself in his Prologue:—"I, Gaston, by the grace of God, surnamed Phoebus, Count of Foys, and Lord of Béarn, have, all my life, been fond of three things—war, love, and hunting; in the two first [617] others may have excelled me, and been more fortunate; but, in the last, I flatter myself, without boasting, that I have no superior. * * * and, besides treating of beasts of chase and their natures, I am convinced that my book is calculated to prove the great good that may arise from the exercise of hunting. A man, by its means, avoids the seven mortal sins; for he has no time to think of the commission of any while he is engaged with his horses and hounds: he is more lively, more ready, more expert, more enterprising, makes himself acquainted with countries, and is quick and active: all good habits and manners follow, and the salvation of his soul as well; for, by avoiding sin, a Christian shall be saved; and this he does; therefore, a hunter must be saved. His life is full of gaiety, pleasure, and amusement, and he has only to guard against two things: one, that he forgets not the knowledge and service of God, *and does not neglect his duty to his liege lord*.

"Now, I will prove this fact. It is well known that idleness is the root of evil; when a man is lazy, negligent, unemployed, he remains in his bed, and in his chamber, and a thousand evil imaginations take possession of him: now a hunter rises at daybreak, and sees the sweet and fresh morning, the clear and serene weather; he hears the [618] song of birds warbling softly and lovingly, each in its language: when the sun is up, he beholds the bright dew glittering with its rays on streams and meadows, and joy is in the heart of the hunter. Then comes the excited delight of the pursuit, the cries, the sound of horns, the cry of dogs, the triumph of success—what time has he to think of evil things! He comes back weary, but satisfied; his early meal was but slight, for he set out so soon; it is late before he seeks a second, and that is seldom otherwise than frugal; he washes, he dresses, and he sups upon his game, and shares it with his friends: then he enjoys the soft air of evening: after his exertions, he lies him down in fine sheets of fresh and fair linen, and sleeps well and healthily, without thinking of evil things. Thus, by frugal living, great exercise, and cheerful occupation, he avoids great maladies, has good health, *and lives long*. And never knew I man, who was attached to hawks and hounds, but was of good disposition and habits; for the love of hunting springs from nobleness and gentleness of heart, whether one be a great lord or a poor man, high or low."

The brother of poor young Gaston, who, perhaps, had a deeper motive than momentary passion when he made the accusation to his father which destroyed him, guilty or innocent, afterwards met a dreadful doom. In that fatal masquerade of savages, when Charles VI. was so nearly burnt to death, Yvain de Foix was one of [619] those, whose dress catching fire, and being sewn on close to his skin, could not be taken off, and he died in extreme torture, after lingering two days. If he had, indeed, intended to effect his brother's death, what must have been his feelings under all the frightful sufferings he endured!

Alas! the glories of the magnificent Gaston Phoebus were fearfully extinguished in blood and flame! Alas! the splendours of the proud castle of Orthez were dimmed with cruelty and suffering! No wonder that spectres are still said to walk and wail around

the ruined tower; no wonder that the moans of the feeble prince, fainting beneath the blow of his mail-clad chief, are heard at night echoing through the loop-holes of the battered walls; or that the plaintive cries of another victim startle the shepherd returning late from the hills.

This other victim has also a melancholy story to relate of the injustice and cruelty of near relatives, and the dangers of exalted birth and great possessions. Charles and Blanche of Navarre, brother and sister, were both "done to death" by those nearest to them; and while the pale shade of Queen Blanche still flits along the ruined battlements of Moncade, the spectre of Prince Charles haunts the streets of Barcelona, where he was poisoned; crying out for ever on his murderess, "Vengeance —Vengeance on Doña Juana!" [620]

Story of Queen Blanche.

THE mother of these two died, leaving the youthful Prince of Vienne heir to her kingdom of Navarre, having just married her eldest daughter, Blanche, to Henry, King of Castile, and her younger daughter, Leonore, to the Count of Foix. She was herself the wife of John, King of Arragon; who, after her death, desired to be himself the sovereign of Navarre, in lieu of his son, Charles, whom he instantly confined in a dungeon in Lerida. The prince was, however, beloved by the people, and the Catalans rose in a body to deliver him: they effected their purpose, and bore off the rescued prisoner in triumph, but not before a cruel step-mother, Doña Juana, who had replaced the first wife of King John, had administered to him a potion, whose effects soon showed themselves, for he died in the hands of his deliverers.

The young Queen Blanche, of Castile, was now the heiress of Navarre; but she succeeded her brother only in his misfortunes and his fate. Married at twelve years old, her husband, when she was sixteen, had already repudiated her, believing himself bewitched, and in danger in her society. Impressed with this imagination, the King of Navarre, in an interview with his wife's brother-in-law, the Count de Foix, agreed that Blanche should be given up to him, and forced to embrace a life of celibacy, in order [621] that her sister, Leonore, Countess of Foix, should enjoy her possessions.

When news was brought to Queen Blanche that she must follow the messengers sent to Olite, to carry her to Orthez, her despair knew no bounds: she felt that her doom was sealed, and her fearful destiny was but too clear to her mind. She even, in her agony, wrote a letter of entreaty to her unnatural husband, to entreat his protection; but he remained deaf and indifferent to her supplications, and the doomed lady was taken away, a prisoner, to the tower of Moncade.

Hero, for two years, languished the ill-fated heiress; her captivity embittered by the sad reflection that her sister was her jailor, and her father and husband her betrayers. A ray of hope suddenly gleamed upon her fortunes; but whether, in her secret dungeon, any pitying friend contrived to let her know that she had yet a chance of escape and triumph, does not appear. Louis XI. came into Béarn. It was not any feeling of compassion for a political victim that influenced him to take part with the captive; for he was just the person to approve of an act, however cruel, which would secure power to a sovereign; but his own interests appeared affected by this arrangement of things; and, in a conference at Pampluna, in which the powerful family of Beaumont offered their services to assist the project, it was agreed that the captive Queen should [622] be demanded at the hands of the Count de Foix, and reinstated in her rights.

Leonora and her husband saw that the time was come when nothing but a further crime could secure them from danger. Blanche, once dead, nothing stood between her sister and the throne of Navarre; and what was her life in comparison with the great advantages they should derive? A deputation from the states of Béarn arrived; the Beaumonts and King Louis sent imperious messages, which were received with the utmost humility by the Count and Countess of Foix: they had no wish to oppose the general desire; there was but one obstacle to the accomplishment of the end in view. They represented that their beloved sister, whose health had long required extreme care, and who had been the object of their solicitude ever since Prince Charles's death, was on a bed of sickness—every hour she grew worse—and, at length, it was their melancholy duty to announce her death.

"Treason had done its worst,"

and Blanche had breathed her last in the Tour de Moncade.

A magnificent funeral was prepared—much lamentation and mourning ensued—and the body of the royal victim was pompously interred with her ancestors, the Princes of Béarn, in the cathedral of Lescar.[34]

Five years after this tragedy, the vengeance of Heaven—still called for by the shades [623]
of the brother and sister—overtook Doña Juana, their cruel step-mother. She died in the agonies of a lingering disease, and in her torments betrayed, by her ravings, her crimes to all. Her constant exclamation was, "Hijo! que me caro cuestas!" *Oh, my son! you have cost me dear!* alluding to her own son, for whose sake she had sacrificed the former children of her husband. She died, deserted by all; for that husband, equally guilty, on hearing that her words had betrayed her, thought it policy to feign indignation at her wickedness, and refused to visit her in her dying moments. The memory of the unnatural father is still preserved in a Spanish proverb, which alludes only to his sole good quality—liberality—in which he was extreme: in application to courtiers—who look for presents which are long coming—it is usual to say, "Ya se muriò rey Don Juan."

There is no end to the stories which may be told of the castle of Orthez, and those in its neighbourhood; the knights and squires of Gaston de Foix's court, when not engaged in jousts and tournaments, or in fighting in earnest, seemed never weary of telling histories which their guest, Froissart, listened to with eager attention; amongst [624]
them, the following is characteristic of his ready belief, and the credulity of the time:

The Great Bear of Béarn.

Messire Pierre de Béarn, natural brother of Gaston Phoebus, was the victim of a strange malady, which rendered him an object both of fear and pity: there was a mystery attached to his sufferings which no one of the learned or inquisitive attendants who surrounded him could explain; and when Froissart inquired why it was that he was not married, being so handsome and so valiant a knight, his question was met with "the shrug, the hum, the ha," that denoted some secret. At length, as he was not easily to be satisfied when anything romantic was on the *tapis*, he found a person to explain to him how things stood with respect to the brother of the count.

"He is, in fact, married," said the squire who undertook to resolve his doubts; "but neither his wife nor children live with him, and the cause is as follows." He then went on to relate his story:

The young Countess Florence, of Biscay, was left an heiress by her father, who had died suddenly in a somewhat singular manner; his cousin, Don Pedro the Cruel, of Castile, being the only person who could tell the reason of his having been put to [625]
death. His daughter, who feared that the friendship of such a relation might be as dangerous to herself, being warned to avoid him, as she had fallen under his displeasure in consequence of having hinted that she knew how his wife, the sister of the Duke of Bourbon, and the Queen of France, met her end, thought it better to escape as quickly as she could from Biscay, leaving her estates in his power; and she came to the Basque country a fugitive, with a small retinue, glad to have saved her life, though all besides was his prey. This distressed damsel, knowing that all honour was shown to ladies at the court of Gaston de Foix, lost no time in directing her steps to the Castle of Orthez, where, throwing herself at the feet of the gallant count, she related her wrongs, and implored his assistance.

Gaston entreated her to be comforted, and assured her that he was ready to do all in his power to assist her: he consigned her to the care of the Lady of Coarraze, his relation, a high baroness of the country. With all his generosity, Gaston Phoebus never seems to have lost sight of his own interest, and it struck him immediately that the heiress was exactly the match he desired for his brother, Pierre de Béarn. Accordingly, he so arranged matters that the young Countess of Biscay and her domains should remain in his family; he married her to Pierre, and re-conquered her lands from the [626]
cruel King of Castile.

A son and a daughter were the fruits of this union, which appeared a happy one; but

the fates or the fairies did not allow it to remain so. In Béarn, as in other parts of the world, although hunting is a very agreeable amusement, it sometimes brings with it unpleasant consequences, though Count Gaston may say nay. The woods, forests, and mountains, it is well known, belong exclusively to beings who are tenacious of their reign being disturbed, and who generally contrive to revenge themselves on the hardy hunter who ventures to invade their secret retreats. Nevertheless, at all periods, men are found incautious enough to tempt them, and seldom does it happen that they do not suffer for their temerity.

Pierre de Béarn, like his brother, Gaston, was remarkably fond of the chase. The Countess Florence, on the contrary, held the pastime in the utmost abhorrence, and to please her he abstained from the sport he loved during the early period of their union; but at length he became weary of this self-denial, and, in an evil hour, he set forth on an expedition into the forests of Biscay to hunt the bear. He had not been fortunate at first in his search, and had climbed some of the highest parts of the mountain in hopes to meet with game worthy of him, when he suddenly came upon the track of a [627] tremendous animal, such as he had never before beheld in his experience.

He followed it for some time over plains of ice, his gallant hounds in full chase; at length, the mighty beast—apparently, indignant at their perseverance, just as they had arrived at a gorge of the rocks, beneath which a precipice descended on either side—turned round on his pursuers, and presented a front sufficient to daunt the courage of the boldest. The dogs, however, rushed on him, but, with one blow of his enormous paw, he stretched them dead at his feet; four of the finest met the same fate, and several, disabled and wounded, shrunk howling back to their master, who stood firm, his spear poised, waiting the proper moment of attack. Pierre saw that no time was to be lost, for he was alone, having, in his eagerness, outstripped his companions; his dogs were of no further use, and he must trust now to his own strength and skill.

The spear went flying through the air, and struck the monster in the breast; furious with pain, he uttered a hideous howl, and rushed forward, catching, in his long claws, the left arm of the knight, whose right hand was armed with his hunting-knife, which he had hastily drawn from his belt; with this, in spite of the pain he felt, he continued to strike the monster, whose roaring echoed through the caverns of the rock like thunder at every stroke. [628]

At this instant, and just as the knight's strength was nearly exhausted, he beheld, with joy, his friends advancing to his aid; two of them sprang forward and discharged their spears; but still, though desperately wounded, the bear would not release the arm he continued to gripe, and, as he turned upon them, dragged his first foe with him. As, however, his head was directed towards the new comers, Pierre, with a strong effort, made another plunge in his neck, which instantly had the effect of making him release his hold; he then drew his dagger—for his knife remained in the animal's body—and, with the assistance of his friends, the bear was despatched. As the body lay on the ground, a pause of astonishment ensued after the shouts of the victors; for never was so gigantic a beast beheld in the Pyrenees, and it seemed a miracle that Pierre had escaped: his arm was fearfully injured, and he was faint with exertion; but his triumph was so great that he hardly permitted his wound to be bound up. They placed the carcase of the bear on their shoulders, and with great difficulty carried it from the spot where it fell; it was then consigned to their attendants, and the whole train returned in great delight to the castle. As they entered the court, they were met by the Countess Florence and her ladies, who had been uneasy at the long absence of her lord. No sooner had she cast her eyes on the huge beast they were carrying, than [629] she turned deadly pale, uttered a loud shriek, and fainted on the ground.

The lady was borne to her chamber, and for two days and two nights she uttered not a word; but was in great pain and tribulation, sighing and moaning piteously: at the end of that time she said to her husband, "My lord, I shall never be better till I have been on a pilgrimage to St. James; give me leave to go, and to take with me Pierre, my son, and Adriana, my daughter. I beg it as a boon." Messire Pierre, distressed to see her situation, granted her request too readily.

The countess then ordered a great train to be prepared, and set forth on her journey, taking with her treasure and jewels of great value, which was not much remarked at the time; but she knew well that she did not intend to return. Her journey and her pilgrimage accomplished, she announced her intention to pay a visit to her cousins, the King and Queen of Castile; and to their Court she went, and was received with joy.

And there the Countess Florence is still, and will not return, nor send back her children. The very night on which he had killed the great bear, Messire Pierre was seized with the malady which has ever since taken possession of him. "He rises," said the squire, "in the night, arms himself, draws his sword, and, with loud and furious cries and gestures, like a man possessed, flies at every one near him, and makes such [630] a terrific noise and confusion that it would seem fiends were in his chamber. His squires and valets awake him, and he is quite unconscious of what has happened, and will not believe those who relate to him what he has done in his sleep. Now, it is said," continued the squire, "that the lady knew well what would happen the moment she saw the great bear; for her father had hunted that very animal, and when he came up to it, he heard a voice which said, 'Why do you persecute me thus? I never did you any ill: you shall die of an untimely death.' And so, indeed, did he, being beheaded by King Pedro the Cruel, without cause. This was the reason she fainted and was in such tribulation; and for this cause she never loved her husband after, for she always feared he would do her a bodily injury; and that harm would happen to her or hers, while she stayed with him."

The squire and the historian's comments on this strange story are more amusing than wise. "We know well," said Froissart, "by ancient writings, that gods and goddesses were in the habit of changing into birds and beasts men and women who offended them. It might well, therefore, happen that this great bear was in his time a knight accustomed to hunt in the forests of Biscay; he probably did something to anger [631] some deity of the woods, and consequently lost his human shape, and got changed into a bear, to do penance for his offence."

Whether Froissart really believed what he was saying, or whether the opinion was merely advanced to afford him an opportunity to display his classical learning, is not clear; but he forthwith inflicts upon his hearer the story of the "*Joli Chevalier Acteon*;" at which the other is marvellously pleased.

They continue to speculate upon the reasons of the Countess Florence for quitting her husband, and conclude that she knew more than she chose to tell. It has been thought that the lady, when very young, was one day in the forest, having strayed from the castle, within whose garden walls she was weary of being kept. She was delighted when she found herself at liberty, and kept wandering on, up one alley and down another, wherever she saw flowers, and the sun streamed through the leaves; till, at last, the evening began to close, and she turned her steps to return; but there was such a labyrinth of trees, and every path was so like another, that she knew not which to choose, and became alarmed lest she should not reach home before night, and her absence would be discovered. She hurried forward in great uncertainty, and her fears increased every moment; for she seemed to be getting further and further in the [632] depths of the forest; suddenly she came upon a great rock in which was a cavern, and at its mouth she paused a moment to look round her, when a sound issued from it which almost paralysed her with terror, and presently forth rushed a huge black bear, who seized her in his paws. She shrieked loudly, for she expected her hour was come, when, to her amazement, she heard a voice from the monster, and these words: "You have intruded on my privacy; I did not seek you; remain and be my companion, or at once I put you to death." She was so amazed that she had scarcely power to answer; but summoning her courage, she replied, "I am a great lady, and the daughter of the lord of Biscay: release me, and it shall be the better for you; kill me, and my father will take a signal revenge." "You shall not quit this forest," replied the monster, "till you promise what I demand. I will then transport you to your father's castle, when you shall make him swear never to hunt in my domains again. If he should do so, he shall die a violent death; and all with whom you shall in future be in connexion shall be under the same promise, or I will cause them to die badly. If any, after this vow, hunt me, and it should happen that I am killed, misfortune shall come on you and your race for my sake."

The lady promised, as indeed she had no choice but to do; and the great bear then [633] ordered her to follow him; she did so, and in a few moments she saw the castle in view. "Now," said he, "give me another promise. If I should be killed by any one belonging to you, swear that you will go to the shrine of St. James, of Compostella, and pray for my soul, for I am not a bear, as I appear, but a knight, transformed for my sins." As he spoke, and while Florence made the vow he required, she saw his skin changing by degrees, and his form taking another appearance, till he stood before her, in the misty light, a fair young knight, the handsomest her eyes had ever beheld; he

looked mournfully upon her, and disappeared, and she found herself suddenly in her own turret, in her chamber, on her bed, and no one had perceived her absence. She related this adventure to her father, who, much amazed thereat, refused to credit her tale; nor would he give up his accustomed pastime of hunting for all her entreaties, by which stubborn conduct his fate came upon him as has been related.

The lady, the more she thought of the beauty of the transformed knight, loved him the more; but she had no hope ever again to see him, and her misfortunes having obliged her to quit her country, and take refuge in Béarn, all happened as has been told. She was not more fortunate with her husband than her father, in preventing his [634] hunting in the forests of Biscay; and when she saw the great bear had been killed, she lamented her lover, as well as the ill fate which he had predicted for her lineage. Certain it is, that she never afterwards returned to Messire Pierre, and that she gave great treasure to the church of St. James, of Compostella, that perpetual mass might be said for *a soul in purgatory*. [635]

CHAPTER XI.

THE COUNTESS OF COMMINGES—THE CHARGE—THE PERSECUTED HEIRESS—THE BRIDGE—THE CORDELIER—COSTUME—ASPREMONT—PEYREHORADE.

ALTHOUGH Count Gaston Phoebus was a tyrant, who spared none in his anger, yet he had all the virtues which were admired by the bold spirits of the men of his time; amongst the chief of which was hospitality. Like a true knight of old, he afforded protection to distressed ladies and damsels, and his Court was a refuge sought, and not in vain, by all who had been injured by those stronger than themselves, or who [636] required assistance in any way. Amongst other ladies who came to throw themselves at the feet of this redoubted righter of wrongs was the Countess Alienor de Comminges, wife of the Count of Boulogne, and the right heiress of the county of Comminges, then in the hands of the Lord of Armagnac, who unjustly detained it. This spirited lady one day made her appearance at the Castle of Orthez, with her little girl of three years old in her hand, and demanded protection of Gaston Phoebus. She was received with great honour and respect, and Gaston listened with great benignity to her complaint.

"My lord," said she, "I am on my way to Arragon, to my uncle the Count d'Urgel, and my aunt-in-law, with whom I am resolved to remain; for I have taken a great displeasure against my husband, Messire Jean de Boulogne; for it is his business to recover for me my heritage, kept from me by the Count of Armagnac, who holds my sister in prison; but he will bestir himself in nothing, for he is a craven knight, fond of his ease, and has no care but to eat and drink, and spends his goods upon idle and sensual enjoyment. And he boasts that when he becomes count he will sell his inheritance in order to satisfy his foolish and childish wishes; for this cause I am disgusted, and will live with him no longer; therefore I have brought my little daughter to deliver her into your charge, and to make you her guardian and defender, to keep [637] and educate her according to her station. I know well, that, for the sake of love and relationship, in this my great strait you will not fail me, and I have no safe person with whom to confide my daughter, Jeanne, but you. I have had great difficulty to get her out of the hands of my husband, which I was resolved to do, because I know the danger in which she stands from him, and from those of the house of Armagnac, being, as she is, the heiress of Comminges. I, therefore, beseech you to befriend me, and take charge of her; and when my husband finds she is in your guardianship, he will be himself rejoiced; for he has often said that this child would be a source of great uneasiness to him in the future.

"The Count of Foix heard the lady, his cousin, speak these words with great satisfaction, and instantly imagined within himself, for he is a lord of great fancy," says Froissart, "of how much service the charge of this child might be to him, for she might be the cause of making peace with his enemies, and by marrying her in some high place, he could keep them in check; he, therefore, replied, 'Madam and cousin, willingly will I do what you ask, both from affection and parentage, by which I am bound to assist you. Leave your daughter with me, and rely on it she shall be cared for and treated as if she were my own child.' 'I thank you greatly,' said the lady. [638]

"The young daughter of the Count of Boulogne was therefore left at Orthez with the Count of Foix, and never departed from thence. And her lady mother took her way to Arragon. She came several times afterwards to see her child, but did not request to have her again: for the count, Gaston Phoebus, acquitted himself of his charge as if she had been his own; indeed, it is said that he has a notion of marrying her to the Duke de Berri, who is a widower, and has a great desire to marry again."

Jeanne did in fact become the wife of the Duke de Berri, when she was under thirteen, and he more than sixty; but, after all the care which had been taken of her, and the "coil" that was made for her, she died early, leaving no children. Her mother being dead, the inheritance of Comminges devolved on her aunt, Marguerite, the same who was kept prisoner by the Count of Armagnac. The fate of heiresses in those days was sad enough, and that of this countess particularly so. The Count of Armagnac married her to get her property; after his death she was forced into an alliance with another of the same family, from whom, however, she contrived to get a divorce, and then accepted the hand of a Count de Foix, probably from fear. This latter soon began to ill-treat her, having failed by entreaties to induce her to make over her possessions to him; finding her resolved, he leagued himself with one of her old enemies, Jean [639] d'Armagnac, and they agreed together to share the spoil of her heritage. She was dragged about, from prison to prison, first in one strong castle and then in another, for fear of its being known where she existed; and for many years she languished in this misery. At this time Charles VII. was at the height of his successes, and some friend had contrived to inform her of the changed aspect of affairs in France. In order to induce him to undertake her cause, she, by means of the same friend, let him know that she had named him heir of all her property and estates—knowing, probably, too well, how little weight any consideration but personal interest would have.

The tyrants soon discovered what she had done, and her treatment became still worse. The arrogance and presumption of the Count d'Armagnac, who ventured to put after his name, "By the grace of God," and assumed the airs of a sovereign, added to which, *the unjust manner in which he acted*, at length irritated the king to such a degree that he summoned both lords to appear before him at Toulouse, and commanded that they should bring with them the Countess of Comminges.

Nothing was now to be done but to obey the strongest; and the two tyrants and their victim came to Charles, as he desired; he then took the lady under his protection, and the Estates pronounced *her will valid*; her husband being permitted to enjoy a certain [640] portion during his life. After this the countess remained with the king, and it is to be hoped enjoyed a short period of repose. She died at Poitiers, upwards of eighty years old, and no sooner was she dead than the turbulent and ambitious Armagnacs took possession, in spite of the king, of all her estates, about which, for long years, continual wars and contentions ensued.

Of all the castles in Béarn, perhaps that of Gaston Phoebus at Orthez is the most suggestive of recollections; but I fear I have been led into so many long stories beneath its ruined walls that the actual fortress itself is almost forgotten. We stood upon the irregular mound which its accumulated ruins present, remarking the fine effect of the distant line of snowy mountains, whose outlines varied from those familiar to us at Pau, and enjoyed the sunset from that exalted position, which might have often been admired in the same spot centuries before, by the lords, knights, historians, minstrels, and distressed or contented damsels, who filled the courts of the mightiest chieftain of Béarn.

We descended from the castle, through a long, dilapidated street, which seemed to know no end, and began to despair of ever reaching the bridge, when we were accosted by a good-natured looking woman, who offered to be our guide. After a long [641] walk, through high, narrow, but not ill-paved, streets, at last we came upon the roaring, foaming Gave: one of the most impatient rivers that ever was confined by a bridge, or pent up by crowding houses. On each side rise wild, grey, rugged rocks, some covered with clinging plants, some naked and barren, over and between which the passionate torrent comes dashing and foaming, as if anxious to escape, as fast as possible, from the town which has intruded streets and mills on its original solitude, since the early period when some chivalric baron, or, perhaps, the Grosse Comtesse herself, threw over it the strange old bridge, and placed in its centre the towered arch which no efforts, early or late, have been able to dislodge. To be sure, this is scarcely

surprising, if, as tradition says, it was no mortal architect who built this bridge; but a set of workmen whose erections are not easily destroyed, and who, after all, might have laid the first foundations of the fortress on the height, as well as this huge tower, which seems of a-piece with one of the rocks its neighbours. The fact is, the fairies, who inhabited in former days the caverns of the Gave, and used to come out by moonlight in little boats on its waters, got tired of its continual roaring and foaming, and bethought them of a way to cross to the other side, without being either shaken or tossed by its turbulent waves, or wetting their tiny feet by stepping from stone to [642] stone. They resolved, therefore, to throw a bridge over the stream, and, taking a huge hollowed rock for the purpose, by their united efforts they cast it across; and, as the water-spirits were offended on the occasion, and rose up against them, endeavouring to destroy their labours, they found it requisite to build them a tower in the centre, which they defended against all comers. This was effected in a single night; and the shepherds, who beheld in the morning what had been done, would never have been able to account for it, but that, watching when the moon was at the full, they perceived the fairies passing in crowds along the bridge, and directing their way towards the opposite hill, where the castle stands. They have often been seen dancing round the ruined well there; and, it is thought, can plunge into the spring, and reappear far up in the Gave at their pleasure. The shepherds, also, observed that the castle was under their dominion; for they often remark, as they approach Orthez, on returning from the market at Peyrehorade, that the great tower, which is clearly visible on the height at one moment, sinks gradually into the earth, the nearer they come, and, at last, disappears altogether, nor is observed again, till they have mounted the hill, to see if it really "stands where it did;" where they behold it as firm and as frowning as ever, laughing to scorn time and the elements, and refusing to offer any clue to its mystery. [643]

The bridge of Orthez has been the scene of terrible contentions, at different periods. In the tower in its centre is a projecting window, from whence, tradition says, Montgomery, the Protestant leader, by the orders of Queen Jeanne de Navarre,—to whom, in this country, all sorts of horrors are attributed,—caused the priests to be cast into the Gave, who refused to become Calvinists. The window is called *La frineste deüs caperas* (*the priests' window*). In those times of outrage and violence, this might, or might not, be true; but certain it is that three thousand Catholics, men, women, and children, perished in the siege which Montgomery laid to Orthez, and that the sparkling, foaming torrent which we looked at with such pleasure, then rolled along a current of blood.

It is said that, during the assault of the town, a Cordelier was celebrating mass in his convent, and had the courage to finish the ceremony in spite of the tumult around; he then concealed the sacred chalice in his bosom, and cast himself from his convent-window into the Gave. The waters bore him on to the Adour; and his body, tossed and torn by the rocks, was finally deposited on the bank, beneath the walls of a convent of the same order, at Bayonne, where the shuddering monks received and bore his mutilated remains to their chapel, with weeping and lamenting for the misfortunes of their brethren. [644]

The "Château Noble" of Gaston Phoebus had then to endure a terrible siege: the Viscount de Terride had sustained himself there as long as possible; but, wanting provisions, was at length obliged to yield, and was, with all his garrison, carried prisoner to Pau. There those officers who, being Béarnais, had been taken in rebellion against their Queen, were served with a banquet called *le repas libre*, at the conclusion of which they were all put to the sword.

The costume of the female peasants in this neighbourhood is almost invariably a short scarlet petticoat, and brown or black tucked-up gown, with a bright-coloured handkerchief on the head, tied in the usual *gentil* style, with all four ends displayed, so as to show their rich hues,—one being allowed to fall longer than the rest; in dirty weather, the legs and feet are bare, and the sabots carried. Many very large straw hats are worn, lined with smart colours, and tied with ribbon; but it must be confessed that most of these are very old, and have long since lost their early brilliancy.

There is nothing remarkable in the costume of the men,—the customary *berret* being the covering of their heads, and either a blue blouse, or a dark dress, with red sash, and sometimes a red waist-coat, diversifying their appearance. We were not struck with the beauty of any of the peasants we met. Being market-day, the road was

crowded for several leagues, and we thought we had a good opportunity of judging: however, a French fellow-traveller told us our idea was erroneous, as the young girls were seldom allowed to come to the market, which was generally attended by matrons only. However this might be, we certainly saw nothing beyond very ordinary faces, and the common defect of mountainous countries—the frightful *goître*—too evident. It is the custom with most persons, when they first arrive in a place, to adopt some received opinion, which not the strongest evidence of their senses is allowed afterwards to shake; and thus it appears heresy, either to disbelieve in the salubrity of Pau, or in the beauty of the inhabitants of all the country round. If beauty were merely comparative, the notion may be true; but, though those who are not affected with *goître*, and who are not hollow-cheeked, and thin, and brown, are prettier than those who are, [645]

"Yet beautie is beautie in every degree;"

and "pretty Bessies" appeared to me to be very rare in Béarn.

There is a very imposing building situated on the Gave, of which the townspeople are extremely proud: it is a corn-mill, of great power, lately erected, and extremely successful. It appears that the town of Orthez is in a flourishing condition, as to trade. Here are prepared most of the hams so celebrated throughout France, under the name of Bayonne-hams; and here numerous flocks of the fat geese which furnish the markets of the neighbouring towns with *cuisses d'oies*, so prized by gourmands, are to be seen. But the most picturesque *flocks* we observed on this road, were those of the round, pretty sheep, with thick snowy fleeces, just returned from the mountains, where, delicate as they look, they have been accustomed, all the summer, and till late in the autumn, to climb to the highest point of the Pic du Midi itself. They were now being conducted to the valleys and plains for the winter, and the meadows were whitened with them in all directions. [646]

This part of the country was, formerly, thickly-wooded, and occasionally a few oak woods are passed on the road; but the continuous forest which once spread abroad in this direction has disappeared. On approaching the long, desolate-looking bourg of Peyrehorade,—which, however, on market-days, is bustling and crowded enough—a ruin, on a height not unlike that of Orthez, looks proudly over the plain, where two Gaves unite. It is the Château d'Aspremont, once redoubted, and of great force, and belonging to that good and noble governor of Bayonne, who sent back to Charles IX. the answer so often quoted, when commanded to execute all the Protestants in his town of Bayonne—that he had examined the persons under his command, and had found them brave and true soldiers, but no executioners. [647]

The singular-sounding name of *Peyre-Hourade* has the meaning of *Pierced Stone*, and comes from a Druidical monument in the neighbourhood. These remains are rare in the Pyrenees, though so frequently met with in other parts of France. In a meadow, not far removed from the high-road, is a block of granite, nearly flat, of great height, standing upright on the narrowest end: there is no quarry of similar stone in this part of the country; and its isolation and quality render it a subject of surprise—as much so as the unexplained wonders on Salisbury Plain. The fairies, no doubt, if any fortunate individual could make friends with them now, could set the matter at rest;

"But now can no man see none elvés mo!" [648]

CHAPTER XII.

BAYONNE—PUBLIC WALKS—BIARITZ—ATALAYA—GIANT FERNAGUS—ANNE OF NEUBOURG—THE DANCING MAYOR.

FROM Orthez we continued our way to Bayonne, where it was our intention to remain a few days. The entrance to Bayonne, that famous city, whose motto is "Nunquam Polluta"—"*Always pure*," from the separate town of St. Esprit, which is in the department of the Landes, as well as half of the bridge which connects it with its more important sister, is extremely striking. This bridge is over the fine bold river Adour, which joins the Nive here, and, together, they divide the town between them. Although Bayonne has few public monuments of much consequence, yet the cathedral, the

towers of the two castles, and other buildings, rise from the rivers in great majesty; and, as we crossed the immensely long wooden bridge at a slow pace, gave us a good impression, which a closer view did not disappoint. It has a singular aspect, unlike that [649] of any other town, and the air all round it is pure and healthy; and we felt happy for the time to have exchanged the icy chill of the snowy mountains for the freshness of the sea breeze.

There are few old towns in France, which can be called fine in themselves: their advantages lie in situation, and in the modern additions which have succeeded to the ramparts and close-walled enclosures of the ancient time, when to crowd streets together and fence them in was the principal aim; but Bayonne, although still fortified strongly, is less confined than most cities: a thorough air blows through the tolerably well-paved streets; open spaces occur every now and then, narrow and close places have been cleared, and the two fine rivers and their quays prevent its being so crowded as it might otherwise be. The houses are very high, which makes the streets appear narrower than they really are; but they are not very long, and intersect each other in a manner to prevent their being disagreeable.

There are arcades in the old part, as at La Rochelle and Agen, some of which are very dark and narrow, and occasionally strange alleys appear, as sombre and dismal as any in Rouen itself; but this is not the general character of the town. One long, handsomely-paved street, is bordered with fine houses and planted with trees, in the style of Bordeaux, and here are situated most of the hotels; the grand squares of the [650] Theatre and Douane open from this, and the magnificent allées marines extend from this spot.

Everywhere in Bayonne, it is easy to escape from the bustle of the city, and find yourself in a beautiful, shaded walk—an advantage seldom possessed by a commercial town.

Although many are delightful, and there is only the embarrassment of choice, the most beautiful and agreeable, it must be allowed, are the allées marines, which are walks nicely kept, planted with several rows of fine trees, reaching along the banks of the Adour for an immense distance, with meadows on the other hand, and a range of cultivated hills on the opposite shore. The fine broad, sparkling, agitated river, is dotted with vessels of different sizes, some of them moored to the bank; a fresh breeze from the sea comes sweeping along, bringing health on its wings; the citadel crowns the height of St. Esprit; the cathedral rises above the other town; before is the meeting of the bright waters, trees, groves, and meadows everywhere; murmuring streams, spanned by wooden bridges, hurry along to throw themselves into the bosom of the Adour at intervals, and the whole scene is life and brilliancy.

This walk is a kind of shaded jettée, and has, unlike most French promenades, nothing formal or monotonous about it: the trees are allowed to throw their branches [651] out at pleasure, without being clipped into form; they are irregularly planted, so that the favourite straight lines are avoided, and the fine sandy soil does not allow the paths to remain dump half an hour at a time; consequently, it is always a safe lounge, and, assuredly, one of the most charming possessed by any town I ever saw. It is as agreeable, although not resembling it in its features, as the mail which charmed us so much at La Rochelle.

The days were very uncertain, and violent showers overtook us every half hour, while we remained at Bayonne; yet we contrived to escape damp in these pretty alleys, which, one minute swimming with water, were, in an incredibly short space, dry and pleasant again.

The first anxiety on arriving at Bayonne, is always, of course, to get to the sea; even the cathedral, our usual first visit, we neglected, in order to take advantage of a gleam of sun, and hasten to Biaritz, which lies about a league from the town: there is now a fine road to St. Jean de Luz, by which you reach this celebrated bathing-place; and the often-described cacolets, which even now travellers venture to tell of, are dwindled into a tradition. In the season, one or two of these primitive conveyances may still, it is said, be seen, as the English are amused at endeavouring to ride in them; but, except one has a preference for broken limbs to safety, there is no reason why any one should [652] choose such a carriage. They are, in fact, *now*, two panniers, in which two persons sit on each side of a horse, with the legs hanging down: formerly, it was merely a board slung across the animal's back, on which the traveller sat see-saw with his guide; and

numerous are the accounts of perils encountered on a bad road in these conveyances twenty years ago. Omnibuses, cabriolets, and coaches of all kinds are now to be had, and there is neither pleasure nor glory in going uncomfortably in the obsolete *cacolet*.

Biaritz has greatly changed its aspect, since Inglis described it as a desolate fishing village: it has grown into a fashionable watering-place, full of fine hotels and handsome houses, with accommodations of all sorts; the sands are, in the bathing-season, covered with pavilions for the bathers, and all the terrors and dangers of the Chambre d'Amour and the Grottos of Biaritz, are over: that is to say, as far as regards persons being carried away by the tide, or surprised by the waves amongst the rocks; for, unless any one was silly enough to place himself in danger, no risk need be run, as it does not *now* come to seek you. The rocks, however, are still terrible to mariners in a tempest; when, in spite of the warning *pharos*, which crowns the height, the vessel is driven into these little bays, bristling with rocks of all sizes and forms, each capable of [653] causing immediate destruction. No winter passes without dreadful disasters on this beautifully dangerous coast, which looks not half so fatal as it really is.

I had so often heard Biaritz described as magnificent, that I had imagined a bold coast of gigantic cliffs and huge blocks of pyramidal stone, piled at distances along the shore, like those at the back of the Isle of Wight, or on the Breton coast. I was, therefore, surprised to find only a pretty series of bays, much lower, but not unlike the land at Hastings, with the addition of small circles of sand, strewn with large masses of rock, over and through which the restless waves drive and foam, and form cascades, and rush into hollows, roaring and beating against the caverned roofs and sides with the noise of cannon, increased in violence according to the state of the elements.

In rough weather the sea is so loud here that the reverberation is distinctly heard at Bayonne, as if artillery was being fired, and its hoarse murmur is generally audible there at all times. A fine light-house has been erected on a height; but this precaution does not altogether prevent accidents, and scarcely a winter passes without sad events occurring on this dangerous coast. A few days only before we visited Biaritz, an English vessel had been lost, with all hands on board, except a poor man, who had [654] seen his wife perish, and his two little children washed on one of the rocks: there they lay like star-fish, and were taken off by the pitying inhabitants. I could not learn the exact particulars, but I believe only one survived, which was immediately received into the house of an English family who reside at Biaritz, and who benevolently took the little stranded stranger under their protection.

There was always, it seems, a look-out house on the hill above the rocks; and formerly it was requisite to watch lest the vessels of those numerous pirates who infested these seas should come down upon the coast. The mount where it stood is called by its old name, *Atalaya*. Whether it has anything to do with the former inhabitant of a ruined tower which still looks over the ocean, as it did in ages past, does not appear; but it may have been connected with the giant Ferragus, or Fernagus, of whose castle this piece of ruin alone remains.

The giant Ferragus was one of those tremendous pagan personages, to conquer whom was the chief aim and end of the Paladins of the time of Charlemagne; and history has recorded the combat of Roland, the great hero of these parts, with this redoubted Paynim.

Biaritz was amongst the places in the Pays Basque, named by the cruel inquisitor, [655] Pierre de Lancre, as "*given up to the worship of the devil*;" he tells us that the devils and malignant spirits, banished *from Japan and the Indies*, took refuge in the mountains of Labourd: "and, indeed," continues this miserable bigot, in whose hands was placed the destiny of hundreds of innocent creatures, "many English, Scotch, and other travellers coming to buy wines in the city of Bordeaux, have assured us that in their journeys they have seen great troops of demons, *in the form of frightful men*, passing into France." Above all, he asserts that the young girls of Biaritz, always celebrated for their beauty, have "in their *left eye a mark impressed by the devil*."

Bayonne has several new quarters still unfinished, which promise to be very handsome and commodious. There is a sort of imitation of Bordeaux in the style of building, without altogether such good taste: at least, this may be said of the theatre, which, though immensely large, is much less majestic or beautiful; its position is, perhaps, even better than that of Bordeaux, as it stands in a large uninterrupted square, with a fine walk and trees by the quay on one side; and all the streets which

extend from it are new and wide.

The street in which the principal hotels are placed is very like one on the *cours* at Bordeaux, and is remarkably striking; but, besides this, there is little to admire in the [656] town, except the singularity of two rivers running through its streets, like another Venice.

The residence of the Queen of Spain, Anne of Neubourg, widow of Charles II., at Bayonne, is still remembered, and anecdotes are told of her during her long stay of thirty-two years. She arrived on the 20th September, 1706, and was received with great honours by all the dignitaries: the town was illuminated, and the streets hung with tapestry, as she passed to the Château-Vieux, where she took up her abode. She seems to have been very much beloved, to have shown great benevolence, and made herself numerous friends. Her generosity and profusion, however, caused her to leave on her departure twelve hundred thousand francs of debt, which Ferdinand VI. had to pay. Scandal was not silent concerning her, and a lover was named in the young chevalier Larrétéguy whose brother was at one time confined in the Château d'If for an impertinent exclamation which he made one day when the Queen's carriage was stopped by the crowd on the Pont Majour—"Room for my sister-in-law." A fine complexion and an air of majesty constituted her beauty; but she grew enormously fat, and was not remarkable for her outward attractions.

She seems to have exhibited some caprice in her rejection of a palace which she had [657] caused to be built at great expense. It was called the Château de Marrac, and had been erected under her orders with infinite care: when it was finished she refused to occupy it in consequence of one of her ladies having presumed to take possession of a suite of chambers previous to her having been regularly installed as mistress. This was the reason assigned; but she had, it may be imagined, a better to give for abandoning a place which had cost her so much money.

She made frequent journeys to St. Jean Pied de Port, Bidache, Cambo, Terciis, &c., for her health, and was always received on her return to Bayonne with sovereign honours. The magistrates of the town went, on one occasion, to meet her with offerings of fruit, flowers, expensive wines, hams, and game, all in silver filigree baskets, beautifully worked.

During a dangerous illness which she had, the shrine containing the relics of St. Léon was lowered, as in a period of general calamity; and, on her recovery, prayers and thanksgivings were commanded, and a solemn procession of all the officers of the town, civil and military, took place.

In 1738 she returned to Spain, greatly regretted by all who had known her at Bayonne; and, it seems, she was so much impressed with sorrow at having left an abode so agreeable to her that she survived only two years, and died at Guadalajara in [658] 1740.

An account of a fête, given by the Queen on occasion of some successes in Spain which greatly rejoiced her, concludes with the following rather amusing sentence: "After the repast was finished, much to the satisfaction of all, a *panperruque* was danced through the town. M. de Gibaudière led the dance, holding the hand of the *Mayor of Bayonne*; the Marquis de Poyanne bringing up the rear: so that this dance rejoiced all the people, who, on their side, gave many demonstrations of joy. It lasted even till the next day amongst the people, and on board the vessels in the river; and the windows of every house were illuminated."

Bayonne has a reputation for being in general extremely healthy; and its position, in reach of the fine fresh sea air, seems to render it probable. To me, after the close atmosphere of Pau, it was peculiarly pleasant; and seemed to give new life, and restore the spirits, depressed by that enervating climate, where, except for invalids, a long residence is anything but desirable.

There seems but little commercial movement at Bayonne, and no bustle on the quays; indeed, except at Nantes, I have always, in France, been struck with the quiet and silent aspect of the seaports; so unlike our own. Just at the time we were there, great complaints were being made, in consequence of the prohibition of Spanish ships [659] from touching at any port of the South of France: commerce was at a stand-still, and all persons in trade seemed vexed and disappointed at the bad prospect before them. [660]

CHAPTER XIII.

BASQUE LANGUAGE—DIALECTS—WORDS—POETRY—SONGS—THE DESERTER—CHARACTER—DRAMA—TOWNS.

THE Basque country,—in which the ancient town of Bayonne, or Lapurdum, holds a principal place,—is unequally divided between France and Spain. The one part is composed of La Soule, Basse Navarre, and Labourd, and extends over a surface of about a hundred and forty square leagues; the other portion comprises Haute Navarre, Alava, Guipuscoa, and Biscay, and contains about nine hundred and sixty square leagues: so that the whole country in which the Basque language is spoken, enclosed between the Adour, Béarn, the river Arragon, the Ebro, and the ocean, contains not less than eleven hundred square leagues. Part of this extent is barren, rude, and wooded, and is said to resemble the ancient state of Gaul, as described by historians. Though immense tracts of wood have been cleared away, there is still more [661] in this region than in any other of the Pyrenees; there are three great forests; one of Aldudes, in the valley of Balgorry, where exist the only copper-mines in France; the forest of Irati, near Roncevaux; and that of St. Engrace, which joins the woods of Itseaux.

The habits, manners, and language, of this people have engaged the attention of the curious for a series of years; and the speculations and, surmises to which they have given rise are without end. Although it is generally thought that the Basques are descendants of the ancient Iberians, some learned writers contend that the singular language which they speak, and which has no resemblance to that of any of the nations which surround them, approaches very near the Celtic.

Whether they are *Vascons* or *Cantabrians*, they are called, in their own tongues, *Escualdunac*, and their language *Escuara*. Seventy-two towns, bourgs, and villages, are named, by Du Mège, as appropriated to the people of this denomination,—that is, from the mouth of the Adour to the banks of the Soison and the mountains south of the Pays de Soule. He remarks that no historian of antiquity has made mention of this people, or their language, under the name they at present bear; and it was never advanced till the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries, that the inhabitants of Alava, Guipuscoa, and Spanish and French Navarre had preserved [662] the ancient language of the Iberians, and that they were the representatives of that nation; never having been conquered by any foreign invaders, and never having mixed their blood.

Du Mège observes, on these pretensions: "History, studied at its purest sources, and from its most authentic documents, proves that, in the most distant times, several nations,—amongst whom, doubtless, should be included those who first inhabited the coasts of Africa,—came and established themselves in Spain. The Pelasgians, the Greeks of Zacinthus, of Samos, the Messineans, the Dorians, the Phoceans, the Laconians, the Tyrians or Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, the Celts or Gauls, and the Eastern Iberians. Strabo mentions that in the Peninsula were many different languages *and alphabets*; no doubt, as many alphabets as idioms. Great care has been taken to discover the origin of these alphabets, the letters of which *are still to be found in Spain, in several inscriptions engraved on marble*, and in numerous medals."

Nothing satisfactory, however, has been established respecting the language; but a probable one appears to be Velasquez' opinion, that it is formed of dialects of Greek and Hebrew; but this opinion is combated by many learned Spaniards. One author, in particular, was so violent in his enthusiasm, that it led him to discover all the ancient [663] history combined in the Basque language. To him it was of little consequence that the names mentioned by different authors belonged to Spain, Africa, England, or Normandy,—the learned Dr. Zuñiga, curé of Escalonilla, explained them all as *Basque*. Thus, for instance, *Scotland*, called *Escocia* in Spanish, he asserts was so called from *escuocia*, a *cold hand*! Ireland, which is Irlanda in Spanish, means, in Basque, *Ira-Landa*, i.e., *meadow of fern*: and so on to the end of the chapter, in a strain which becomes highly comic. Another writer followed in his steps,—Don Juan de Erro y Aspiroz,—who surpassed him in absurdity; proving to his own satisfaction, not only that the Basque is ancient, but that its alphabet *furnished one to the Greeks*, and that the same nation instructed the Phoenicians in the use of money; added to which, they

passed into Italy, and *from them* sprung the Romans—those conquerors of the world.

Certainly, etymologists do fall into strange errors; as when the forgery *pour rire* of Count de Gibelin was taken for the Lord's Prayer in Celtic, and explained as such by the famous Lebrïgant!

Humboldt, in his "Researches" on the origin of the first inhabitants of Spain, falls into errors which are to be lamented; as his great name may afford sanction to the dreams of others. He acknowledges that he is puzzled to find that there is no trace [664] amongst the ancients of the term Escualdunac. He does not go so far as Zuñiga, who discovers in the name of Obulco, engraved on ancient medals, Tri-Gali, i.e. "laughing corn" or Balza-Gala—"black corn:" that Catalonia (evidently a modern name) signifies, "The country of wild cats." Cascantum—"dirty place;" and Hergaones—"good place of the spinners!"

Du Mège observes, that Humboldt has unfortunately followed former writers too much; and though all he writes is worthy of respect, he fails to convince, in this treatise, having begun on false ground. Since then, M. de Montglave has "proved" a fact which is very startling, namely, that there is a great affinity between the Basque language and the dialects of the indigenous nations of South America![35]

This last circumstance, which new observations seem to render more and more probable, would at once put an end, if really proved, to all discussion, and open a new field for speculation. It would be somewhat curious to establish the certainty of the South Americans having discovered and colonized Europe many centuries before they were re-discovered by Europeans!—this, once determined, the Druid stones and the round towers of Ireland might all, by degrees, be explained: the obstinate resolve of all [665] learned persons to derive everything in Europe from the Greeks and Romans, or to go to the far East, when fairly driven there, to find out origins, is very hard upon the enormous double continent of the New World, whose wondrous ruined palaces prove the original inhabitants to have been highly civilized and of immense power: and which, by its extent and variety, might cast into insignificance those proud specks which imagine themselves suns, when they are, perhaps, only motes in the sun's beams.

It scarcely appears that the learned and impartial Du Mège has settled the question by his arguments; indeed he seems himself aware that it is yet open, for he rather confutes others than assumes an opinion himself.

He concludes, that the ancient Vascons who overran Aquitaine, in 600, are certainly not the same people as those who now speak the Escuara language, and that these *may have been* "one of those people who invaded the Roman empire in the reign of Probus, or the remains of those tribes to whom, in the time of Honorius, was confided the guardianship of the entrance of the Pyrenees. Thus placed in the defiles of the mountains, *it was easy* for them to extend themselves successively into Aquitaine, Navarre, Guipuscoa, &c., to impose their *language* and their laws on the terrified people, and thus *mix themselves with* the Vascons and Cantabrians of Spain, and the [666] Tarbelli and Sibyllates of Gaul."

Whatever may be their origin, the Basques, as they exist at this moment, are a very singular people, both as to their customs and language: there is not the slightest resemblance between them and their neighbours; they are perfectly foreigners in the next village to that which they inhabit. Some *profane* persons (M. Pierquin, for instance, who goes near to do so, in an article on *la France littéraire*,) have dared to insinuate, that the language of the Basques is nothing more than a mere jargon, *both modern and vulgar*; but this is so cruel an assertion, and one which destroys so many theories, reducing learning to a jest, that no wonder M. Mazure and others are indignant at such boldness.

It must be confessed that, since extremes meet, the same arguments used to prove the classical antiquity of the language would serve to convince that it was merely modern, and made use of, by uneducated persons, to express their wants as readily as possible. There are, in the Basque, terms which represent ideas by sounds, explaining, by a sort of musical imitation, many usual acts, and the appearance of objects; but this is frequently brought forward by its defenders in its favour, and as establishing its antiquity.

M. Mazure, who appears an enthusiast for the Basque language, produces several [667]

words to show the sublimity contained in their signification: for instance, he says, "the radical name of *the Moon*, combined with other terms, gives occasion for superb expressions, full of thought, and of a character which no modern language could furnish: thus—*ilarquia*, the moon, signifies *its light*, or its *funereal* light; and *illarguia, ilkulcha, ilobia, ilerria, ileguna*, signify the *coffin*, the *grave*, the *churchyard*, the *day of death*.

"The days of the week are also extremely expressive—as Friday, Saturday, Sunday, which convey the idea of the *remembrance of the death of the Saviour—the last day of work—the great day*. A strictly Christian nation has left, in these words, their stamp." This being the case, how does it agree with the extraordinarily antique origin of the Basques? However, it appears that these are exceptions; other words being sufficiently unintelligible, that is to say, difficult to explain.

M. Mazure considers that the Basque language is, in some respects, the *most perfect* that exists, from the *unity of the verb* which it preserves: its system of conjugation alone were enough, in his opinion, to make it an object worthy of study and admiration to all grammarians. To the uninitiated, the very opposite opinions of M. Mazure and M. Pierquin are somewhat amusing: the former insists that the Basque has nothing to do with Hebrew or Phoenician, but inclines to think it a lost *African* dialect, such as, [668]
perhaps, might have been spoken by the Moors of Massinissa, who peopled Spain, and probably Aquitaine, at some period unknown.

One singular fact with respect to this mysterious dialect is, that it possesses no written nor printed books older than two centuries since; and no alphabet has been discovered belonging to it; consequently it has no literature; but it has preserved many songs and ballads, some of great delicacy and beauty; and its *improvvisatore*, by profession, are as fruitful as the Italians. One popular song, in the dialect of Labourd, may give an idea of the strange language which occupies so much attention.

BASQUE SONG.

"Tchorittoua, nourat houa
Bi hegaliz, aïrian?
Espagñalat jouaïteko,
Elhurra duk bortian:
Algarreki jouanen gutuk
Elhurra hourtzen denian.

"San Josefen ermitha,
Desertian gorada
Espagñalat jouaïteko
Handa goure palissada.
Guibelerat so-guin eta,
Hasperenak ardura. [669]

Hasperena, babilona,
Maïtiaren borthala
Bihotzian sarakio
Houra eni bezala;
Eta guero eran izok
Nik igorten haïdala.

TRANSLATION.

Borne on thy wings amidst the air,
Sweet bird, where wilt thou go?
For if thou wouldst to Spain repair,
The ports are filled with snow.
Wait, and we will fly together,
When the Spring brings sunny weather.

St. Joseph's hermitage is lone,
Amidst the desert bare,
And when we on our way are gone,
Awhile we'll rest us there;
As we pursue our mountain-track,

Shall we not sigh as we look back?

Go to my love, oh! gentle sigh,
And near her chamber hover nigh;
Glide to her heart, make that thy shrine,
As she is fondly kept in mine.
Then thou may'st tell her it is I
Who sent thee to her, gentle sigh!

———

It appears to me, that there is a very remarkable similarity between the habits of the people of the Basque country and those of Brittany; although they of the South are not rich in beautiful legends, such as M. de Villemarqué has preserved to the world: they [670] have dramas and mysteries just in the same manner: some of which last for days, and are played in the open air by the people. They name their rocks and valleys as the Bretons do: as, for instance, they have the *Vallée du Sang*, the *Col des Ossemens*, the *Forêt du Réfuge*, the *Champ de la Victoire*; and traditions attach to each of these. There is, however, a gayer, livelier character amongst them than that which inspires the pathetic ballads of Brittany. The Basques are very ready to be amused; are more hilarious and less gloomy than the Bretons: yet they have the same love of their country, and regret at leaving it. An author[36] who has written on the subject, says: "To judge properly of the Basque, he should be seen amidst his pleasures and his games; for it is then that he exhibits his brilliant imagination. Often, in the joy of a convivial meeting—when his natural gaiety, excited by wine and good cheer, is arrived at that point of vivacity when man seems united to the chain of existence only by the link of pleasure—one of the guests will feel himself inspired: he rises; the tumult ceases; profound silence is established, and his noisy companions are at once transformed to attentive listeners. He sings: stanzas succeed each other, and poetry flows naturally from his lips. The measure he adopts is grave and quiet; the air seems to come with [671] the words, without being sought for; and rich imagery and new ideas flash forth at every moment, whether he takes for his subject the praise of one of the guests, or the chronicles of the country. He will sing thus for hours together: but some other feels inspired in his turn; a kind of pastoral combat takes place—very like those between the troubadours of old—and the interest of the scene increases. Presently they start into dances, and their steps accompany the words, still more like the custom of the jongleurs. The rivals sing and dance alternately, as the words require it; their movements increase in expression, the most difficult and the prettiest are striven for by the dancers, the time being always well preserved, and the spirit of the poem not lost sight of. When they are obliged to give up, from mere fatigue, a censor pronounces which is the victor: that is, which of the two has given the most gratification to the audience."

The Basque poet has no view in his compositions but the expression of his feelings: he has no idea of gain, or reputation, but sings because he requires to show the emotions which agitate him. It is not a little singular that, in this particular, he resembles the inhabitants of Otaheite; one of whom Bougainville describes as having sung in strophes all that struck him during a voyage.

The Basque language seems very well adapted for light poetry; and, indeed, is [672] peculiarly fitted for rhyme, and has a natural ease which helps the verse along, in a manner which belongs to the Italian. The ideas are always tender and delicate, to a surprising degree, as the following songs may prove:

BASQUE SONG.

———

"Su garretan," &c.

———

I BURN in flames, because my heart
Has loved thee through the dreary past;
And in my eyes the tear-drops start,
To think I lose thee at the last.
My days are pass'd in ceaseless weeping,
And all my nights in vain regret;
No peace awaits me—waking—sleeping,

Until I die, and all forget:
And thou who seest me thus repine,
Hast not a tear for grief like mine!

———

The Basque poet can seldom read or write: he owes nothing to education: nature alone is his instructress, and she inspires him with ideas the most graceful, tender, and, at the same time, correct, for nothing exceptionable is ever heard in his songs. In many of these there is a strain which might parallel some of the sweetest odes of the Persians; from whom, it is not impossible but that they may have derived them; if, indeed, the early troubadours from the East have not left their traces in such lays as this: [673]

BASQUE SONG.

———

"Ezdut uste baden ceruan aingeruric," &c.

———

I CANNOT think in heaven above
Immortal angels there may be,
Whose hearts can show so pure a love
As that which binds my soul to thee:

And when, my ceaseless suff'rings past,
The grave shall make me all forget,
I only ask thee, at the last,
One gentle sigh of fond regret.

Very often these songs take the form of dialogues: the following is one very well known in the country:

BASQUE SONG.

———

"Amodíoac bainarabila choriñoa aircan bezala," &c.

———

The Lover.

LOVE lifts me gently in the air,
As though I were a bird to fly,
And nights to me, like days, are fair,
Because my gentle love is nigh.

The Mistress.

Thou call'st me dear—ah! seest thou not
Those words have only pow'r to grieve me?
Why is my coldness all forgot?
And why not, at my bidding, leave me? [674]

The Lover.

The love I feel—and canst thou doubt—
I, who would traverse seas for thee!
Who have no power to live without,
And own thy charms are life to me.

The Mistress.

If I have charms, thine eye alone
Behold'st the beauty none can prize;
Oh! in the world exists but one
Who fills my soul and dims my eyes:
That one—ask not who he may be,
But leave me—for thou art not he!

The following may serve as a specimen of their passionate expressions:

BASQUE SONG.

———
"Ene maitcac biloa hori," &c.
———

My fair one, with the golden tresses,
With rosy cheeks and hands of snow,
With hopeless care each heart oppresses,
Around her step such graces glow.

A cloud, upon her brow descending,
Has dimm'd that eye of dazzling ray,
Upon whose glance, the light attending,
Has led my giddy heart astray.

I see thee, like the flow'r of morning,
In sweetness and in beauty shine;
None like to thee the world adorning—
My life, my soul, my life is thine!

[675]

The Basques have compositions in various styles—complaints and satires—like the professors of the *gaie science*. War and peace are celebrated by them: there are poems on La Tour d'Auvergne; Napoleon; Wellington, and the Revolution of July: in tragedy and melo-drama they peculiarly succeed; and there exists a modern Basque drama, of singular merit, called Marie de Navarre, the scene of which is laid in the tenth century, in which great power is exhibited, and considerable dramatic effect produced.

There is a saying, well known in the country, *"Ce n'est pas un homme, c'est un Basque;"* which is intended to express the superiority of the native of these regions over all others. It appears that the Basque is, in fact, of much finer form than the rest of the people of the Pyrenees; and the young women are proverbially handsome. I cannot speak from extensive observation; but of this often-named peculiarity of personal appearance I was by no means sensible in the few specimens I have seen—for all the people of this part of the South seemed to me extremely inferior in beauty to those of the North; and, taken in general, it strikes me that the handsomest natives of France I have seen are to be found in Normandy. I speak merely as comparing the people with the same classes in England: and to one accustomed to the sparkling clear eye, fine delicate complexion, tall stature, and finely-developed figures of both our [676] men and women, the inhabitants of the whole of France seem very inferior: there is a monotony in their tanned faces, spare figures, and black eyes and hair, which wearies, and ceases to create interest after the first. Some individuals in the Basque country, however, struck me as handsome and very intelligent.

The Basque is bold and brave, and the French armies never had finer soldiers, as far as regarded spirit, than the natives of these countries: but neither did any region produce so many deserters; for the *maladie du pays* is strong upon them, and they take the first opportunity of returning to their home amongst the mountains. This is not confined to the Basque, but occurs to all the mountaineers of Béarn. One instance will show this feeling; the story was related by a guide to the Brèche de Roland, who knew the circumstances. A young man had been forced by the conscription to join Napoleon's army: he was very young at the time, and went through all the dangers, hardships, and privations like a mountaineer and a man of courage; but, as soon as he saw an opportunity, he deserted, and sought the land where all his wishes tended. He was pursued and traced from place to place; but, generally favoured by his friends and assisted by his own ingenuity, he always eluded search, and, with the precaution of never sleeping two nights in the same village, he managed for several years to [677] continue free. He was in love with a young girl, and on one occasion, at a *fête*, had come far over the mountains to dance with her: he was warned by a companion that emissaries had been seen in the neighbourhood; but he determined nothing should interfere with the pleasure he anticipated in leading out the lass he loved. He had a rival, however, in the company, who gave notice to the officers of justice that the deserter would be at the dance, and, accordingly, in the midst of the revel—as they

were executing one of those agile dances, called *Le Saut Basque*—the object of pursuit became aware that, amidst the throng, were several persons whom he had no difficulty in guessing were his pursuers. They kept their station close to the path he must take when he left the spot where they were dancing, and he, with great presence of mind and determined gallantry, finished the measure with his pretty partner: at the last turn, he looked briskly round, and observing that one of his companions was leaning on a thick stick, he suddenly caught it from his grasp, and with a leap and run, dashed past the party who were waiting for him, brandishing the weapon over his head and keeping all off. They were so taken by surprise, that they had no power to detain him; and the villagers closing round and impeding them as much as possible, the young hero got off to the mountains in safety. He was, however, taken some time [678] after this scene, and carried to Bayonne to be tried, when every one expected that he would meet with capital punishment; but it was found impossible to identify him—no one could be induced to appear against him—and the magistrates, wearied out, at length gave him his discharge, and he returned to live quietly in his village, and marry his love, after having been a hunted man in the woods and mountains for nearly ten years.

The Basque is said to be irritable, revengeful, and implacable; but gay and volatile, passionately addicted to dancing and the *jeu de paume*, which he never abandons till compelled by positive infirmity. He is very adventurous, and fond of excitement; it is not, therefore, singular that he should be a hardy smuggler, so cunning and adroit that he contrives to evade the officers of the excise in a surprising manner. If, however, a smuggler falls beneath the shot of one of the guardians of right, all the natives become at once his deadly enemy, and he has no safety but in leaving the country instantly. The women assist their relations in this dangerous traffic, and perform acts of daring, which are quite startling. It is told of one, a young girl of Eshiarce, that, being hard pressed by a party of excise, she ran along a steep ledge of rocks, and, at a fearful height, cast herself into the Nive: no one dared to follow down the ravine; and they saw her swimming for her life, battling with the roaring torrent; she reached the [679] opposite shore, turned with an exulting gesture, although her basket of contraband goods was lost in the stream, and, darting off amongst the valleys, was lost to their view.

The Basques have their comedy, which they call *Tobera-Munstruc*, or *Charivari represented*; and they enter into its jokes with the utmost animation and delight. They generally take for their subject some popular event of a comic nature, and all is carried on extempore. The young men of a village meet to consult respecting it; and then comes the *cérémonie du bâton*. Those who choose to be actors, or simply to subscribe towards the expenses, range themselves on one side; two amongst them hold a stick at each end, and all those chosen pass beneath it; this constitutes an engagement to assist; and it is a disgrace to fail. News is then sent to the villages round of the intention to act a comedy; and preparations are made by the select committee. The representations are positive *fêtes*, and are looked forward to with great pleasure; crowds attend them; and their supporters are usually picked men, who have a reputation for talent and wit. Crimes never come under their consideration: it is always something extremely ridiculous, or some ludicrous failing, that is turned into contempt and held up to risibility. It is quite amazing to what an extent the genius of the improvvisatores go at times; they display consummate art and knowledge of [680] human nature, quick *répartie*, subtle arguments, absurd conjunctions, startling metaphors, and are never at a loss to meet the assertions of their adversary on the other side; for it is always in the form of law-pleadings, for and against, that the comedy is conducted.

It is usually carried on in the manner following:

The crowd assembled, a man on horseback opens the *cortège*: he is dressed in white trowsers, a purple sash, a white coat, and a fine cap, ornamented with tinsel and ribbons; flutes, violins, tamborines, and drums, succeed; then come about forty dancers, in two files, who advance in a cadenced step; this is the celebrated dance called the *Morisco*, which is reserved for great occasions. This troop is in the same costume as the man on horseback; each dancer holding in his right hand a wand, adorned with ribbons, and surmounted by a bouquet of artificial flowers. Then come the poet and a guard, a judge and two pleaders, in robes; and a guard on foot, bearing carbines, close the procession.

The judge and advocates take their places on the stage, seating themselves before three tables, the poet being in front on the left.

A carnival scene now takes place, in which are all sorts of strange costumes, harlequins, clowns, and jokers; in this a party of blacksmiths are conspicuous, whose zeal in shœing and unshœing a mule, on which a *huissier* sits, with his face to the tail, [681] creates great merriment. When all this tumult is quieted by proclamation, music sounds; the poet advances and improvises an address, in which he announces the subject of the piece; his manner is partly serious, partly jesting. He points out the advocate who is to plead the cause of morals and propriety: this one rises, and, in the course of his exordium, takes care to throw out all the sarcasm he can against his rival, who rouses himself, and the battle of tongues begins, and is carried on in a sort of rhyming prose, in which nothing is spared to give force to jest or argument against the reigning vices or follies of the day. As the orators proceed and become more and more animated on the subject, they are frequently interrupted by loud applause. Sometimes, in these intervals, the poet gives a signal, which puts an end to the discussions before the public are fatigued; and, the music sounding, the performers of the national dance appear, and take the place of the two advocates for a time. These combatants soon re-commence their struggle; and, at length, the judge is called upon to pronounce between them. A farcical kind of consultation ensues between the judge and the ministers around, who are supposed to send messengers even to the king himself by their mounted courier in attendance.

The judge at last rises, and, with mock solemnity, delivers his fiat. Then follow quadrilles; and the famous *Sauts Basques*, so well-known and so remarkable, close the [682] entertainments.

These *fêtes* last several days, as in Brittany, and are very similar in their style. I am told, however, that, though very witty, these representations are not fit for *la bonne compagnie*.

"If to what we have been able to collect on what are called Basques," says Du Mège, "we add the remarks of General Serviez, *chargé d'administration* of the department of the Basses Pyrénées, a complete picture is presented of the manners and habits of the descendants of the Escualdunacs, who may be subdivided into three tribes, or families: the *Labourdins*, the *Navarrais*, and the *Souletins*."

"They have rather the appearance of a foreign colony transplanted into the midst of the French, than a people forming a portion of the country, and living under the same laws and government. They are extremely brave, and are always the terror of the Spaniards in all wars with them; but their aversion to leaving their homes is very great, and their attachment to their personal liberty is remarkable. They are much wedded to their own habits and customs, and are almost universally *unacquainted* with the French language. They are said to be the *cleanest people in the world*; in which particular they singularly differ from the Bretons, whom, in some respects, they resemble. [683]

"Mildness and persuasion does much with them, severity nothing: they are choleric in temper, but soon appeased; nevertheless, they are implacable in their hatred, and resolute in their revenge. Ready to oblige, if flattered; restless and active, hard-working; *habitually sober and well-conducted*, and violently attached to their religion and their priests. They seem rarely to know fatigue, for, after a hard day's work, they think little of going five or six leagues to a *fête*, and to be deprived of this amusement is a great trial to them.

"They are tenacious of the purity of their blood, and avoid, as much as possible, contracting alliances with neighbouring nations; they are impatient of strangers acquiring possessions in their country. They are apt to quarrel amongst each other at home; but there is a great *esprit du corps* amongst them when they meet abroad. There are shades of difference in their characters, according to their province. In general, the *Souletins* are more cunning and crafty than the rest, resembling their neighbours of Béarn in their moral qualities. The *Navarrais* is said to be more fickle. The *Labourdins* are fonder of luxuries, and less diligent than the others; and it is thought, consequently, less honest; the latter are generally sailors, and are known as good whalers."

There seems a desire amongst *improvers* in France to do away amongst the common [684]

people with the original language, or *patois*, which exists in so many of the provinces; and in many of the schools nothing is taught but French. This would seem to be a benefit, as far as regards civilization; but it shocks the feelings of the people, who are naturally fond of the language of their fathers. The Bretons, like the Welsh with us, are very tenacious of this attempt: the people of Languedoc, with Jasmin, their poet, at their head, have made a stand for their tongue; and the Basques, at the present moment, are in great distress that measures are now being taken to teach their children French, and do away altogether with the language of which they are so proud, and which is so prized by the learned. In a late *Feuilleton* of the Mémorial des Pyrénées, I observed a very eloquent letter on the subject of instruction in French in the rural schools, from which the Basque language is banished. The children learn catechism and science in French, and can answer any question put to them in that language by the master, like parrots, being quite unable to translate it back into the tongue they talk at home, where nothing but Basque meets their ears.

It is, of course, quite necessary that they should understand French for their future good; but there does not appear a sufficient reason that they should neglect their own language, or, at any rate, that they should not be instructed in it, and have the same [685] advantage as the Welsh subjects of Great Britain, who did not, however, obtain all they claimed for their primitive language without a struggle.

The writer in the Mémorial contends that the children should be taught their prayers in Basque, and should know the grammar of that dialect in order to be able to write to their friends when abroad—for many of them are soldiers and sailors,—in a familiar tongue, since those at home by their fire-sides know nothing of French, and could not understand the best French letter that was ever penned. The question is, could they read *at all*, and if the epistle were read for them by a more learned neighbour, would not French be as easy as Basque? for the friend must have been at school to be of use.

Be this as it may, the "coil" made for the beloved tongue shows the feeling which still exists in Navarre for the "*beau dialecte Euskarien*."

"Do you know what you would destroy?" exclaims M. de Belsunce, in somewhat wild enthusiasm; "the sacred relic of ages—the aboriginal idiom, as ancient as the mountains which shelter and serve for its asylum!

"The Basque language is our glory, our pride, the theme of all our memories, the golden book of our traditions. Proud and free in its accent, noble and learned in its picturesque and sonorous expressions, its formation and grammatical form are both [686] simple and sublime; add to which, the people preserve it with a religious devotion.

"It is the language spoken by our illustrious ancestors—those who carried the terror of their arms from the heights of the Pyrenees to Bordeaux and Toulouse. It is the language of the conquerors of Theodobert, Dagobert, and Carebert; and of the fair and ill-fated wife of the latter—the unfortunate Giselle. Were not the sacred cries of liberty and independence uttered amongst our mountains in that tongue, and the songs of triumph which were sent to heaven after the victory of the Gorges of the Soule? It is the dialect named by Tacitus, as that of those who were never conquered—*Cantaber invictus*: immortalized as that of the *Lions of War*: spoken by the most *ancient people in the world*—a race of shepherds with patriarchal manners, proverbial hospitality, and right-mindedness; light-hearted, friendly and true, though implacable in vengeance and terrible in anger as undaunted in courage.

"Our chronicles live in our national songs, and our language proves an ancient civilization. To the philosopher and the learned who study it, it presents, from its grandeur, its nobility, and the rich harmony of its expressions, a subject of grave meditation; it may serve as the key of the history of nations, and solve many doubts on the origin of lost or faded languages." [687]

Perhaps M. de Belsunce takes a rather pompous view of the subject; but he has, nevertheless, much reason in his appeal.

As specimens of this extraordinary language, some of the names of the Basque towns may amuse and surprise the reader; perhaps, in the Marquesas islands, lately taken possession of by the French, they may find some sounds which to Basque sailors, of which a ship's crew is almost certain to have many, may be familiar.

Iratsodoqui.

Urruxordoqui.
Mentchola.
Orgambidecosorhona.
—Places in the district of Forest of Saint Eugrace.

Furunchordoqui, near the Port d'Anie.
The Pic d'Anie is properly called Ahuguamendi.

In Basse Burie occur the following names;—

Iturourdineta.
Iparbarracoitcha.
Aspildoya.
Lehintchgarratia.

In the arrondissement of Bayonne may be met with:—Urkheta, Hiriburu, Itsasu, Beraskhoitce, Zubernua, and others equally singular in sound. [688]

CHAPTER XIV.

CAGOTS—CACOUS OF BRITTANY.

One of the most puzzling and, at the same time, interesting subjects, which recurs to the explorer in the Pyrenees, is the question respecting that mysterious race of people called Cagots, whose origin has never yet been satisfactorily accounted for. All travellers speak of the Cagots, and make allusion to them, but nothing very positive is told. When I arrived in the Pyrenees, my first demand was respecting them; but those of my countrymen who had ever heard of their existence assured me that their denomination was only another word for *Crétin* or *Goîtreux*: others insisted that no trace of the ancient *parias* of these countries remained, and some treated the legends of their strange life as mere fables.

I applied to the French inhabitants; from whom I heard much the same, though all agreed that Cagots were to be found in different parts of the mountains, and that they were still shunned as a race apart, though the prejudice against them was certainly wearing away. [689]

I inquired of our Béarnaise servant whether she could tell me anything about the Cagots, upon which she burst into a fit of laughter, which lasted some time, on her recovery from which she informed me that they were accustomed to use the word as a term of derision. "Any one," said she, "*whose ears are short—cut off at the tip*, we call Cagot; but it is only *pour rire*, it is not a polite word."

I hoped, from her information, and the manner in which she treated the subject, that the Cagots were indeed extinct, and known only as a by-word, which had now no meaning; but I found, by conversing with intelligent persons who had been a great deal in the mountains, and given their attention to such discoveries, that the unfortunate people, once the objects of scorn and oppression to all their fellow-men, are still to be found, and still lead an isolated life, though no longer proscribed or hunted like wild beasts as formerly.

I examined, with the aid of a friend in Pau, the archives of the town, and found several times mention made of these people up to a late period, in which they were classed as persons out of the pale of the law; a price is put on their heads, as if they were wolves; they are forbidden to appear in the towns, and orders are issued to the police to *shoot them* if found infringing the rules laid down; punishments are named as awaiting them if they ventured to ally themselves, in any way, with any out of their own caste, and they are spoken of together with brigands and malefactors, and all other persons whose crimes have placed them out of the protection of their country. [690]

In Gascony, Béarn, and the Pays Basque, it is well known that for centuries this proscribed race has existed, entirely separated from the rest of their species, marrying with each other, and thus perpetuating their misfortune, avoided, persecuted, and contemned: their origin unknown, and their existence looked upon as a blot on the

face of nature. At one period the Cagots were objects of hatred, from the belief that they were afflicted with the leprosy, which notion does not appear to be founded on fact; in later times, they have been supposed to suffer more especially from *goître*; but physicians have established that they are not more subject to this hideous disease than their neighbours of the valleys and mountains. Nevertheless, a belief even now prevails that this wretched people, and the race of Crétins, are the same, and that they owe their origin to the Visigoths, who subdued a part of Gaul.

Ramond, in his "Observations on the Pyrenees," has the following curious passage: "My observations on the Crétins had thrown little light on the subject; and learned persons whom I had consulted had not placed it in a clearer point of view: I found myself obliged to add another proof to the many that exist, to demonstrate that the resemblance of effects is not always a sure indication of the identity of causes; when my habitual intercourse with the people entirely changed the nature of the question, [691] by showing that it was amongst the unfortunate race of Cagots that I should find the Crétins of the Valley of Luchon.

"It was with a shyness which I found much difficulty in overcoming, that the inhabitants of this country avowed to me that their valley contained a certain number of families which, from time immemorial, were regarded as forming part of an infamous and cursed race; that those who composed them were never counted as citizens; that everywhere they were forbidden to carry arms; that they were looked upon as slaves, and obliged to perform the most degrading offices for the community at large; that misery and disease was their constant portion; that the scourge of *goître* generally belonged to them; that they were peculiarly afflicted with the complaint in the valleys of Luchon, all those of the Pays de Comminges, of Bigorre, Béarn, and the two Navarres; that their miserable abodes are ordinarily in remote places, and that whatever amelioration of prejudice has arisen in the progress of time, and the improvement of manners, a marked aversion is always shown towards that set of people, who are forced still to keep themselves entirely distinct from the free natives of the villages in their neighbourhood."

There hare, however, many parts of Béarn, Soule, and Navarre, for instance, in following the course of the Gave of Oloron, inhabited by Cagots who are by no means [692] subject to the infirmity of *goître*, by which it appears that it is merely an accidental complaint with them as with others.

The prejudice which has peculiarly attributed to them this horrible affliction is therefore erroneous: and equally so is the idea that they carry in their appearance any indication of a difference of species: for, instead of the sallow, weak, sickly hue which it was believed belonged to them, it is known that they differ in nowise from the other natives in complexion, strength, or health. Instances of great age occur amongst them; and they are subject to no more nor less infirmities than others. Beauty or ugliness, weakness or strength, deformity or straightness, are common to the Cagots as to the rest of the human race. This, however, is certain, that in some villages the richest persons are of the proscribed order; but they, nevertheless, are held in a certain degree of odium, and their alliance is avoided: the state of misery and destitution in which they were represented to M. Ramond exists but partially at present; for, being in general more active and industrious than the other inhabitants, they very frequently become rich, although they never are able to assume the position in society which wealth in any other class allows.

The following is a fearful picture, which it is to be hoped is exaggerated at the present day. It exhibits the Cagots according to the opinion a few years ago prevalent, [693] and denies to this people the health for which others who defend them contend:

"Health," says the French author of "Travels in the French Pyrenees," "that treasure of the indigent, flies from the miserable huts of Agos, Bidalos, and Vieuzac: three villages, so close together, that they constitute one whole: they are situated in the valley called Extremère de Sales. The numerous sources which spring beside the torrent of Bergons, the freshness and solitude of these charming retreats, the rich shade of the thick chesnuts, which in summer form delicious groves—all is obscured by the miserable state of the inhabitants: diseases of the most loathsome kind prevail for ever in this smiling valley: Crétins abound, those unhappy beings *supposed to be the descendants of the Alains*, a part of whom established themselves in the Pyrenees and the Valais. Whether this connexion really exists or not, a stupid indifference, which prevents them from feeling their position, exists in common with the Crétins

amongst those people known as Goths, or Cagots, *chiens de Gots*, and *Capots*, who are a fearful example of the duration of popular hatred. They are condemned to the sole occupation permitted to them, that of hewing of wood; are banished from society, their dwellings placed at a distance from towns and villages, and are in fact excommunicated beggars; forced, besides, in consequence of the profession of [694] Arianism, adopted by their Gothic ancestors, to wear on their habits a mark of obloquy in the form of a goose's foot, which is sewn on their clothes; exposed to insult and every species of severity; condemned to the fear of having their feet pierced with hot irons, if they appear bare-footed in towns, and pursued with the most bitter rigour that bigotry and animosity can indulge in."

The words, *Stupides, Idiots, Crétins*, and *Cagots* have been considered synonymous; but this is an error: the last wretched class being separated in their misery, and distinct from the rest. The beautiful valleys of the Pyrenees are frightfully infested with the disease of *goitre*, and few of them are free; but the Cagots merely share the affliction, as has been said before (following the learned and benevolent Palassou) with the rest of the inhabitants.

The notion which, at first sight, would seem better founded, is, that the Cagots are descendants of those numerous *lepers* who formed a fearful community at one period, and were excluded from society to prevent infection; but the more the subject is investigated the less does this appear likely: though banished, from prudential motives, and even held in abhorrence, from the belief that their malady was a judgment of Heaven, those afflicted with leprosy, when healed, had the power of [695] returning to the communion of their fellows: they were not excommunicated, nor placed beyond the mercy of the laws: they were avoided, but not hated; and they had some hope for the future, which was denied to the Cagots.

In the Basque country they are called *Agots*, and it is ascertained that, though held in the same aversion as in Bigorre, Navarre, and Béarn, they have no physical defects, nor any difference of manners or appearance to the rest of the natives: they are there also vulgarly said to descend from the Goths.

The popular notion of the shortness of the lobe of the ear, which is supposed to be a characteristic of a Cagot, seems to be only worthy of the laughter which accompanied its first announcement to me; yet it is an old tradition, and has long obtained credence.

The learned Marca, who has treated this subject, remarks: "These unfortunate beings are held as infected and leprous; and by an express article in the *Coutumes de Béarn* and the provinces adjacent, familiar conversation with the rest of the people is severely interdicted to them. So that, even in the churches, they have a door set apart by which to enter, with a *bénitier* and seats for them solely: they are obliged to live in villages apart from other dwellings: they are usually carpenters, and are permitted to use no arms or tools but those expressly required in their trade: they are looked upon [696] as infamous, although they have, according to the ancient *Fors de Béarn*, a right to be heard as witnesses; seven of them being required to make the testimony of *one uninfected* man."

Though previous to the time of Louis VI. called Le Gros, in 1108, the Cagots were sold as slaves *with* estates, it does not appear that their fate, in this respect, was different from that of other serfs, who were all transferred from one master to another, without reserve. A denomination given to a Cagot, however, in the record of a deed of gift, mentioned by Marca, gives rise to other conjectures, involving still more interesting inquiries. It is there stated, that with a "*nasse*" was given a *Chrétien*, named Auriot Donat; that is to say, the *house* of a Cagot and himself with it.

In the cartulary of the *ci-devant* Abbey of Luc, in the year 1000, and in the *Fors de Béarn*, they are designated as *Chrestiàs*, and the term *Cagot*, we are informed by Marca, was first employed in acts relative to them in the year 1551. They are called *gaffos* in an ancient *Fors* of Navarre, in 1074; and the term *Chrestiàas* even now is used to denote the villages where the Cagots reside.

It appears that the Cagots of the present day are ordinarily denominated *Agotacs* and *Cascarotacs*, by the peasants of Béarn and the Basque country: that of *Chrétiens* seemed affixed to them formerly, but was equally so to the lepers who were obliged to [697] live isolated, and their abodes were called *chrestianeries*.

As the serfs became emancipated, the Cagots, who had been slaves peculiarly appropriated by the Church, and called by them, it seems, *Chrestiàs*, were allowed similar privileges: added to which, from having belonged to the ecclesiastics, and from not enjoying the rights of citizens, they were exempt from taxes. In later times, this led to innovations by these very Cagots, who, becoming rich, endeavoured to usurp the prerogatives of nobility. The Etats of Béarn, issued a command to the "*Cagot d'Oloron*,"—who appears to have been a powerful person—to prevent him from building a *dovecote*, and to another to forbid him the use of arms and the costume of a gentleman.

At the church of St. Croix at Oloron is still to be seen a *bénitier*, set apart for the use of this race; and at the old fortified church of Luz, was a little door, now closed up, by which they entered to perform their devotions.

The prohibition to carry arms, which never extended to *lepers*, would seem to indicate that the Cagots, always separately mentioned in all the public acts, were persons who might be dangerous to public tranquillity. And this, together with the appellation of *Christians*, may give colour to another opinion, entertained by those who reject the idea of their being descendants of those Goths who took refuge in the [698] mountains after the defeat of Alaric by Clovis.

The opinion to which I allude, and which is adopted by Palassou, is that they come from those Saracens who fled from Charles Martel in the eighth century, after the defeat of their chief, Abderraman, near Tours: these Saracens are supposed to have sheltered themselves from pursuit in the mountains, where, being prevented by the snows from going further, they remained hemmed in, and by degrees established themselves here, and conformed to Christianity; but does this account for the contempt and hatred which they had to endure for so many centuries after? for no race of people, once converted, were any longer held accursed in the country where they lived. If, indeed, they remained pagan, this severity might naturally have visited them; but the Cagots were certainly Christians from early times, as the accommodations prepared for them in churches proves.

There seems little doubt that the armies of Abderraman spread themselves over the Pyrenees, where they long kept the French and Gascons in fear: traditions of them still exist, and the name of a plain near the village of Ossun, in Bigorre, called Lane-Mourine, seems to tell its own tale, as well as the relics found in its earth of the skulls of men, pronounced by competent judges to be those of the natives of a warm climate: [699] in other words, of Saracens, or Moors. But still there seems nothing to prove that the Cagots are the children of these identical Moors, who are said to have been infected with leprosy, and consequently shunned by the people amongst whom they had intruded themselves.

Lepers, at all times, were ordered to be kept apart from the rest of the people, and were placed under the care of the Church to prevent their wandering and carrying infection with them; and the miserable condition in which the proscribed race of Cagots existed, probably made them more liable to take the hideous disease which would have separated them from their kind, even if not already in that predicament: but there must have been something more than mere disease which kept the line for ever drawn between these poor wretches and the rest of the world.

It is expressly defined in the speeches of ministers from the altar to those afflicted with leprosy:—"*As long as you are ill* you shall not enter into any house out of the prescribed bounds." This applied to *all* afflicted with leprosy; but the embargo was never taken off the Cagot.

At one period, the priests made a difficulty of confessing those who were Cagots, and Pope Leo X. was obliged to issue orders to all ecclesiastics to administer the sacraments to them as well as to others of the faithful. [700]

They were during some time called *gezitains*, or descendants of Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, leprous and accursed; but by what authority does not appear. The leprosy was called the *Arab evil*, and supposed to have been brought into Europe by the Saracens: the *suspicion* of *infection* which attached to this race might have caused them to be so shunned; and, whether afflicted or not, they never got the better of this suspicion.

The greatest number of Cagots are to be found in those parts of the Pyrenees which

lead directly to Spain, which may strengthen the supposition that the Moors are really their ancestors. A sad falling off to the glory and grandeur of this magnificent people is the notion that all that remains of them should be a race of outcasts, loathsome and abhorred! I cannot induce myself to adopt this idea till more proof is offered to support it, and better reason given to account for the contempt and hatred shown to a people, who, though once followers of Mahomed had become *Chretiàas*.

Amongst other names given them are those of *gahets* and *velus*, for which there seems no explanation; but every new fact involves the question in still deeper obscurity.

It was always enacted that *catechumens*, during the two or three years of probation which they passed previous to being received as children of the Church, should live apart from professed Christians, being neither allowed to eat or frequent the baptized, [701] or give them the kiss of peace: and the Saracens of course were subjected to the same trials, from whence might first have arisen the habit of their living apart, and being looked upon with suspicion, both on account of their former faith and their supposed leprosy. This is, however, I think, scarcely sufficient to warrant the long continuance of the enmity which has pursued them.

One of the acts of the parliament of Bordeaux shows with how much harshness they were treated, and what pains were taken to keep them from mixing with the people, long after the panic of leprosy must have disappeared. In 1596 it was ordained that, "conformable to preceding decrees, the *Cagots* AND *gahets* residing in the parishes and places circumjacent, shall in future wear upon their vestments and on their breasts a red mark, *in the form of a goose's or duck's foot*, in order to be separated from the rest of the people; they are prohibited from touching the viands which are sold in the markets, under the pain of *being whipped*, except those which the sellers have delivered to them; otherwise, they will be banished from the parish they inhabit: also, it is forbidden to the said *cagots* to touch the holy water in the churches, which the other inhabitants take." The same decree was issued to put in force ancient ordinances concerning them, in Soule, in the year 1604. [702]

Still further animosity was shown to these miserable people in 1606. The three states of the said country of Soule, in a general assembly, passed an order by which it was forbidden "to the Cagots, under pain of whipping, to exercise the trade of a miller, or to touch the flour of the common people; and not to mingle in the dances of the rest of the people, under pain of corporal punishment."

Severe as these laws were, those against *lepers* were still more cautious: for whereas Cagots were allowed to enter the churches by a private way, the lepers were not permitted to attend divine worship at all; and had churches appropriated to them alone, which was never the case with the Cagots, who were merely placed apart in the lowest seats.

Much the same arrangements were made respecting the *Cacous* of Brittany, who were allowed to occupy a distant part of the churches, but not to approach the altar, or touch any of the vestments or vases, under a fine of a hundred sous; but chapels, or *fréries*, were permitted them at the gates of several towns—an indulgence apparently never permitted to the *Cagots*.

Lobineau derives their name from Latin and Greek words signifying "*malady*," a denomination which strengthens the opinion of those who imagine the crusaders brought the leprosy back from Palestine on their return from their pilgrimage. [703]

That the Cagots were exempt from leprosy, appears from a circumstance which took place in 1460, when "the States of Béarn demanded of Gaston de Béarn, Prince of Navarre, that he would command the rule to be enforced that the Cagots should not walk bare-footed in the streets, for fear of communicating the leprosy, and that it should be permitted, in case of their refusing to comply with the enactment, that their feet should be pierced with a hot iron, and also that they should be obliged, in order to distinguish them, to wear on their clothes the ancient mark of a goose's foot, which they had long abandoned: *which proposition was not attended to*, thereby proving that the council of the Prince did not approve of the animosity of the States, and did not consider the Cagots infected with leprosy."

The law was more severe in Brittany, about the same period; for, in 1477, the Duke François II., in order to prevent the *cacous*, *caqueux*, *or caquins*, from being under the

necessity of begging, and mingling with persons in health, granted them permission to use, as farmers, the produce of the land near their dwellings, under certain restrictions; and at the same time insisted on their renewing the red mark which they were condemned to wear. He also ordered that all commerce should be interdicted to them except that of *hemp*, from whence it comes that the trade of a cordwainer is [704] considered vile in some cantons of Bretagne, as those of swineherd and boatman were in Egypt.

In some places in Brittany, the trade of cooper was looked upon with contempt, and the opprobrious name of *caqueux* was given to them because they were thought to belong to a *race of Jews* dispersed after the ruin of Jerusalem, and who were considered *leprous from father to son*.

It was *only as late as* 1723, that the parliament of Bordeaux—which had long shown such tyranny towards this unhappy class—issued an order that opprobrious names should no longer be applied to them, and that they should be admitted into the general and private assemblies of communities, allowed to hold municipal charges, and be granted the honours of the church. They were to be permitted in future to enter the galleries of churches like any other person; their children received in schools and colleges in all towns and villages, and christian instruction withheld from them no more than from another. Yet, in spite of this ordinance, hatred and prejudice followed this people still; though, protected by the laws, they fell on them less heavily.

At Auch, a quarter was set apart for the *Cagots*, or *capots*, and *another* for *the lepers*. The *gakets* of Guizeris, in the diocese of Auch, had a door appropriated to them in the church, which the rest of the inhabitants carefully avoided approaching. [705]

"This prejudice," says Brugèles,[37] "lasted till the visit paid to the church by M. Louis d'Aignan du Sendat, archdeacon of Magnoac, who, in order to abolish this distinction, passed out of the church by the *porte des Cagots*, followed by the *curé*, and all the ecclesiastics of the parish, and those of his own *suite*; the people, seeing this, followed also, and since that time the doors have been used indifferently by all classes."

Although my idea may be laughed at by the learned, it has occurred to me, that this race might be the descendants of those Goths who were driven from Spain by the Moors, introduced by Count Julian in consequence of the conduct of Don Roderick.

There seems scarcely a good reason why the Goths under Alaric should stop in the Pyrenees on their way to a safer retreat, when pursued by the troops of Clovis, the Christian; Spain was open to them, and to remain amongst the enemy's mountains seemed bad policy. Again, why should Abdelrahman, after his defeat, when his discomfited people fled before the *hammer* of the great Charles, have paused in the Pyrenees? Spain was their's, and surely the remnant would have sought their own land, even if detained awhile by the snows, and not have remained a mark of contempt and hatred in the country of their conquerors. [706]

But when Roderick and his Goths fled from the Moors, after the fatal battle of Guadalete, and they remained monarchs of Spain, there was no safety for the ruined remnant but in close concealment; and the Pyrenees offered a safe retreat. The Christians of France, however, would not have received them as friends, and they could not return to their own country; therefore, they might have sheltered themselves in the gorges, and when they appeared have been looked upon with the same horror as the Arians of the time of Alaric, or even have been confounded by the people with those very Moors who drove them out of Spain.

The difficulty, which is the greatest by far, is to account for the unceasing contempt which clung to them *after* they became *Chrestiàas*.

An ingenious person of Pau, who has considered the subject in all its bearings, has a theory that the Cagots are, after all, the *earliest Christians*, persecuted by the Romans, compelled, in the first instance, to take shelter in rocks and caves; and, even after the whole country became converted to Christianity, retaining their bad name from habit, and in consequence of their own ignorance, which had cast them back into a benighted state, and made them appear different from their better-instructed neighbours. Their name of *Christians* appears to have given rise to this notion.

I am looking forward very anxiously to a work of M. Francisque Michel, on the [707] subject, of the Cagots, which I hear is now in the press. His unwearied enthusiasm and

industry, and the enormous researches he has made both in France and Spain, will, doubtless, enable him to throw some valuable light on the curious question,[38] if not set it at rest for ever.

[708]

CHAPTER XV.

THE CAGOT—VALLÉE D'ASPE—SUPERSTITIONS—FORESTS—DESPOURRINS—THE TWO GAVES—BEDOUS—HIGH-ROAD TO SARAGOSSA—CASCADE OF LESCUN—URDOS —A PICTURE OF MURILLO—LA VACHE.

THE subject of the Cagots has occupied the attention of learned and unlearned persons both formerly, and at the present time; and the interest it excites is rather on the increase than otherwise; like the mysterious question of the race and language of the Basques, it can never fail to excite speculation and conjecture. A gentleman, who is a professor at the college of Pau, has devoted much of his time to the investigation [709] of this curious secret, and has thrown his observations together in the form of a romance, in a manner so pleasing, and so well calculated to place the persons he wishes to describe immediately before the mind's eye of his reader, that I think a few extracts from his story of THE CAGOT, yet unpublished, will give the best idea of the state of degradation and oppression in which the Cagots were forced to exist; and exhibit in lively colours the tyranny and bigoted prejudice to which they were victims. I avail myself, therefore, of the permission of M. Badé, to introduce his *Cagot* to the English reader.[39] The story thus opens:

The Cagot.

A BÉARNAIS TALE.

"ON a fine night in the month of June, 1386, a mounted party, accompanied by archers and attendants on foot, were proceeding, at a quiet pace, along the left bank of a rivulet called Lauronce, on the way between Oloron and Aubertin. A fresh breeze had succeeded the burning vapours which, in the scorching days of summer, sometimes transform the valleys of Béarn into furnaces. Myriads of stars glittered, [710] bright and clear, like sparkles of silver, in the deep blue sky, and their glimmering light rendered the thin veil still more transparent which the twilight of the solstice had spread over the face of the country; while through this shadowy haze might be seen, from point to point, on the hills, the ruddy flame of half-extinguished fires.

"From time to time, those who composed the cavalcade paused as it reached higher ground, in order to contemplate the magnificent spectacle before them and the effect produced by the doubtful and fleeting shadows which rested on the fields, on the dark woods, and on the broken and uncertain line in the southern horizon which indicated the summits of the Pyrenees. The air was full of the perfume of newly-cut hay; the leaves sent forth a trembling murmur; the cricket uttered his sharp chirrup in the meadows; the quail's short, flute-like cry was heard, and all in nature harmonized with the beauty of the summer night."

The party, who are travelling at this hour in order to avoid the heats of the day, are then introduced by the narrator as the Baron de Lescun and his niece, Marie, an orphan confided to his care: they are on their way to the Court of Gaston Phoebus, Count of Foix, at Orthez, who is about to give a series of *fêtes* and tournaments: they have been joined by a lady and her son—the Dame d'Artiguelouve (a name of old [711] standing in Béarn, and still existing,)—and the young *domenger*, (the Bérnais title of *Damoiseau*,) Odon, escorted by their pages and valets. Conversation ensues between them, in which the young lady expresses some doubts as to their prudence in choosing so witching an hour, however beautiful the time, for their journey; when it is known that evil spirits and sorcerers are abroad on their foul errands.

They presently arrive on the territory of Faget, when they are startled to observe, as if flitting near them, human forms, which glide noiselessly along, like shades in the darkness. Some of these mysterious beings placed themselves in a stooping position on the margin of the streams, with their faces bent close to the water. Others,

divesting themselves of their garments, entered, with hurried and noiseless stops, a neighbouring field of oats, and there concealed themselves. Some of the strangers were astonished at what they saw, and could not resolve in their own minds whether or not these were, indeed, phantoms that appeared in their path.

"'Midnight must be near, and the *fête* of St. Jean is about to begin,' said the Sire de Lescun; 'for these are the poor people who are on the watch for the unattainable moment, when, it is thought, the water changes into wine, and has the power of [712] healing all their infirmities: the dew of this night, received on the body in the fields, is also said to be endowed with the same marvellous virtue.'"

A confused noise now met their ears as they entered the forest of Lorincq, and a singular spectacle was presented to them:

"The forest, all resplendent with illuminations, seemed full of bustle and animation. Numerous torches sparkled amongst the trees to which they were suspended or attached; others were borne along, whirled from place to place, their black smoke sending its long wreaths into the air, and their red flame flashing through the gloom. A thousand voices burst forth, as if simultaneously, from height and valley, above, around, and underneath; an immense crowd hurried along—some mounting, some descending—amongst the crackling branches, until the intricate alleys and close retreats of this labyrinth of verdure were filled with human beings.

"The lame and wounded, the infirm and paralytic grouped themselves around the fountains, to be ready at the right moment to plunge their afflicted limbs in the cold waters, and then to cast in their offering of a piece of money: some, providing for the future, busied themselves in filling, from the beneficent source, their vases and pitchers to overflowing; for it was firmly believed, that, in memory of the holy baptism [713] administered by the patron of the *fête*, Heaven had endowed the waters with peculiar powers during that favoured night; allowing the virtue to take effect from midnight to the rising of the sun.

"In the humid fern might be seen cattle sent to graze at will, in the hope of being cured of some malady, their tinkling bells indicating where they wandered. Parties of old men, women, and children, dispersed here and there, were eating cakes prepared for the occasion; while young men and girls danced in circles beneath the ash and elm trees, to the sound of the *flute of three notes*, accompanied by the nasal cadence of the lute of six strings.

"After halting for a considerable time, and taking their part in the religious advantages of the *fête*, the cavalcade resumed its route; and soon descended into the valley of the Bayse, as the sky began to be tinged with the hue of dawn. When they arrived at the hospital of Aubertin, the first rays of the sun were casting a golden light on the Roman transepts of the church."

At the moment that the Dame d'Artiguelouve and her son are alighting from their horses, they are arrested, and impressed with a superstitious feeling of terror, by observing a fine white courser at the door of the church, held by a page. This was, at the period, a bad omen for the stranger who first saw it, and boded no good to any one. [714]

"'I would not', said Joan Bordenabe—a peasant standing by,—'for the castle of Artiguelouve, have met with so bad an omen, as the Ena[40] Garsende and her noble son, who have come at once, face to face, with that animal, covered, as it would seem by his colour, with the snows of the Pyrenees: by our Lady of Sarrance, their future years will be as black as he is white!'

"'But,' replied his companion, 'if I were the knight to whom the charger belongs, I would part with him instantly, even if, at the same time as I drowned him, I must throw into the Gave my sword and golden spurs: don't you see that spiteful-looking magpie, which has just started up before him, after having chattered in his very face? What awful signs of evil are these! and on such a morning, at the rising of the sun! * * * May the *bon Dieu*, the Holy Virgin, and the white fairies of the subterranean caves, who are always combing their hair at the first glimpse of dawn, and looking into the clear mirror of the fountains, protect that beautiful young lady, who is at this moment entering the church. It is to be hoped she has made an ample provision of fennel to lay under her bed's head, and in her oratory, to counteract the evil influence of the *Brouches*!'"[41]

While the young lady, Marie de Lignac, enters the church to perform her devotions, [715] the rest of the party leave her, to join the chase of the wild boar, which the Lord of Artiguelouve, the father of Odon, is following, as his horns announce, in the adjacent forest.

The Hospital of Aubertin, which still exists, is a building of the twelfth century, and was one of many establishments depending on the order of monks hospitalers of Sainte Christine: it served as an asylum to the pilgrims of St. James, and as a resting-place to travellers going and coming to and from Spain, Marie found the church filled with persons of different professions: merchants from Arragon and Catalonia; pilgrims adorned with palms and cockle-shells, emblems of their wandering; shepherds in their red dresses and brown berret-caps; and wayfarers of many sorts, waiting only for the morning to continue their journey in various directions, and offering up their prayers previously to setting out. Among others, she noticed particularly a young knight (un beau caver[42]) devoutly kneeling at the foot of the altar of the Virgin, while his archers and men-at-arms were engaged in prayer close behind him: she judged that to him must belong the white charger at the church-door, which had inspired the peasants with so much superstitious terror. Nothing appeared to disturb the devotion of the [716] knight; neither the neighing of steeds without, nor the clatter of the hoofs of mules in the court, as the different groups prepared to depart; nor the coming and going of the merely curious, who were busied observing the beauty of the edifice, the materials of which, according to popular belief, were furnished by the Holy Virgin herself, who directed the elaborate and beautiful ornaments of the pillars and cornices still to be seen there.

The knight's costume was half civil, half military; of one sombre colour, without blazon or distinction—a circumstance unusual at the period: the expression of his face was grave and melancholy: he was somewhat bronzed with the sun, otherwise his complexion was fair, and his blue eyes were full of character and softness.

Even the appearance of the lady does not cause the knight to cease his prayers, and she remains looking upon him, half-divided between her duty and a sudden feeling of admiration and involuntary esteem for which she is unable to account, except by considering him as an apparition sent from heaven,—when a violent noise without, accompanied by the cries of hunters and their horns, effectually put a stop to the religious occupation of all within the church. All hurry out, and, amongst the rest—her orisons over—is the young lady, attended by her page. She had scarcely left the door, and was hastening to the neighbouring hostelry, when she saw before her, at a very [717] short distance, surrounded by a furious pack of hounds, who, bleeding and wounded, were yet attacking their enemy boldly, an enormous wild boar, evidently rendered savage by his sufferings. The beast rushed along, his white tusks gleaming fearfully, and his hot breath already reaching the terrified girl and her feeble protector. Marie turned back, and darted towards the open door of the church, and in another moment might have been out of the reach of the infuriated animal; but a stone imprudently aimed at the boar by a peasant from the wood, sent him, foaming, exactly in the direction she had taken. She saw there was no escape—made a bound, and fell senseless on the threshold of the church: the boar had just reached the spot, and one stroke of his terrible tusk had sufficed to crush the fragile being, who lay extended before him, when a young peasant, with a swiftness almost supernatural, interposed between her and her fate; and, with an axe with which he was armed, discharged so well-directed a blow on the head of the brute, that he extended him dead at his feet.

Certainly, never had succour arrived at a time of more need; and it was impossible to deny that the young man's intrepidity had saved the lady's life: nevertheless, when the crowd collected around them, as Marie, assisted by her terrified page, began to [718] recover consciousness, and her deliverer stood, his axe yet reeking with the blood of the animal from whom he had saved her, and whose carcase lay recking, the skull cleft in two,—it was with anything but applause or commendation that this act of self-devotion was hailed by all present.

As they cast their eyes on the coarse and ragged garb of the young man, those nearest observed on the breast a certain piece of red cloth, cut in the form of *a goose's foot*: a cry of horror and contempt, mingled with surprise, accompanied this discovery, and the words—"It is a Cagot! it is a Cagot!" rang through the assembly, and was repeated by a hundred voices in different intonations of horror. * * *

The object of this popular disgust was a tall, handsome, powerfully-built youth, fair,

and of fine complexion: he stood in an easy attitude, in which the majesty of recent action was conspicuous: his colour was heightened, and his bright eyes flashed with satisfaction at the deed he had performed; but when he heard the rage of the people rising, and the fatal and detested name of *Cagot* sounded in his ears, a far different feeling—the consciousness of his utter degradation, which he had for a moment forgotten, returned to him with added force. Suddenly recalled from his illusion, his head sunk mournfully on his bosom, and he seemed at once to retire within himself, gathering all the courage and patience of which he was capable to enable him to [719] endure the outrages and violence which he knew but too well awaited him.

"'Accursed Cagot![43]—down with the accursed Cagot!' repeated a host of confused voices.

"'Death to the leprous wretch!—to the river with him!—drag him to the river!—he has infected our fields—the holy dew is on him yet!'

"'He has laid his infected hands on our master's goods—he has dared to touch the game!' cried one of the huntsmen, coming up.

"'Hound of ill omen!' thundered Odon d'Artiguelouve, dashing through all the crowd, with his lady-mother and all his mounted attendants—'has he dared to place his devilish claw on that which belongs to us?'

"'He has bewitched our woods, and blighted our harvests!' exclaimed a peasant, giving him a blow, and spitting in his face.

"'To the flames with the sorcerer!—to the fire with the broomstick-rider!—to the fire with the comrade of the infernal spirits!' cried others; and one threw at him a half-burnt log of the St. John's fire, which, striking him on the forehead, sent the unfortunate Cagot reeling to the foot of a tree, against which he leaned for support.

This, and much more insult was lumped upon the unfortunate young man, [720] accompanied by furious howlings and execrations, which became every moment louder: hisses, laughter, and showers of mud and stones were sent towards him as he stood, motionless and calm; his eyes half-closed; without uttering a groan or a word; but, apparently, resolved to endure without shrinking the undeserved fate which pursued him.

Every moment the crowd increased, and with it the fury of popular hatred, until, at length, fatigued with the patience of their victim, the people proposed at once to drag the Cagot to the river. He was, therefore, seized, bound, and, in spite of his resistance and his strength, they prepared to carry their threats into execution; at the same time uttering those savage cries, known in the country as *les cris Basques*, and imitating, in derision of the wretched creature they were injuring, the sharp voice of the goose, and the nasal call of the duck. The young Ena Marie, for whose sake her deliverer was thus suffering, wept, entreated, and appealed to the senseless multitude in vain, and implored the mercy of Odon and Dame Garsende, who treated her prayers with indifference, and appeared to think the conduct of the mob perfectly justifiable. But, at the moment when all hope seemed lost, the interference of the young knight of the church prevented the execution of the crime about to be perpetrated.

Followed by his archers and men-at-arms, he rushed forward, and commanded that [721] the prisoner should be released, in a tone and with gestures so commanding, that the astonished crowd was, for a time, arrested in their project, and a general silence ensued, presently broken by a voice at a distance, which exclaimed—"Noble and generous child! the blessing of Heaven be on thee!" All eyes were directed towards the speaker—an old man with silver hair, clothed in a dark mantle, with the hood drawn over his head: he stood on an elevated mound above the scene of action, and on finding himself observed hurried away from the spot.

Meantime, taking advantage of the awe his appearance had excited in the public mind, the knight hastened to the poor Cagot, cut with his sword the cords which bound him, and set him at liberty. Amazement was painted on the victim's countenance, as he observed the relief which approached him: to be the object of care to a noble knight—to be defended, treated like a human creature was indeed a prodigy to him! The being, but an instant before stupified and inert, from whom insult and injury had drawn no cry nor tear, this evidence of humanity touched to the quick: he cast a long look of tenderness and gratitude on his deliverer; and large tears rolled

down his bleeding cheeks. But the panic of the instant soon passed away; hoarse murmurs arose, and threatening words, and the tumult recommenced, Odon d'Artiguelouve advanced to the knight, and demanded, in a haughty tone, by what right he interfered with the execution of the laws. [722]

"'I am not a stranger to this country,' replied he, calmly, 'though it is some time since I quitted it; and I know its *fors* and *customs* probably as well as you can do, Messire.'

"'Then,' answered Odon, 'you should know that a Cagot is forbidden to appear in an assembly of citizens, and that all commerce with them is expressly denied him; that he has no right to touch any article intended for their use; and yet you defend this wretch, who has defiled, by the contact of his accursed hand, the game which belongs to a gentleman.'

"'It appears, then,' answered the knight, with bitter irony, 'that a gentleman singularly loves his game, since he attaches more value to a boar's head than to the life of a noble lady, which this poor Cagot preserved at the risk of injuring one of these precious animals.'

"'Was it for high deeds of this nature,' interposed the Lady of Artiguelouve, seeing that her son's countenance fell, 'that the knight took his vows, when he received the honour of the accolade?'

"'I swore, madam,' answered the *caver*, 'to consecrate my arms to the service of religion, and the defence of the widow, the orphan, and the *unprotected*.' [723]

"'And by what enchantment,' rejoined Dame Garsende, 'does your knight-errantship behold in us giants or monsters?'

"'A loyal and christian knight ever sees a monster in oppression, madam. No man can be punished before he is judged, and I see here neither jury, court of knights, or *cour majour*.'

"'If that is all,' cried Odon, 'every formality shall be gone through. Seize this miserable wretch, my friends, and drag him to the justice-seat; we will follow.'"

An immediate movement was made to obey this order; but the knight again interfered.

"'It is well,' said he; 'but if you have a right to take him before a court, he has that of claiming sanctuary. From whence come you, friend?' he added, turning to the Cagot.

"'From the Vallée d'Aspe, sir knight,' was the answer.

"'Then, it would suffice to reach the Pène d'Escot, at the entrance of this valley, to be in an inviolable security, and we would, if it were necessary, escort you as far; but closer still a refuge attends you; you have only to reach the *circle of sanctuary* which yon church of Aubertin offers.'"[44]

[724]

A great struggle now ensues, the Béarnais resolving to oppose the Cagot's entrance to the sanctuary, and the knight and his followers maintaining his attempt. The young Marie of Lignac at length forces her way through the crowd, and laying her hand on the Cagot, demands, by virtue of the *fors et coutumes*, that he be given up to the protection of a noble lady who claims her right to shelter the guilty.

This appeal was not to be treated with contempt; and the mob, perhaps tired of the conflict, gave way with a sudden feeling of respect; while Marie led the persecuted Cagot, surrounded by the knight's men-at-arms, to the door of the church, where he entered, and was in safety.

The next scene of the story introduces the reader to the old knight of Artiguelouve, and the interior of his castle,[45] where the late events are recounted to him by his wife and son, with great bitterness; and envy and offended pride excite the mother and son to resolutions of vengeance, which the father, a man apparently soured with misfortune, and saddened by some concealed sin, can only oppose by expressions of

contempt, which irritate the more.

The demoiselle de Lignac, meantime, is arrived at the Castle of Orthez, and received, as well as her uncle, with great honour by Gaston de Foix, who proposes instituting his beautiful guest the queen of the approaching tournament. [725]

The unknown knight, having left the Cagot with the monks of Aubertin, and acted the part of the good Samaritan by his charge, is next seen pursuing his way southward; where, in the mountains, an interview takes place between him and his father, who is, it seems, a proscribed man. They meet after many years of absence, during which the young knight has won all kinds of honour, having gone to the wars under the care and adoption of a brave champion, Messire Augerot de Domezain; who, dying of his wounds, had recommended his young friend to the King of Castile, from whom he receives knighthood. He learns from his father that the holy hermit, brother of Augerot, under whoso care he was brought up, is dead; and he further learns, that the time is nearly come when the secret of his father's misfortunes will be revealed to him. All that the knight, in fact, knows about himself is, that a cloud hangs over the noble family to which he belongs, and that his father is obliged to conceal himself to escape persecution.

The father and son separate: the one retiring to his retreat in the Vallée d'Aspe, the other journeying onwards to the court of Gaston Phoebus. [726]

He has arrived at Orthez, and has just reached the famous *Hôtel de la Lune*, described by Froissart, when he falls into an ambush, and is carried off by unknown enemies, and thrown into a dungeon in the ruins of an abandoned castle, situated on a hill to the south of the Valley of Geu, between Lagor and Sauvelade—a spot which may still be seen. Here the unfortunate knight is left to lament and mourn, that all his hopes of distinguishing himself in the tournament, and of again seeing the beautiful Marie, are destroyed at once.

The *fêtes* go on, and every thing at Orthez breathes of gaiety and splendour; the people have their games; the Pyrrhic dances, called *sauts Basques*, are in full force, performed by the Escualdunacs in their parti-coloured dresses, and red sashes; the Béarnais execute their spiral dances,[46] and sing their mountain-songs and ballads; some cast great stones and iron bars, in which exercises is distinguished Ernauton d'Espagne, the strong knight mentioned in Froissart as being able to bring into the hall of Gaston an ass fully laden with fuel, and to throw the whole on the hearth, to the great delight of all present. These scenes give occasion to the author to introduce many of the proverbial sayings of the people, which are curious and characteristic. Their strictures on the dress and appearance of the knights and nobles, are in keeping with the freedom of the habits of the day, when the commonalty, however oppressed in some particulars, were allowed a singular latitude of speech. [727]

Amongst their homely sayings, occur the following:—

"Habillat ù bastou qu', aüra l'air d'ù baron."
Dress up a stick, and you can give it the air of a baron.

————

"Nout basquès mey gran hech que non pouchques lheba:"
Do not make a larger fagot than you can lift.

————

"Quabaü mey eslurras dap l'esclop que dap la lengue."
It is better to slide with *sabots* than with the tongue.

————

"Yamey nou fondes maysou auprès d'aigue ni de seignou."
Never build a house near a torrent nor a great lord.

————

"Las sourciéros et lous loup-garous
Aus curés han minya capons."

————

Witches and loup-garoux make priests eat fat capons, *i.e. are to their advantage*—an adage which would seem to infer that the search for sorcery was known to be a *job* in all ages.

The tournament goes on: and, to the great disappointment of the lady of the lists, no stranger-knight appears; and her admirer, Odon, is the victor over all others; when, just at the last moment, the trumpet of the Unknown sounds, and he comes into the arena, and challenges the envious knight, after defeating all the others, Dame Garsende has recourse to a stratagem to overcome him, which fails in regard to him, [728] but overwhelms her son in confusion, and causes his defeat: she cuts the cord of a canopy under which the knight has to pass, in the hope that it will fall in his way, and encumber his advance; but he adroitly catches it on the end of his spear, and Odon, in falling from his horse after the knight's attack, gets entangled in the garlands and drapery, and makes a very ridiculous figure. Of course the stranger-knight is made happy in the chaplet placed on his brow by Marie, and the kiss of custom by which the gift is accompanied. His rival retires, vowing vengeance.

A grand feast then takes place; and as the guests arrive they are severally recognised by the people. The stranger-knight, whose device is *a branch of vine clinging to an aged tree*, is hailed with acclamation, and a tumult of enthusiasm, consequent on his successes and his honourable reception by Gaston Phoebus; to whom, when questioned as to his name and family, he replies that he is called Raymond, the adopted son of Messire Augerot de Domezain. Gaston instantly recognises in him a knight whose valorous deeds are on record, and who saved the life of Marie de Lignac's father, at the battle of Aljubarotta.

Raymond produces a chain of gold, which the dying knight had charged him to deliver to Gaston, to be sent to his daughter; and the tears and thanks of the young [729] lady are the reward of his accomplished mission.

The stranger-knight is now at the height of favour: adopted by Ernauton d'Espagne as his brother-in-arms; welcomed by the gorgeous Gaston Phoebus; hailed by the people; and, above all, loved by Marie. He is, of course, exposed to the evil designs of Garsende and her son, from which he twice escapes; but they are obliged to conceal their enmity, and he is ignorant from whence he is attacked. During a grand banquet, a minstrel, whose verses had warned him to avoid a poisoned cup, unable to approach him near enough to deliver a billet, gives it in charge to one of his favourite men-at-arms, who places it in the sheath of his sword till he can transmit it to his master. This action is observed by Garsende; who, afterwards, taking advantage of the soldier's fondness for the fine vintage of Jurançon, contrives to get possession of the letter, and excites the jealousy of Marie, who imagines it written by a woman, deceived by the expressions, "My beloved Raymond," and the signature of "The Being dearest to your Heart," and the mysterious rendezvous appointed, all of which is, in fact, written by his exiled father. This plot, however, fails, through the candour and devotion of Marie; and the knight keeps the tryst which his father had appointed at a ruined hermitage, formerly tenanted by the preceptor of Raymond, on a lonely hill above the Vallée [730] d'Aspe. Here they meet; and a scene of tenderness on the part of the son, and mystery on that of the father, ensues; in which the latter entreats yet a little time before he discloses certain secrets of moment, concerning the young knight, whose successes appear to produce a strange effect on his mind, almost amounting to regret, for which the other cannot account. When they part, he agrees that, when he has once seen him the husband of Marie,—who, though aware of the mystery which envelopes him, has generously granted him her hand,—and when he knows him to be *removed from all danger*, he will no longer withhold the information he has to give.

They separate; but enemies have been on their track; and the father is watched to his concealed retreat, while Raymond remains sleeping at the foot of the altar, in the hermitage. The intention of Odon d'Artiguelouve, who is on the spot, had been to murder him as he slept; but the information brought him by his spies, who have watched the old man, entirely changes his intentions. A more secure revenge is in his power, and he returns to his castle with extraordinary satisfaction; leaving the happy lover of Marie, and the successful victor of the lists, to his dreams of future bliss.

The great day arrives on which Gaston de Foix has announced a solemn festival, to be held in honour of the Knight of the Vine-branch, and his affianced bride, Marie de [731] Lignac. All the nobles of the country assemble; and, amongst them, the old "grim baron," Loup Bergund d'Artiguelouve, and his family. Minstrels sing, music sounds,

and honours and compliments pour upon the favoured knight; and even his rivals, to judge by their joyous countenances, have only pleasure in their hearts. The Prince of Béarn, and his brilliant court, enter their decorated pavilion amidst the shouts of the assembled guests; the people are admitted to view the jousts; and Raymond advances to the foot of the throne, and receives a paternal embrace from the courteous Gaston Phoebus. The signal is given for the amusements to begin, when a loud voice is heard above the trumpets and the clash of instruments: the herald-at-arms pauses; and Odon d'Artiguelouve, who had cried, "Hold!" stands up in his seat, and thunders forth these ominous words:

"'Suspend the solemnities; for I behold here, on this spot, in presence of our august assembly, one of those impure beings on whom the sun shines with disgust,—who excite horror in heaven and on earth,—whose breath poisons the air we breathe,—whose hand pollutes all it touches. Hold! for, I tell you, there is a Cagot amongst us!'"

As he spoke, he pointed with a frantic gesture of malevolence towards an aged man, wrapped in a large, dark, woollen cloak, who was vainly endeavouring to conceal himself in the crowd. [732]

A cry of horror and indignation burst from all sides: all shrunk back from the profane object indicated; leaving a space around him. A deadly paleness, the effect of amazement and consternation, passed over the face of Raymond; for, in the person of the accused, he recognised—his father!

Raymond almost instantly, however, recovers from the effect of this terrific announcement; and springing forward, and placing himself before the old man, cried out, in a loud and firm voice:

"'He who dares make such an assertion has lied!'

"'How! exclaimed Odon d'Artignelouve; 'dost thou give me the lie? Here is my gage of battle: let him take it up who will.' And, throwing his glove into the midst of the assembly, he continued:

"'I, Odon d'Artiguelouve, to all gentlemen present and to come—knights and nobles—offer to maintain my words, with sword, or battle-axe, or lance, against all who shall have the boldness to deny that yonder old man, wrapped in a dark mantle, now before us, has dared to trample under foot our laws and ordinances, and sully by his impure presence our noble assembly; for he is no other than a vile Cagot, leprous and infected, belonging to the Cagoterie of Lurbe, hid, like a nest of snakes, amongst the rocks of Mount Binet, at the entrance of the Vallée d'Aspe.'" [733]

A shudder of horror ran through the crowd as these words were uttered.

"'And I,' cried the knight, in a voice of furious indignation—'I, Raymond, the adopted son of Augerot de Domezain,—whose real name will, I trust, one day appear,—in virtue of my privileges, my title, and my oath, protest, in defiance of thy rank, thy strength, and thy youth; in despite of thy sword, thy lance, and thy battle-axe,—I protest, in the face of God and the men who hear me, that, from the crown of thy head to the sole of thy foot, thou art an infamous and perjured impostor,—a traitor as black as hell can make thee,—and that thou hast lied in thy throat. My arm and my sword are ready to engrave upon thy body, in characters of blood, the truth of my words!'"

The tone of energetic conviction with which Raymond spoke, his bold and martial bearing, the flash of his eye, and the indignant rage of his manner, impressed his hearers as they listened, and a murmur of applause followed his exclamation. Marie, pale as death, sat like a statue of marble; her hands clasped, her breath suspended, and her eyes fixed wildly on the trembling old man,—the object of all attention.

Odon was about to reply, when Count Gaston, with a heightened colour and an excited air, rose and spoke: [734]

"We are," he said, "deeply displeased that such a discussion should have disturbed the peace of our assembly. You are not ignorant, Sir Raymond, that our laws accord to all men of Béarn the right of combat against the aggressor who has outraged him by the injurious epithets of false and traitor. And you, Sir Odon, remember that here, as in the *Cour Majour*, we owe justice to all,—to the weak as well as the strong; and that, before judgment, proof is necessary."

The old man is now required by Odon to stand forth and answer in full assembly whether he is not called Guilhem, whether he is not a Cagot, and whether he is not a member of the Cagoterie of Lurbe.

A profound silence ensues in the assembly; all, in breathless anxiety, await the answer of the accused, who stands hesitating and apparently unable to utter a word; at length, with an effort, and in a hoarse and trembling voice, he falters from beneath the thick hood which he had drawn over his face, "Heaven has so decreed it—Alas! it is a fatal truth!" Now comes the triumph of the rival of the unfortunate knight; he starts up, wild and fierce, exultation trembling on his envenomed tongue:

"Béarnais!" cried he; "listen to me! If this man, who has dared to call me false and traitor, were a knight, as he calls himself, or a noble, like me, he would, by our laws, [735] be entitled to claim the right of duel, to which he had provoked me, on foot or on horseback, armed at all points; or, were he a man belonging to the people, I being a gentleman, he could oppose me with a shield and a club; or were we both equally peasants, we could fight, each armed according to our rank. But, were I ten times the aggressor, and he the offended party, all combat between him and me is impossible, for he is beneath the knight, the noble, the citizen, the serf, the labourer; beneath the lowest degree in the scale of humanity—beneath the beasts themselves; he is a vile Gesitain, a dog of a leper, an infamous and degraded Cagot, and yonder stands his father!"

Horror takes possession of all—knight, lady, prince, and people. In vain the unfortunate Guilhem, throwing back his cowl and imploring to be heard, proclaims aloud that he is not the father of the noble knight; that Raymond does not belong to their unhappy race, and calls the Redeemer to witness that he speaks the truth; he is treated with scorn and contempt, and the popular fury rises at the disavowal.

Gaston Phoebus commands silence, and calls upon the knight to disprove the fact alleged, and confirm the hope he entertains; but Raymond has no words but these:

"No, noble Prince; I have no power to speak other than the truth; and were the [736] torments I endure ten times heavier, I have only to confess—this is, indeed, my father."

Marie, as he spoke, uttered a wild shriek, and fell senseless to the ground; a yell burst from the crowd, joy and triumph glowed on the countenances of Odon and his mother, and Gaston Phoebus cast himself back in his seat, and covered his face with his robe.

"'Go, Cagot!' roared the pitiless Odon; 'who now is a false traitor, who now has lied, and proved himself a vile impostor? Away with thy helmet, thy sword, and thy spurs; away with all the armour of the craven! Let the herald at arms degrade thee before the world! Where is now thy name, thy titles, thy prerogatives? where are thy fiefs and thy domains? Thy name is *Cagot*, thy possessions leprosy, and every foul disease—every impurity of soul and body; thy castle is a mud hut in the Cagoterie of Lurbe, and this is thy blazon!'"

As he spoke he raised his arm in the air, and, with the frantic force of hate, dashed in the face of the distracted Raymond a piece of red cloth cut into the form of a *goose's foot*.

At the sight of this emblem the populace rose with fury, and rushed in a body, with savage cries, on the unfortunate pair.

A scene of horror now takes place; Raymond is deserted by all his people but one, [737] his favourite man-at-arms, and the generous Arnauton, who will not quit his adopted brother even in such degradation; together they stand against the mob, whose rage the Prince himself is unable to restrain. Odon leads them on; the poor old man is with difficulty rescued from their grasp by the determined valour of his defenders, who are,

however, too few to contend against their foes, and Odon is on the point of attaining the object of his wishes, and beholding the heart's blood of his rival—when assistance comes in the shape of the young Cagot who had saved the life of Ena Marie. At the moment when the blow is falling, and Raymond has no chance of escape, he darts forward, and, seizing Odon in his powerful grasp, drags him to the bridge of the Gave, which is thrown over the torrent, where a mill-wheel is working. There a fearful struggle goes on, which is closed by both combatants being precipitated into the stream, to reappear crushed and mangled by the mighty engine under which they fell.

The bravo young Cagot casts one dying look, full of tenderness and gratitude, towards those who watch his end with pity and despair, and all is over.

On the evening of that fatal day, Guilhem and Raymond, both exhausted and overcome with grief and fatigue, rest themselves in a miserable hut, far away amongst the rocks, in one of the steepest and wildest gorges of Mont Binet. It was one of the [738] accursed and abhorred dwellings of the Cagot village of Lurbe.

The night was black and fearful: a tempest raged in all its terrors without, and occasional gusts of wind and rain penetrated the wretched retreat where the unfortunate fugitives sat, their vestments torn, and their bodies as severely wounded as their minds. Several Cagots, both male and female, from other cabins near, hovered round them, tenderly administering to their wants, and preparing such balms to heal their wounds as their simple knowledge afforded. They accompanied these friendly offices with tears and passionate gesticulations, accompanied by half inarticulate exclamations, such as savages, unused to speech, might do in a strange unvisited land. [739]

"'It is, then, true, my father,' said Raymond, as he looked round on these beings, ill-clothed, poor, degraded by oppression and contempt, scarcely endowed with common intelligence, and miserable to regard—'It is, then, true, that you are a Cagot, and that these are my brothers and my equals? Ah! why did you let me wander into a world which I ought never to have known? Why did you not let me live and die a Cagot as I was born? These, then, are Cagots!'

"'Yes,' cried Guilhem, weeping bitterly; 'Yes, we are Cagots, and all men are our persecutors; and yet, when one of *their* children falls into our hands, we do not ill-use it, we do not torture it, we do not crush it beneath the wheels of a mill; we do good for evil, and they repay us by evil alone! Ah! I am as if bound on a flaming pile, my tears are like molten lead on my cheeks. I!—a wretched, vile Cagot!—I should die with pity if I saw one of my executioners in the state to which they have reduced me!'

"'My father, my dear father, calm yourself,' said Raymond, with tender affection; 'your son, at least, is left you.'

"'No, no,' cried the old man, passionately;'my son is not left me; my son is dead; he was torn in pieces by the mill-wheel of Orthez. I am not your father; you are not—you [740] never were, you never can be—my son; this is the first word of the secret I have to tell you.'

"'What do you tell me!' cried Raymond, in amazement! 'Your disavowal was not, then, a deception, prompted by paternal affection! What! are you not my father? and was that generous creature, sacrificed for my sake, indeed your son!'

"'He was my child, my only child! the only living being attached to me by the ties of blood—the only creature who would have listened to my last agonized sigh at my hour of death. And see what was his fate, for me! I allowed him to venture for my sake amongst the ferocious people; see to what an end his devotion and gratitude to you had led him!' So saying, the unfortunate old man uncovered the mutilated remains of his unfortunate son, rescued from the stream, and transported to the spot by the compassionate care of Arnauton d'Espaigne. The body lay on a rustic couch, enveloped in a white shroud, which is always, according to the usage of the country, prepared long before death, a taper of yellow wax shed its feeble rays on the corpse'."

The grief and lamentations of Guilhem are interrupted by the rites which then take place; the men wringing their hands, and gesticulating, and cursing the cruelty of the world: the women weeping and wailing; and one of those endowed with poetical [741]

powers, improvising a lament over the body, uttering her words in a melancholy cadence, deeply expressive of the grief of all.

"'Alas, Gratien!' she moaned; 'thou hast then left us! thou hast deserted thy aged father—gone without a pressure of the hand! Gratien, may God receive thy soul! To live is to suffer. Life is like the wheel by which thou wert torn. Thou wert in the right to fly it. Happy child! thou art gone to a place where there are no Cagots, no men to persecute thee; thou wilt know now who were the ancestors from whom we descend. Thou hast no more use for the pruning-knife and the infamous axe. No more toil nor suffering await thee; no more contempt nor outrage! Accursed be the wheel, oh, Gratien, which crushed thee! never may the torrent wash out thy blood which stains it; let it turn for ever red and bloody! No bell tolled for thy soul; but the thunder and the wind, oh, Gratien! Toll louder still—no bell for the Cagot! But Heaven weeps with us, the trees groan with us. Old man! thou dost not weep alone. Adieu, dear Gratien, thy body is returned to thy cabin; but thy soul, escaped the demon, is fled on a beam of the moon to the great house of heaven! Yes, he cries—I am in heaven; I am telling the Cagots, our ancestors, that their children are still in suffering!'"

Guilhem, comforted by the tenderness of Raymond, recovers in some degree his self- [742]
possession, and proceeds to relate to the young knight the manner of his falling, when an infant, into his charge. The narrative is as follows:—

"'In 1360, twenty-six years ago, when I was myself thirty-nine years of age, the event happened which I have now to tell you. I was a Cagot from my birth, by my parents and my ancestors—a proscribed outcast of unkind nature, like these you see around—poor, ignorant, timid, and a mark for insult and contempt. I had already suffered much; for God, alas! had given me a heart formed to feel and to love; yet long habits of endurance had, in great measure, rendered it callous and insensible, unaided as I was by intellectual culture.

"'I married a woman of my race; but, after a year, she died, leaving me in lonely widowed sorrow, with one child. Alas! he has just rejoined his mother, and rude is the journey which has conducted him to her!

"'At this period, as you know, and as I afterwards learnt from the mouth of your venerable preceptor, the holy hermit, all France was overrun with bands of marauders and robbers of every nation, called the *late-comers*.[47] Béarn was no more free from them than other parts of the kingdom. One day, I was returning from Oloron, my heart more sad than usual,—cursing men and life, for I had been the object of new injuries, [743]
—when a chief of one of these predatory bands suddenly presented himself before me; and, addressing me, said: 'Good man, will you do a kind action? Take this infant, abandoned to my men-at-arms by an unfaithful servant. I have saved it from their inhumanity: it has that about it which will pay your trouble.' I saw that he held in his arms a child, who was weeping bitterly; when I looked on its lovely face—round, innocent, and rosy—my heart was touched, and I accepted the charge.

"'Alas! the sweet creature knew not that it had fallen into the hands of a Cagot; for no sooner had I received it on my bosom, than it ceased crying; and, so far from showing repugnance to one about to become its father, its hands were stretched towards me, and it smiled in my face. My dear Raymond, thou wert this infant sent by Providence to my care.'"

The old man then relates his bringing home the child; employing a goat to nourish it; and at length confiding it to the charge and instruction of the hermit of Eysus, the only being whose religion or charity allowed him to listen to the confession of the Cagot. While Raymond, however, was yet an infant, and but a short time after Guilhem had received him, the latter was, one day, returning from an expedition to the town, where the wants of his family obliged him to resort, and passed by the ruins of the old tower [744]
(the very place in which Raymond afterwards became a prisoner, and was rescued, by the fortunate familiarity of Guilhem with the spot, in time to appear at the tournament).

"'I had,' said he, 'taken from my dress the ignominious mark of my degradation; and, in full security, was gathering at my leisure some herbs destined for your use, when it so happened that some shepherds of the Vallée d'Aspe observed and at once recognised me; and their usual superstition acting on them at the supposed ill-omen of meeting a Cagot picking herbs, they attacked me with one accord, and commenced pelting me with stones, and using every epithet of opprobrium. I was struck to the earth; then they dragged me to the entrance of a sort of inclined cavern, called in the country 'The Den of the Witches'[48]. With coarse jests they thrust me through the opening, exclaiming that, as the evil spirits raised tempests when stones were thrown in there, perhaps they would be appeased by receiving the body of a Cagot.

"'I fell to some distance, rolling along the declivity; and my body stopped at the bottom on the damp earth. When I had a little recovered, I prepared to attempt an escape, as I heard that my tormentors had departed; but, on reaching the opening, I found a barrier which I had not looked for: these wretched men had lighted a fire of [745]
weeds and brushwood at the mouth of the cave. The flames raged violently, excited by the current of air from within, and I soon felt the effect; sparks and pieces of burning timber fell in; and my wounded body was soon a prey to a scorching shower which poured down upon me.

"'A greater fire rose within my soul,—my injuries had driven me to despair; my brain reeled, and the torments of hell seemed within me and around. Hatred and bitter vengeance rose boiling from my heart; and I cursed all human nature,—invoking ruin and destruction on mankind, from whom I had never known pity, I raved in my burning prison, and gave myself up to fury and despair, when Heaven took compassion on my misery. A lighted brand which fell from above disclosed, by the vivid flash it cast through the gloom, an opening at the other end; and I clearly distinguished a covered way, evidently made by human hands, which seemed to run along to some distance before me. I retreated into its shelter, and my heart revived once more.

"'I advanced some little way and reposed myself, when, suddenly, I thought I could distinguish in the distance vague and interrupted sounds. A shudder came over me; and at first I dreaded to move; but, at length, I forced myself to do so; and, gathering up one of the lighted brands, I yielded to my curiosity, and proceeded forward. [746]

"'Presently the sounds became more distinct; and I could not mistake the voice of wailing and lamentation, which found an echo in my own heart and awakened its sympathies. I continued my way cautiously; and, after a few minutes, found myself at an opening, formed in a shelving position, in the manner of a loop-hole, closed with two flagstones, not so near but that a space was left wide enough for me to see into a vaulted chamber beyond, which at the moment was lighted by a torch.

"'A young and beautiful woman was seated on the ground, in an attitude of profound grief, leaning against the wall opposite. A man of high stature, and who might be about my own age, stood at a little distance, and looked towards her with a ferocious and menacing air, in which there was, nevertheless, an appearance of what might be thought shame, for the glance was oblique, as if he avoided meeting her eye. The light fell full upon his face, which was so remarkable in its expression, that I could not detach my regard from him, and his features remain deeply graven on my memory.

"'You are, then, obstinately resolved to drive me to extremity,' said he, 'and will not consent to my demand?'

"'What?' answered the lady, in a voice of grief, but full of energy, 'shall I despoil my [747]
son of his rights and his inheritance without knowing that he is dead, and that in favour of my most cruel enemies? No! he may yet live—Providence may yet watch over him—restore him one day to the world, when he will come to claim his own and revenge his mother's wrongs!'

"'You have no alternative but a fearful death, remember!' said the man, in hoarse accents.

"'Rather any death than abandon my child!' was the answer.

"'Then, madam,' returned her companion, 'your will shall be done—impute your fate to your own conduct.'

"As he pronounced these words, he approached the door of the dungeon, where stood another female in the shade, who contemplated the scene in silence, with an

unmoved and chilling aspect. They then left the place together, fastening the heavy door carefully, while the sound of their keys and chains sent a fearful echo through the vaulted apartment. Their victim fell back in a state of desolation, pitiable to behold, and burst into passionate tears, praying fervently to Heaven, and uttering exclamations which might melt the stoutest heart.'

"'I was deeply moved to behold her; and, in a low voice, ventured to exclaim: 'Madam, be of good cheer! Heaven hears you; and has sent one to your aid who is ready to exert every effort, for your relief.' [748]

"'What voice is that?' cried she, starting.

"'Be not terrified!' I answered; 'it is that of a mortal, guided hither by the hand of God!'

"'At the same time I applied myself to loosen the stones at the loop-hole, and with much difficulty succeeded in doing so; but, in spite of all my precautions, the unfortunate lady, bewildered with fear and grief, was so astonished when I appeared through the opening, that she uttered a cry and fainted on the ground.

"'Without losing a moment, I took her in my arms, and carried her through to the subterranean way. I then replaced the stones as closely as I could, and hastened to bear her to the mouth of the cave, which I now found without obstacle, the fire extinct, and nothing to impede our progress.

"'Oh, Raymond! the ways of Providence are inscrutable! This dungeon, from whence I had rescued that innocent victim, is the same where, a few days since, you were thrown by the hands of enemies; and the lady who had nearly perished there was—your mother!'

"'Great Heaven!' exclaimed Raymond, 'my mother! condemned to such horrors—buried in the earth alive;—oh! to find the author of her injuries!'

"'I saw that person this very day,' replied Guilhem; 'I recognised him in the old man who was seated on the right of your rival.' [749]

"'That was his father, the lord of Artiguelouve,' cried Raymond.

"'Then it was no other than the lord of Artiguelouve who was your mother's persecutor.'"

The Cagot now goes on to relate, that, on bringing the unfortunate lady to this village, she recognised, in the infant he had adopted, her own son. She recounted, that those persons whom he had seen in her dungeon had plotted to remove both her and the infant, as their existence interfered with certain plans of their own. One of her servants had been bribed, who, under pretence of bearing the child to a place of safety, and the better to deceive her, having taken with it jewels of value, had feigned to be set upon by robbers, and had her son forcibly torn from him. Three months afterwards, the man, overcome with remorse and wretchedness for his crime, fell sick, and, on his death-bed, desired secretly to see the mother, who wept for her infant as dead; to whom he related the truth. This information was fatal to herself; for her enemies now threw off the mask, and insisted on her renouncing for her son all claim to the estates and titles of which he was the heir; which she having refused to do, they treated her in the manner that has been related. [750]

A mystery still hung over the revelations of the lady, who named no persons in her story, and who appeared to dread to make further disclosures; and, above all, she desired that no vengeance should be taken on the authors of her grief.

"'There are crimes,' she said, 'which recoil on those who perpetrate them: he who sows vengeance, reaps not peace: and I would that my son should feel that mercy is the highest attribute of humanity. Keep, therefore, the secret of his birth from him, and let him know only tranquillity and joy.'"

The Cagot promised to comply with her christian desire, and, together with the pious hermit of Eysus, to bring up her son in piety, and ignorance of his station, until he should be one day safe from the danger of his enemies. The unfortunate mother left a

letter, addressed to the Sire de Lescun—a friend on whom she could rely—which, on some future occasion, was to be delivered to him; but the long absence of the Knight of Lescun, in the wars, had hitherto prevented its being done.

Whether the mother of Raymond would have continued in the same intentions, cannot be known; for grief and sickness soon brought her to the close of her sad career. When she was dying, the poor man who had succoured her and her child, conceiving that he was not acting according to his conscience, in withholding from her the exact situation in which he was himself placed, threw himself on his knees at her [751] bed-side, and with tears entreated her forgiveness, for that he had the misfortune to be *a Cagot*.

"'Have pity upon me,' said he, 'that I thus add to the weight of sorrow which you carry with you to the tomb.'"

Instead of the start of abhorrent contempt which the persecuted man dreaded, she turned upon him a look of the most ineffable benevolence; and, placing her cold hand upon his head, uttered these words:—

"'It is well;—Cagot since thou art, I bless thee; for thy heart is more noble than the proudest blazon could make it.'

"No human description can convey an idea of the impression made on the heart of the good man by these few words,—the first of pity and consolation he had ever heard addressed to one of his own fated race. A new life, a new being seemed given him as he heard them; and, from that instant, he vowed to exist only for the salvation of the being left behind by the angel who had shed her benediction upon him. She died, and he kept his word."

The supreme tribunal of Béarn, the *Cour Majour*, was assembled at Orthez, in one of the grand saloons of the castle of Moncade, to dispense to the people, by its irrevocable decrees, the national justice of its celebrated *Fors*. Great excitement prevailed; for it was known that the Knight-Cagot, or Cagot-Knight, as Raymond was [752] called, was about to appear, to defend himself from his accusers.

"The Lord and Lady of Artiguelouve were present in the great assembly, summoned to appear for their deceased son, to support the charge he had made. The fair Marie de Lignac sat pale and agitated, supported by her uncle, the Knight of Lescun. The Bishops of Lescar and Oloron, the eleven judges,[49] and all the nobles of the country attended, and were seated on elevated benches, in due order, near Prince Gaston de Foix."

After a consultation of some length, these *equitable* magistrates had decided that justice should be allowed to the complainant, and punishment awarded to those who had injured him, provided that he could prove that he was *a man* and not *a Cagot*.

Nothing now remains for Raymond but the presentation of his mother's letter, and all the proofs which establish his birth. On opening the paper, and on examining the embroidery on the mantles which wrapped the rescued infant; on looking at the initials of the chain of gold, the Knight of Lescun recognised the son of his cousin, Marguerite d'Amendaritz, first wife of Messire Loup Bergund, who, when he hears the truth, is seized with sudden remorse and amazement, and, being now without an heir, [753] is not sorry to recover him whom he had before abandoned to destruction. In spite, therefore, of the indignation of his wife—and her endeavours to repress his agitation throughout the scene—he starts up, and proclaims himself the father of Raymond: who, he declares aloud, is his long-lost son,—stolen from him by *routiers*—whose loss had cost him the life of a beloved wife, whom he deplored.

The result is, however, far different to his expectations, or that of all present. The young knight, on finding that he is the son of a man so laden with crime as Loup Bergund, is seized with a frenzy of contempt and disgust.

"His open and expansive forehead became contracted with horror—he stood silent a few seconds, petrified and overwhelmed with his emotions—his body shrinking back in an attitude of repulsion and dislike, as if a venomous reptile were before his sight. His regard then fell full on Loup Bergund, and the terrible severity of its expression made

the unworthy tyrant shrink beneath his glance of fire.

"*You* my father!"—exclaimed he, at length, in a terrible voice—"do *you* open your arms to me as to your son? Hence!—back! there is nothing in common between us—we can be nothing to each other! I know you not. Go—say to your captive of yonder dungeon that her son is dead; that the *routiers* have stolen him: you my father! no; you have no son—it is a falsehood—you are a great lord, and I a wretched foundling—a [754] being without a name—one disdained by wolves and robbers. No; you are not my father. I have no other but he who stands beside me; I am the son of no other than the poor Cagot."

As he spoke, Raymond dashed the chain of gold on the ground, and trampled it under his feet—he seized his mother's letter from the hands of the Knight of Lescun, and thrusting it into the flame of a torch hard by, burnt it to ashes; then, throwing himself into the arms of Guilhem, he burst into a passion of tears. Recovering himself, however, in a few moments—while all looked on silent and aghast—he cried aloud—

"'And now I am, indeed, a Cagot—irrevocably so—and it is my glory and my joy! But hear me all! while I proclaim what you are worth, and those whom you dare to despise, and for whom the Redeemer died, as well as for us all: You are decked in gold and gorgeous raiment, and they are in rags; but they have hearts which beat beneath, and you have souls of ice: you are their executioners, and they are martyrs. You cast your wives and children into the dungeons of your castles, from whence the poor Cagots save them: you are great upon the earth, but they will be great in Heaven!"

These last words fell, like thunder, upon the ears of all, but most on those of Gaston Phoebus—who thought of his murdered son—and writhed with agony. Raymond [755] continued:

"'God will yet do justice, in his time, to the oppressors of the innocent. Your names, in future ages, will be execrated. Meantime, keep your pomp, your pleasures, your grandeur, and your luxury; while our possessions are opprobrium and contempt, shame, banishment, and suffering—days without sun, and nights without repose or shelter. Yes, drive us from you—you know that we are infectious, that we shall contaminate your purity—Away! Room, room for the Cagots!'"

And Raymond and Guilhem retired through the crowd, which shrunk back, appalled, to let them pass.

The next day Marie de Lignac received a letter, the contents of which were never seen but by her tear-dimmed eyes; nor ever re-read by her after she entered the convent of Marciniac.

The Lord of Artiguelouve, on his death-bed, was a prey to the most bitter repentance: he implored that some priest of more than common sanctity should hear his last confession; and one was discovered in a holy hermit, who, when he was summoned from his retreat, was found kneeling beside a humble tomb, where he passed all his days in prayer, with rigorous fasting and unwearied penance. He obeyed the call of the expiring sinner, and received his last sigh. Thus did the repentant Lord of Artiguelouve meet the forgiveness of his son, Raymond: for it was he that closed his [756] eyes with a blessing, and then returned to his hermitage to weep by the tomb of his father, the Cagot.

I am indebted to M. Baron du Taya's (of Rennes) learned researches and obliging kindness for a few particulars respecting the Cacous of Brittany.

It is thought there that this proscribed race are the descendants of *leprous Jews*, which would at once account for the detestation in which they continued to be held, but for the term *"Chrestaàs"* applied to them, which destroys that supposition: again, it is said that they are descended from original *lepers*, and that diseases are inherent in their blood—though not leprosy, it may be epilepsy: for this reason, the *rope-makers* of Ploermel were held in abhorrence, and are even now shunned: they are irritated when the term *caqueux* is applied to them, but it is common to call them *Malandrins*—a word of opprobrium, only less shocking to their ears. They had always their separate burial-ground and chapel; and, till the revolution of 1789, the prejudice existed against

them: even now it is not entirely extinct.

Rope-makers, coopers, and *tailors* are still held in a certain degree of contempt in Brittany, as those of these trades were formerly all looked upon as Cacous.

The Cacous of St. Malo met with some compassion from Duke Francis II., the father [757] of Anne of Brittany; and also in the time of Francis I., King of France, ordinances were made in their favour; but they were not so fortunate as their brethren of Rome, who, in the sixteenth century, are said to have sold, in one Holy week, rope to the amount of two thousand crowns, to make *disciplines*.

In 1681, a law was passed to this effect; "Seeing that there are no longer any Leprous, *Ladres*, or *Caquins* at Kerroch, parish of St. Caradec d'Hennebon, there is in future to be no distinction made in the inhabitants of this village—who formerly had their burial-ground and chapel apart—and all shall be admitted to the benefit of parish assistance during their lives, and buried in the church after their death. For it is considered that it *was ill and abusively* ordained by the Bishop of Vannes, in 1633, that the wives of the said inhabitants should not be purified, except in their own chapels; for it is well ascertained that no native of the said village of Kerroch has ever been afflicted with leprosy."

Notwithstanding this sensible and humane act, the people of Kerroch are not free from the absurd suspicion even yet.

"It would appear," observes M. Baron du Taya, "that the Cacous were first a subdivision of lepers, and afterwards, by hereditary *remembrance* of them, the latter were always the objects of commiseration amongst the professors of religion and chivalry. Thus the first Grand Master of St. Lazare was himself a leper. Several great [758] names occur amongst these Grand Masters: such as Jean de Paris, in 1300; a Bourbon in 1521; and, under Henri IV., a Philibert de Nerestang."

In 1436 a prohibition was issued against the *Cacosi* receiving the kiss of peace, and the kiss of the monks, *before men who were whole*; it was not denied them, but they were to be *the last*.

In many places in Brittany the rope-makers work out of the towns near those places where lazar-houses were once established. They were not authorized to place their benches in the lower part of the church at Pontivy till after the revolution in 1789! The villagers still look upon certain rope-makers, tailors, and coopers, as possessing *an evil eye*, and are in the habit of concealing their *thumbs* under the rest of their fingers, [50] and pronouncing the word *argaret* as a counter-spell: this word is unintelligible even to the Bas-Bretons themselves. The prejudice still exists in Finisterre against the Cacous: the village of Lannistin is one of their abodes. The Cagot girls of Béarn are said never to be able to draw water from a brook or well without spilling half of it: so that their houses are always dirty, and themselves thirsty. Probably the same misfortune exists in Brittany, for there is little cleanliness to be found there.

Perhaps, after all, the most probable conjecture as to the origin of these unhappy [759] Cagots is, that they were persons *suspected of witchcraft*, and banished in the first instance from society, to which traditional prejudice prevented their return; and, though the cause of their banishment was no longer remembered, the abhorrence they had once inspired did not wear out with ages. The supposition of their having been *the first Christians*, persecuted and contemned, and never regaining the world's good opinion, seems a notion difficult to adopt, except that the first Christians were suspected of sorcery and communication with evil spirits. "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils." If such were, indeed, the case, what a lesson for prejudice and superstition, that the descendants of the earliest converts should be persecuted by their Christian brethren!

The Vallée d'Aspe, where the scene of the preceding story is laid, is one of the most picturesque of Béarn, and the customs of its people remarkable.

The Pic d'Anie, whose solemn height rises above the village of Lescun, is regarded by the Aspois as the sojourn of a malignant deity. From thence come the fearful storms which desolate the country, and no inhabitant of the village will dare to climb the ascent: it is looked upon as a piece of presumption to attempt it; for it is believed that the Jin of the mountain, called the Yona Gorri, or flame-coloured spirit, has there fixed [760] his solitary abode, and has his garden on the summit, which he will not allow to be

visited by strangers. Certain evil spirits have occasionally been seen in his company, each holding a lighted torch and dressed in shining scarlet habiliments: they thus surround the chief, and dance round him to the music of an unearthly instrument, like a drum. Loups-garoux, and sorcerers mounted on dragons and other animals, may be seen in the air, wending their way towards Anic, as far as from Jurançon, Gan, and St. Faust.

At Escout is a fairy oak, beneath which, whoever places an empty vase, having belief, will find it, after a short period, when he returns, full of gold and silver: there are known to exist persons in the Vallée d'Aspe whose fortune had no other source.

There is a famous rock at the entrance of the valley, the object of attraction to all females who desire to become mothers. Many of the superstitions are similar to those in the Landes where the belief in the power of the demon is generally received. The *Homme Noir*—a fearful spirit with large black wings—may frequently be seen perched on the summit of the highest peaks, shaking from his pinions showers of hail, which break the early flowers and crush the rising corn.

There are persons, even now—though they are rarer than in the time of that acute discoverer, De Lancre—who are believed to deserve the name of *Poudoueros, Hantaumos, Brouchos, Mahoumos*, for they are votaries of the evil one, and many spells are requisite to avoid their "witch knots," and "combs of care," &c. [761]

Presages can be drawn from the croak of a magpie, from the rush of waters, and the howling of dogs. If a flower is seen to expand on a barren rock, or in a place where there is no other vegetation, it is looked upon as an augury of an abundant harvest throughout the country. But if a tree spreads its branches over the roof of a house it announces all sorts of misfortunes: the sons of that house will perish in a foreign land: the lovers of those daughters will be faithless: the parents will be abandoned by their children, and die in aged destitution.

If a single rose is left

"——Blooming alone,
Its lovely companions all faded and gone;"

and if it grows with its beautiful head inclined towards a cottage, woe to the inhabitant; he has but a brief space of existence left him! Let every one beware of insulting the fountains; for if a stone or any rubbish is thrown into their waters, the person doing so will perish by thunder!

At the entrance of the Vallée d'Aspe, on the Spanish side, is St. Christine, where formerly stood one of those *hôpitaux des ports*, erected by benevolence for the safety of pilgrims and travellers. This was called, in a bull of Innocent III., *one of the three hospitals of the world*; but it has been long since destroyed. [762]

The forests of Itseaux, Gabas, Benou, and Irati, were formerly the most considerable in this part of the Pyrenees: that of St. Engrace is still very extensive. About a century ago the forest of Itseaux was so thick, and so little known in its vast extent, that more than one person was lost in its depths. A singular circumstance occurred at that period, which may give an idea of the perfection of its solitude. A young girl of about sixteen or seventeen was found there in a savage state: she had been a denizen of the shades from the age of seven or eight. All that was known of her was, that she had been left by some other little girls in the woods, having been surprised by the snow. The shepherds who found her conducted her to the hospital of Mauléon: she never spoke, nor gave any sign of recollecting the past; they gave her grass and vegetables to eat, but she continued to droop, and in a very short time died of grief for the loss of her liberty.

About twenty years after this a wild man was observed in the same forest: he was very tall, and strongly built, hairy like a bear, active as an izard, and perfectly harmless. His delight was in coursing the sheep and dispersing them, uttering loud peals of laughter at the confusion he created. Sometimes the shepherds sent their dogs after him, but he never suffered them to come up with him. Nothing was known or traced respecting his history, and he appears to have finished his wild career in the forest: probably he was some child left by accident or design in that savage solitude; where, like Orson, some bear nursed him, but who never found a Valentine to restore him to humanity. [763]

Itseaux still presents an immense extent of wood: it covers one side of the mountains of Lescun, fills the valley of Barétous, and joins the great forest of St. Engrace, to the entrance of the Vallée de Soule. It is the largest of the Pyrenean forests.

There is scarcely a valley in the Pyrenees to which some celebrity is not attached. Amongst others, the Vallée d'Aspe resounds with the fame of the pastoral poet, Despourrins: and Ariosto has celebrated that of Gavarnie, where, in the *Tours de Marboré*, he places the abode of some of his heroes.

"Charlemagne, Agramont, tous leurs fameux héros;
Les Zerbin, les Roger, les Roland, les Renaud:
De ces Palais du Temps habitent les ruines.

* * * * * * * *

Tout parle d'Arioste en ce fameux vallon
Et comme aux champs Troyens, chaque roche à son nom."

Cyprien Despourrins, though he wrote as one of the people, and *for* them, was not a man of obscure birth; his family was originally of a race of shepherds; but one of his ancestors having made his fortune in Spain, returned a great man to his native valley, [764] the beautiful Vallée d'Aspe, and there bought the Abbey of Juzan, and became a proprietor, with many privileges. The father of the poet inherited his estates, and distinguished himself in the career of arms, being cited for his bravery, the character of which bears the impress of the times in which he lived, namely, the end of the seventeenth century. Numerous anecdotes are told of him: amongst others, that he had had a dispute with three foreign gentlemen; and in order to get the quarrel off his hands at once, he challenged them all three at the same time, and came off victorious in the combat. To perpetuate the memory of his victory, he obtained from the King permission to have engraved, over the principal entrance of his house, *three swords*, which may still be seen on the stone of the old building shown as his residence. After this notable exploit, Pierre Despourrins visited the *Eaux de Cauteretz*, where, in the neighbourhood of Argelez he formed an acquaintance with the family of Miramont, and an attachment to the fair Gabrielle, daughter of that house; through his marriage with whom, he afterwards became possessor of the château of Miramont, near St. Savin, destined to become famous by means of his son, the famous poet Cyprien. The château is still to be seen, and is a great lion in the neighbourhood. [765]

There are constant disputes between the people of Bigorre and Béarn, as to which has the greater right to claim the poet as their own, for he belonged to both; but as he chose the musical *patois* of the latter in which to sing his pastorals, it appears but just that the Béarnese should have the preference. He was born at Accous, in 1698: his two brothers, Joseph and Pierre, became, one the vicar, the other the curate of the village, and *he* was called, *par excellence*, the *chevalier*. There is a curious story told, illustrative of the simple manners of these mountaineer-priests. The two brothers were very musical: one played the flute, the other the violin; and every Sunday their talents were exerted for the benefit of their parishioners. All the young people of the place were accustomed to meet in the court-yard of their house; and, seated at a casement, the reverend pair played to their dancing. As soon as the bell sounded for vespers, the ball was suspended, and all the docile flock accompanied the good pastors to church.

The chevalier had inherited his father's warlike qualities, and was, it seems, always ready with his sword. He was at the *Eaux Bonnes* when he received an affront from a stranger, which—as Sir Lucius O'Trigger has it,—"his honour could not brook." Unluckily, he had not his sword with him, and the affair must be decided at once; he therefore sent his servant to Accous to fetch it, recommending him great promptitude [766] and address in inventing some story to prevent his father from guessing his errand. The servant used his utmost despatch, and thought he had managed very cleverly to avert suspicion: the old knight, however, was too clear-sighted in such matters; and, having divined the state of the case, mounted his mule instantly, and secretly followed the messenger. He traversed the mountains of Escot and Benou, and, braving all their difficulties, arrived at the Eaux Bonnes. On asking for his son, he was informed that he was closeted with a stranger: he repaired thither, and, pausing at the door, heard the clashing of swords. Satisfied that all was as he surmised, the imperturbable old knight

remained quietly at his post, awaiting the issue of the combat. At length the noise of arms ceased; young Despourrins came out precipitately, and found his father on the watch, who, embracing him tenderly, exclaimed—"Your servant's hasty departure prevented my setting out with him; but I followed closely, guessing that you had an affair of honour on your hands; and, in case you should fall, I brought my sword with me, which has never yet failed at need." "I am your son," replied the Chevalier; "my adversary is grievously wounded; let us hasten to afford him assistance."

After Despourrins, the son, was established near St. Savin, and the estates of the Vallée d'Aspe were abandoned by his father for his new domain, he seems to have [767] given himself up to the charms of poetry and music, living the life of a shepherd, and familiarizing himself with the habits, customs, manners and pleasures of that simple race, until he spoke with their words, and thought with their thoughts. Whoever has visited the beautiful Valley of Argelez, and wandered amongst the wilds in the neighbourhood of the once famous abbey of St. Savin, can well understand the poet's delight in such a retreat, and will not wonder when he is told that Despourrins often passed whole nights in the woods, singing his verses, like one transformed to a nightingale. Even now the songs he sung are remembered and cherished; and though the *pastous* of his native mountains probably know nothing of the poet, his lays are constantly on their tongues. One of the most famous is a romance, called "La Haüt sus las Mountagnes," which I give entire, with a translation in prose and verse, in order to show the nature of this Troubadour language, which differs from the Gascon dialect, in being softer and less guttural; in fact, resembling rather more the Italian than Spanish language:—

La haüt sus las Mountagnes, û Pastou malhurous
Ségut aü pè d'û Haû, négat de plous,
Sounyabe aü cambiamen de sas amous.

"Cô leüyé, cô boulatye!" disé l'infourtunat,
"La tendresse et l'amou qui t'ey pourtat
Soun aco lous rébuts qu'ey méritat? [768]

"Despuch que tu fréquentes la yen de counditiou
Qu'as près û tà haüt bôl, que ma maysou,
N'ey prou haüte entà tu d'û cabirou.

"Tas oüilles d'ab las mies, nous dégnen plus meacla;
Touns superbes moutous, despuch ença,
Nou s'approchen deüs més, qu'entaüs tuma

"De richesses me passi, d'aünous, de qualitat:
You nou soy qu'û Pastou; més noùn n'y a nad
Que noüs surpassi touts, en amistat,

"Encouère que ay praübé, dens moun pétit estat,
Qu'aïmi mey moun Berret tout espélat,
Qué nou pas lou plus bèt Chapeü bourdat.

"Las richesses deü moundé nou bèn queda turmen;
Et lou plus bèt Seignou, dab soun aryen,
Nou baü pas lou Pastou qui biü counten.

"Adiü, cô de tygresse, Pastoure chens amou,
Cambia, bé pots carabia de serbidou:
Yamey noun troubéras û tau coum you!"

TRANSLATION.

High up, amongst the mountains, an unfortunate
shepherd
was seated at the foot of a beech, drowned in tears,
musing on
the changes of his love.

"Oh light, oh fickle heart!" said the unhappy youth; "for
the tenderness and the affection which I have borne
towards you,
is this wretchedness a fitting reward?

"Since you have frequented the society of persons of
condition,
your flight has been so high that my humble cottage is
too low
for you by at least a stage.

"Your flocks no longer deign to mix with mine; your
haughty
rams, since that period, never approach mine but a
battle
ensues. [769]

"I am without wealth or dignity; I am but a simple
shepherd
but there is none that can surpass me in affection.

"And methinks, according to my simple ideas, that I
prefer my
berret, old and worn as it is, to the finest ornamented
hat that
could be given me.

"The riches of the world only bring uneasiness with
them, and
the finest lord with all his possessions cannot compare
to the
shepherd who lives content.

"Adieu, tigress-heart! Shepherdess without affection;
change,
change, if you will, your adorers, never will you find any
so true
as I have been."

I here give a metrical version of the same song:

DESPOURRINS.

————

"La Haut sas las Mountagnes."

————

ABOVE, upon the mountains,
A shepherd, full of thought,
Beneath a beech sat musing
On changes time had wrought:
He told to ev'ry echo
The story of his care,
And made the rocks acquainted
With love and its despair.

"Oh! light of heart," he murmur'd,
"Oh! fickle and unkind!
Is this the cold return
My tenderness should find?
Is this a fit reward
For tenderness like mine?—
Since thou hast sought a sphere
Where rank and riches shine, [770]

"Thou canst not cast a thought
Upon my lowly cot;

And all our former vows
Are in thy pride forgot.
For thee to enter in,
My roof is far too low,
Thy very flocks disdain
With mine to wander now.

"Alas! I have no wealth,
No birth, no noble name,
A simple shepherd youth
Without a hope or claim;
But none of all the train
That now thy favours share
Can bear, as I have borne,
Or with my love compare.

"I'd rather keep my habits,
Tho' humble and untaught,
Than learn the ways of courts,
With dang'rous falsehood fraught;
I'd rather wear my bonnet,
Tho' rustic, wild, and worn,
Than flaunt in stately plumes
Of courtiers highly born.

"The riches of the world
Bring only care and pain,
And nobles great and grand
With many a rich domain,
Can scarcely half the pleasures,
With all their art, secure,
That wait upon the shepherd
Who lives content and poor.

"Adieu, thou savage heart!
Thou fair one without love:
I break the chain that bound us,
And thou art free to rove. [771]

But know, when in thy vanity,
Thou wanderest alone,
No heart like mine will ever
Adore as I have done."

The royal circle of Neuilly has been enlivened sometimes by the sound of the Béarnese minstrelsy; and, on one occasion, listened to a band of mountaineers from Luchon, who undertook, a few years since, a journey through Europe, singing their choruses in all the principal cities. On hearing the above song of Despourrins, the King exclaimed, with his usual ready kindness,—"Your songs alone would be sufficient to make one love your country."

Several celebrated singers, favourites in the Italian world, were natives of Béarn: one of these, Garat, surnamed "the musical Proteus," was born at Ustaritz. Nothing appeared impossible to this prodigious singer: his voice was splendid and his taste exquisite: his only defect was an inordinate vanity—by no means an uncommon fault in artists of this description. A person on one occasion, thinking to embarrass him, inquired how high in the scale he could go; "I can mount as high as it pleases me to go," was his reply. He used frequently to surprise the Parisians by the introduction of Basque and Béarnese airs, whose peculiarity and originality never failed to cause the [772] most lively admiration and enthusiasm; but he did not announce them as mountain songs till he had secured the praise he sought for them, having passed them for Italian productions. A similar *ruse* was practised by Mehul, when he brought out his "Irato," which the public was given to imagine was composed by an Italian *maestro*. Its success was very great, and Geoffrey, the editor of a popular paper, in noticing the opera, exclaimed,—"O, if Mehul could compose as well as this, we might be satisfied with him." When the triumphant composer threw off his incognito, the unlucky critic

was not a little mortified. The celebrated singer Jelyotte was from Béarn, and Louis the Fifteenth used to delight in hearing him sing his native melodies: in particular one beginning, "De cap à tu soy Marion," one of Despourrins' most spirited pastorals:—

"I am your own, my Marion,
You charm me with each gentle art;
Even from the first my love was won,
Your pretty ways so pleased my heart;
If you will not, or if you will,
I am compell'd to love you still.

"No joy was ever like my joy,
When I behold those smiling eyes,
Those graceful airs so soft and coy,
For which my heart with fondness dies:
And when I seek the charm in vain,
I dream the pleasure o'er again. [773]

"Alas! I have no palace gay,
My cottage is but small and plain;
No gold, nor marble, nor display,
No courtly friends nor glitt'ring train;
But honest hearts and words of cheer
Are there, and store of love sincere.

"Why should we not be quite as blest,
Without the wealth the great may own?
A shepherd life, methinks, is best,
Whose care is for his flock alone;
And when he folds them safe and warm,
He knows no grief, he dreams no harm.

"If you, dear Marion, would be mine,
No king could be so blest as I;
My thoughts, hopes, wishes, should combine,
To make your life pass happily;
Caresses, fondness, love, and glee,
Should teach you soon to love like me."

Another very favourite song is the "Aü mounde nou y a nat Pastou,"[51] in which mention is made of the national dances for which Béarn is celebrated, as well as the *Pays Basque* which produces *baladins*, famous throughout France for their feats of agility and grace. There is a great variety of these dances, and those executed by the young men of St. Savin are remarkable in their kind: bands of the dancers go from village to village in the times of *fêtes*, and are much sought after: they appear very like [774] our May-day mummers, or morrice-dancers, and have probably the same, namely, an eastern, origin: instead of Robin Hood, the Chevalier Bayard is the personage represented in their disguise, and a female always appears amongst them, who answers to our Maid Marian: they are covered with flaunting ribbons, and hold little flags in their hands.

SONG.

"There's not a shepherd can compare
With him who loves me well and true;
French he can speak, with such an air,
As if the ways of courts he knew:
And if he wore a sword, you'd say,
It was the King who pass'd this way.

"If you beheld, beneath our tree,
How he can dance the Mouchicou,—
Good Heaven! it is a sight to see
His Manuguet and Passe-pié too!
His match for grace no swain can show
In all the Valley of Ossau.

"Lest Catti, in the summer day,
The noon-day sun too hot should find,
A bow'r with flow'rs and garlands gay,
By love's own tender hand entwined,
Close to our fold, amidst the shade,
For me that charming shepherd made."

There is considerable variety of style and expression in the poetry of Despourrins, although his subject does not change—being "love, still love." [775]

The following might pass for a song by a poet of the school of Suckling:—

SONG.

————
"Malaye quoan te by!"
————

"OH! when I saw thee first,
Too beautiful, and gay, and bland,
Gathering with thy little hand
The flow'r of May,
Oh! from that day
My passion I have nurst—
'Twas when I saw thee first!

"And ever since that time,
Thy image will not be forgot,
And care and suff'ring are my lot;
I know not why
So sad am I,
As though to love were crime—
Oh! ever since that time!

"Those eyes so sweet and bright,
Illume within my trembling breast,
A flame that will not let me rest;
Oh! turn away
The dazzling ray—
They give a dang'rous light,
Those eyes so sweet and bright!

"Thou hast not learnt to love,
But, cruel and perverse of will,
Thou seek'st but to torment me still.
Faithful in vain
I bear my chain,
Only, alas! to prove
Thou hast not learnt to love!"

[776]

But, perhaps, one of the most striking of all Despourrins' poems, from the beauty of the *patois* and the pretty conceits, is the "Deus attraits d'ûc youenne pastoure," which reminds one of Ronsard's "Une beauté de quinze ans, enfantine."

POEM.

"Tis to a maiden young and fair,
That my poor heart has fall'n a prey,
And now in tears and sighs of care
Pass all my moments, night and day.

"The sun is pale beside her face,
The stars are far less bright than she,
They shine not with so pure a grace,
Nor glow with half her charms to me.

"Her eyes are like two souls, all fire;

They dazzle with a living ray;
But ah! their light which I desire
Is turn'd from me by Love, away.

"Her nose, so delicate and fine,
Is like a dial in the sun,
That throws beneath a shadowy line
To mark the hours that love has run.

"The fairies form'd her rosy mouth,
And fill'd it with soft words at will,
And from her bosom breathes the South—
Sweet breath! that steals my reason still.

"Her waist is measured by the zone
The Graces long were wont to wear;
And none but Love the comb can own,
That smooths the ringlets of her hair. [777]

"And when she glides along like air,
Her feet so small, so slight are seen,
A little pair of wings, you'd swear,
Were flutt'ring where her step has been.

"Dear object of my tender care,
My life, my sun, my soul thou art,
Oh! listen to the trembling pray'r,
That woos thee from this breaking heart."

A QUARREL.

———
"Adechat! las mies amous."
———

He.—MY pretty Margaret, good day!
The mountain air is chill;
And if you guide your lambs this way,
The cold will do you ill.

She.—No, gentle friend, tho' cold I seem,
The air I need not fear;
It is the chillness of your stream
That runs so fresh and clear.

He.—The cock had not begun his song;
When with my flocks I came;
To meet you here I waited long—
Your haste was not the same.

She.—My lambs and I were in the mead
Before the break of day;
And you, methinks, have little need
To blame *me* for delay. [778]

He.—My sheep, with many a ruddy streak,
And bells of jocund sound,
Heav'n knows, a lively music make,
Which can be heard far round.
Come, let our flocks be hither led,
Beneath this shade repair;
For you have butter, I have bread,
And we our meal will share.
Feed, pretty lambs, and feed, my sheep,

Awhile her flock beside,
And, as on flow'rs ye browse and sleep,
We'll leave you for a tide.
Thou, God of Love, who in the air,
Art hov'ring in our view,
Guard well our flocks, and to thy care
Oh! take two lovers too!

She.—No,—farewell till to-morrow, dear,
I may not now abide;
For if I longer tarry here,
My friends will surely chide.

DESPOURRINS.

————

"Y Ataü quoan la rose ey naberè."

————

"When first the rose her perfume threw,
And spread her blossoms to the day,
I saw thee, Phillis, blooming too,
With all the charms that round her play.

"Pure as the sun, thy glace of power,
Thy voice has music's softest swell,—
I saw thee in an evil hour,
Or never should have loved so well! [779]

"Though from thy presence I remove,
While I lament I still adore,—
Oh! what can absence do to love,
But to increase the feeling more!

"Ye simple swains, who know not yet
What pleasure and what pain may be,
Guard well your hearts from Love's regret,
If you would live from danger free."

DESPOURRINS.

————

"Aü mounde nou-y-a nad Pastou,
T'à malhurous coum you!"

————

"No shepherd in this world can be
The child of wretchedness like me:
One would not think it, but I know
No feeling but continued woe;
For Sorrow came into my fold,
And there her dwelling loves to hold.

"It seem'd the joy of Fate,
New pleasures to provide,
And, 'midst my happy state,
A lamb was all my pride.
The sun conceal'd his light,
Whene'er she came in sight.

"I never dreamt of gold,
I lived content and free;
The treasure of my fold,
Seem'd but to live for me. [780]

Alas! those hours that bless,
Not long would time allow,
My joys, my happiness,
Are changed to sorrow now!

"She loved my pipe to hear,
And midst the flock would pause,
And with a smile, so dear,
Would give me soft applause:
And with her music sweet
My notes she would repeat.

"How many jealous swains
Would look, and sigh, and long:
Not one a word could gain,
She only heard my song;
But now that lamb has stray'd
I see her form no more;
My ev'ry hope betray'd,
My fate let all deplore!
My sleep, my rest, is gone,
And I am all undone!"

DESPOURRINS.

————
"Moun Diü! quine souffrance—
M'as tu causat!"
————

"Of what contentment
Those eyes bereft me—
And ah! how coldly
Thou since hast left me:
Yet didst thou whisper
Thy heart was mine,—
Oh! they were traitors
Those eyes of thine!
For 'tis thy pleasure
That I repine. [781]

"Alas! how often
I sigh'd in vain,
And loved so dearly
To purchase pain:
And all my guerdon
To be betray'd,
And only absence
My safety made,
To muse on fondness
So ill repaid.

"But let me warn thee
While time is yet,
Thy heart may soften
And learn regret:
Should others teach thee
New thoughts to prove,
And all thy coldness
Be quell'd by love,
Thou mayst glean sorrow
For future years,—
Beware—false maiden!

Beware of tears!"

DESPOURRINS.

———
"Per acère castagnere."
———

BENEATH a chesnut shade
A shepherd, drown'd in tears,
By her he loved betray'd,
Thus sung his grief and fears:
"Why dost thou smile," he said,
"As all my woes increase?
When will my truth be paid,
And all thy coldness cease?" [782]

The fair one listen'd not,—
And feign'd she had not seen;
But sought a distant spot,
The furze and heath between,
But, as she proudly went,
Thorns, in her path that lay,
Her little feet have rent,
And stopp'd her on her way.

She paused, in sudden pain,
Her pride aside she laid,
And, in soft tone, was fain
To ask her lover's aid;
She bade, in piteous mood,
He would the thorns remove,
And take from gratitude
The kiss denied to love.

That grateful kiss she must
Bestow—tho' she deplore it;
And he had been unjust
Not—doubly—to restore it.

DESPOURRINS.

———
"Roussignoulet qui cantes."[52]
———

OH! nightingale that sing'st so sweet,
Perch'd on the boughs elate,
How softly does thy music greet
Thy tender list'ning mate. [783]

While I, alas! from joy removed,
With heart oppress'd, must go,
And, leaving her so fondly loved,
Depart in hopeless woe.

Ah me! I see before me yet
Our parting and her pain,
My bosom throbb'd with vain regret
To hear her still complain.

My trembling hand she fondly press'd,
Her voice in murmurs died:
"Oh! is not our's a fate emblest,
Since we must part," she cried.

I promised her, whate'er betide,
To love her to the last,
And Fate, my truth has sadly tried,
In all our sorrows past;
But she may trust me, tho' we part,
And both our lot deplore:
Where'er I go, this bleeding heart
Will suffer ever more.

The clearest streams that gently flow,
The river murm'ring by,
Not purer than my heart can show,
Nor have more tears than I.
No book nor scroll can tell a fate
Where sorrows so combine;
No pen can write, nor song relate,
Such misery as mine!

Thus, like the turtle, sad and lone,
Who leaves his mate in pain,
I go, with many a tender moan,
And dream of love in vain:
By all the ties that bound us long,
By all the hopes we knew,
Oh I hear thy shepherd's latest song,
Receive his last adieu!

[784]

Anxious to visit a country whose history and traditions had so much excited my interest and curiosity, I accompanied a friend, early in the year 1843, on an expedition to the Vallée d'Aspe, and through part of the Pays Basque. I would willingly have waited for spring, particularly as I heard from everybody in Pau, that to reach the valleys leading to Spain in the month of February was impossible—was worse than folly: in fact, was what none but the English, who are supposed to have taken leave of their senses, would attempt. One French gentleman, who was well acquainted with every part of the Pyrenees, and had twice made the ascent of the Pic du Midi, was indignant at our perseverance, insisting that we should be stopped by the snows—although very little had fallen in the last winter—and that the Basque country was totally uninteresting except in summer. Others told us that it was never worth seeing at any season; but, as I had become aware that persons settled in Pau were bound in a spell, and scarcely ever ventured more than a league from their retreat until, being once in motion, they set forth towards the mountains in the opposite direction, I did not allow myself to be persuaded to remain in the "Little Paris of the South" for carnival balls, and, followed by the pity and surprise of most of our friends, we took our dangerous way, on a sunny morning, as hot as July, towards Oloron.

[785]

Oloron, finely situated on a height, is a wide, open, clean, and well-built town, with so much open, fresh air, that, after the enervating and confined atmosphere of Pau, one seemed to breathe new life. The walks are good and extensive, and the magnificent range of the snowy mountains very close. Two rushing torrents divide the town between them—the Gaves of Ossau and Aspe—and from the two bridges which span them the view of their impetuous course is extremely imposing. These magnificent torrents are the charm of the Pyrenees; making the country, through which they hurry, one scene of beauty and animation: they do also terrible mischief by their violence when swelled by rains, as we had afterwards occasion to observe; but, at all times, give a character of singular grandeur to the places where they sweep along in uncontrolled majesty.

The village, or faubourg, of S^{te}. Marie d'Oloron joins the main town; and here is situated the cathedral, once of great importance, but now, like all the religious establishments in this part of France, preserving little of its ancient glory. The pillars, however, of its aisles are very grand and massive, and are part of the early structure:

the form and height are imposing, and the chapels of the choir graceful; but the chief curiosity is the portal, which bears marks of a Saracenic origin. The arch is a wide circle, finely ornamented, and, in the centre, an Indian-shaped pillar divides it into two [786] smaller circular arches: the base of this pillar is formed of two figures standing back to back, stooping beneath the load they bear on their hands and depressed heads: they are covered with fetters, both on their legs and arms: their striped dresses are quite Indian, and they wear a curious, melon-shaped cap: the faces are hideous and exaggerated, the limbs strong and well made, and they are in perfect preservation.

I have not seen any satisfactory account of the cathedral, which might explain these curious supporters: on each side of the portal projects a carved figure—one much defaced, the other representing a leopard or panther. A series of beautiful pillars, forming pedestals to absent saints, fill up the space of the porch, and that beyond is closed by high, open arches—rebuilt, but, doubtless, originally of the same construction as those of the beautiful side-entrance to the cathedral of Bourges, where Moorish carvings also occur.

There are no other antiquities in Oloron; but it is an agreeable, healthy town, and looks flourishing and lively; and, I should imagine, must be a cheap place to live in, and has several advantages over its rival, Pau; this, however, is not acknowledged by the partisans of that exclusive town, which is supposed, by those who patronise it, to bear away the bell from every other in Béarn. [787]

The Vallée d'Aspe begins its winding way soon after Oloron is past; and the magnificent, broad river dashes along its rocky bed, as green and bright and foaming as its rival of Ossau, which it exceeds in volume. Our destination was to Bedous, where we were to rest for the night; and, as the shades of evening were already coming on, we could not long enjoy the beauty of this lovely valley, which we anticipated seeing on our return, after having visited all the wonders of the pass into Spain, as far as Urdos, where the high road, which is remarkably good, ends.

Bedous is a shabby, insignificant, and, at this time of year, desolate-looking town, in the bosom of the mountains, where we were fain to lodge for the night as we best could, having good reason to congratulate ourselves on our precaution in taking provisions, particularly bread, wine, and coffee, as all we found there was bad. There was, however, no want of civility and desire to please; and the attendance, if not good, was, at all events, ample: two of the waiting-maids were extremely handsome—- with dark eyes and fine features, and their handkerchiefs put on very gracefully; but the voices of all the inhabitants of Bedous were cracked and hoarse, and so unmusical, that it was difficult to imagine oneself in the country of Despourrins.

As early as possible the next morning we set forth on our journey further up the valley; and, the weather being fine and the sky clear, we were delighted with the [788] aspect of the snowy mountains above and around us. The plain of Bedous is of some extent, and, in the fine season, must be extremely beautiful, being highly cultivated and very picturesque: seven villages are scattered at distances along its expanse—the most conspicuous of which is Accous, where the poet was born; and on a mound without the town stands a pyramid, lately erected to his memory. Nothing can be more beautiful than this position; and, in summer, it must be a little Paradise. The village of Osse, opposite, is a small Protestant retreat in an equally charming spot: hills, called in the country *Turons*, surround this happy valley—*avant-couriers* of the higher chain, which rise as the Gave is followed into deeper solitude.

Marca, the historian of Béarn, cites, in his work, a curious document relative to this valley. It is dated June 1, 1348, and its title is sufficiently singular; it runs thus.

"Contract of a peace made between the valleys of Aspe and Lavedan, by order of the Pope, who had absolved the earth, the inhabitants and the castle of Lavedan, from the sin committed by the abbé of St. Savin, in causing the death, *by magic art*, of a great number of the inhabitants of Aspe, in revenge for the rapines and ravages they had committed in Lavedan: *in punishment of which crime, neither the earth, the women,* [789] *nor the herds of Lavedan had borne fruit for six years.*"

The people of this neighbourhood have the credit of being remarkably intelligent, and, at the same time, simple in their habits and manners: there is considerable jealousy between them and those of Ossau: all we could judge of was that the civility appeared equal, and it appeared to us that the beauty of the peasantry was more

striking, though in this opinion we are not borne out by that of others. The boasted costumes are rarely seen in winter; but we observed one young woman very picturesquely dressed in an old and faded black velvet boddice, peculiarly shaped, laced with red, which, if it had ever been *new* in her time, might have been pretty. Every article of their dress, however, looks as if it had descended from generation to generation, till every bit of colour or brilliancy had departed from it, leaving only a threadbare rag, which imagination alone can invest with grace or beauty.

The route we were following was the high road to Saragossa, and, occasionally, we met sombre groups of men in black *capotes*, mounted on horses or mules, and others escorting waggons laden with Spanish wool—the chief article of commerce. Flocks of beautiful goats were very frequent, and every object seemed new and singular to our eyes. [790]

We dismounted from our carriage at a little bridge over the Gave, and, under the direction of a guide who had accompanied us from Bedous, we set forth, beside its rushing current, towards the cascade of Lescun, far up in the hills. The loud roar and dash of the beautiful torrent, foaming and splashing over its bed, strewn with huge pieces of rock, was the excuse which our guide gave for declining to sing Despourrins' songs, with which he was, however, well acquainted. *"Ils sont plus forts pour ça en Ossau"* was his remark, in a voice so harsh and coarse that I did not pursue my entreaties. We met a fine old man, whom I took for a shepherd, from his cloak and brown *berret*, and the large Pyrenean dog which followed him, but he turned out to be a rich proprietor of land, showed us part of his domains, and seemed a well-informed man, talking familiarly of England and its *comté de Chester*, asking us our motive for visiting this part of France, which he concluded to be economy, and entertaining us greatly by his remarks. Our walk, or rather scramble, to the cascade was very agreeable, but exceedingly rugged, mounting the whole way between the hills till we reached the spot where the Gave comes foaming over a broad ledge of rock, and falls into the valley below with a thundering sound. It is much interrupted in its descent, and forms new cataracts as it goes: so that the whole side of the mountain is in commotion with its leaps and gambols; clouds of spray, like smoke, curling up from [791] the foamy abyss, and every echo sounding with its hoarse murmurs. It reminded me of some of the falls in the Mont Dore; but without the pines.

Meantime, the snowy peaks of the giants of the valley were seen peering over the lower hills, and shining in light; but scarcely had we reached the highest point of the cascade, and were standing on the bridge which spans it, when clouds came over the scene, heavy drops began to fall, and we found it necessary to hasten our return to the high road, where we had left our carriage.

To descend the stony and slippery ways was infinitely more difficult than to mount; and I soon found that clinging to the tough branches of box, which here grows luxuriantly, and sheds a fine fresh odour round, was not sufficient assistance. The guide now proved, by the strength of his arm in assisting us, and his agility, that he possessed qualities more useful than the Arcadian accomplishment, the want of which had annoyed me as we came, and I forgave him for being unable to sing the praises of *La Plus Charmante Anesquette*, the words of which ditty he nevertheless repeated, with surprise and pleasure at finding they were old acquaintances of ours.

Our way was now towards Urdos, by Cette Eygun, and through Etscau, where the Gave forces its way along the street, and where, on the opposite bank, on a high [792] terrace, stands the antique village of Borce—once of importance and now only picturesque. We did not see the town of Lescun, but the path to it appears most precipitous: the inhabitants are said to be the most daring smugglers in the valley, and the town stands perched like a vulture's nest, closed in by savage hills, and concealed from sight, as if it had much to hide.

The Spirit of the Pic d'Anie was evidently offended at our seeking his vicinity at so unaccustomed a season, and sent down one of his storms of rain which are so frequent in the valley. As the weather, however, continued warm we did not heed his anger, and continued our journey through the most magnificent scenery—grander and more surprising at every step—till we reached the huge masses of rock called Le Portalet, where once stood a fort, built by Henri Quatre to arrest the approach of the Spaniards. A little further on is a wondrous path, worked in the rocks, over a tremendous precipice, for the purpose of transporting timber. A new fort is being constructed here, and the appearance of a little toy-like hut, fastened to the entrance of a cave for

the convenience of the workmen who are to blast the rock, is startling and curious.

Urdos is a wild-looking place, at the extremity of the valley, with no interest [793]
belonging to it except that it is the end of the road for carriages, and that at this spot the remainder of the way to Jacca must be made on mules. As the weather was unpropitious, and the snows rendered the *trajet* uncertain, we did not allow our curiosity to carry us further, and contented ourselves with observing the remarkable groups crowding round the inn-door at which we stopped. Spaniards, in wild costumes, with white leggings buttoned behind, sandaled feet, turbaned heads, and rough cloaks thrown over their shoulders, carrying large bundles of goods, were lounging by the entrance, waiting till the rain should cease that they might pursue their way. Some women were of their party, whose appearance was very singular, and the colours of their dresses varied and brilliant in the extreme: one had thrown her green gown, lined with red, over her head, like a veil, and her face was nearly concealed by its folds; her petticoat was of two other bright hues, and she stood, in a commanding attitude, grasping a large staff, a perfect specimen of a brigand's wife.

By degrees, as different guests passed in and out of the inn, and were attracted to the door by the appearance of strangers, we were able to form the most charming pictures, till all Murillo's groups seemed combined in the shifting scene within that narrow frame. [794]

At one time, the *tableau* was complete with the following figures, all coloured in the richest manner, and harmonizing most exquisitely:—a very pretty, intelligent young woman, dressed in green, violet, red, and brown, stood leaning against the doorpost, with an infant in pink, grey, and stone-colour, in her arms: her husband—a handsome, dark Spaniard, with a many-coloured handkerchief with ends twisted round his wild, black, straggling hair—raised his face above her: in shade, behind, stood a sinister-looking smuggler with a *sombrero*, dressed in dark velvet, and a large white cloak thrown over his shoulder: occupying the front space, leant, in a graceful attitude, a female who seemed mistress of the inn. She was a very striking figure, and, both as to costume and feature, might have been the original of many a Spanish Sainte Elizabeth, but younger than she is usually represented. Every part of her dress had a tint of red so subdued into keeping, that it seemed the effect of study, although, of course, mere chance; her gown was rich dark crimson, her apron brighter geranium, her handkerchief, sleeves, and boddice, shades of reddish brown; the large hood on her head a chocolate colour: it was formed of a handkerchief tied negligently under her chin; a second, of rich tint, was bound tightly over her brows, hiding her hair, and her beautiful features came out in fine relief; a delicate blush was on her somewhat [795]
tanned cheek, and her eyes were full of calm expression: she had very prettily-shaped hands and feet, and was altogether a model for a painter; struggling through this group, almost at their feet, came, from beneath their drapery, a lovely little brown child, all reds and purples, with glossy black hair, ruddy cheeks, and large black eyes fixed upon us with a sly, smiling gaze. The stained stone, of which the house was built, was of a fine cold colour, and the deep rich shade within made a back-ground which completed the whole.

In the door-way of a neighbouring stable was another party watching the rain, nearly as picturesque; and before them was dancing, in grotesque attitudes, a half-crazed old woman, at whose vagaries the lookers-on indolently smiled. Our admiration of the beautiful children quite won the hearts of the mothers, who had, apparently, at first regarded us with a somewhat haughty air, and a few little silver pieces completed our conquest; we, therefore, drove off on our return to Bedous, in high favour with our strange wild friends, and ceased to feel at all alarmed at the possibility of their overtaking us on the mountains.

We were obliged to pass another night at the inodorous inn of Bedous, amidst the noise of a carnival night, and the hideous howls of a jovial party who had that day assisted at a wedding, and who seemed bent on proving that music was banished from [796]
the valley. I heard the word "*Roncevaux*" in one of their songs; but could distinguish nothing besides to atone for the discord they made, as they danced *La Vache* under our windows, in the pouring rain, by the light of a dim lanthorn.

I was told by the landlady that in the church of Bedous were formerly two *bénitiers*, one within the aisle, and one in the porch; the latter being appropriated to the use of that unfortunate race—the Cagots—about whom I had been so inquisitive ever since I arrived in Béarn. Accordingly, we lost no time in going to seek for these strange relics;

after looking about in vain, and discovering only one *bénitier*, we were assisted in our search by a man belonging to the church, and our female guide; who understood only *patois*, and led to the mysterious spot where the worn stone is to be seen on which once stood the vase of holy water into which the wretched outcasts were permitted to dip their fingers. The recess is now used as a closet, which is closed with wooden doors, and the *bénitier* is removed, "because," said the man, "there is no distinction *now*, and the Cagots use the same as other people,"[53] I inquired if it was known who [797] were Cagot families, and was told "*certainly*;" but little account was taken of the fact. "Bedous," said my informant, "was one of the Cagot villages, but the prejudice is almost worn out now: it is true we do not care to marry into their families if we can help it; not that there is any disease amongst them; it is all mere fancy. Only when people quarrel, they call each other Cagots in contempt; however, we shall soon forget all about it."

On our return through the valley to Oloron, we paused at Notre Dame de Sarrance, a place of pilgrimage, entirely uninteresting as a church, but placed in a beautiful position amongst the hills.

At Oloron, when we passed before, there was no room for us, in consequence of the whole inn being occupied with guests at the wedding of the landlord's fourth daughter, the three others having been lately married. As we arrived the day after the wedding, there still remained sufficient good cheer to supply our wants, and make a pleasing contrast to Bedous. [798]

CHAPTER XVI.

ARAMITZ—THE PLAY—MAULÉON—THE SISTERS—WORDS—ST. JEAN.

Our intention now was to visit Mauléon, and see as much of the Pays Basque as the uncertain state of the weather would allow. The route to Aramitz is very beautiful, with the fine valley of Barétous, and the Bois d'Erreche stretching out at the foot of the bold hills. When we entered the town of Aramitz the whole population was assembled in a great square; some acting, and others gazing at a carnival play, the [799] performers in which were dressed in flaunting robes, with crowns and turbans; while a troop, in full regimental costume, figured away as a victorious French army, headed by a young Napoleon, who ever and anon harangued his troops and led them on to battle against a determined-looking band of enemies, amongst whom were conspicuous *a bishop* and *a curé*, in full dress. A combat ensued, when the heroes on each side showed so little nerve, being evidently afraid of their own swords—which seemed *real* steel, that no child's-play in England could have gone off so tamely: the enemies all fell down at the first attack, and the only comic part was the rushing forward of the fool, and his agonized exclamation of "*O! mon curé!*" as he dragged that reverend gentleman from beneath a heap of slain. We asked our driver how it happened that the clergy of the parish allowed this *travestie*, and how the curé's dress had been procured: he told us that the costume belonged to some one who had *formerly* been in the Church, and as for the representation no one could prevent it, particularly as the sons of the mayor were amongst the actors. "But," he added, "M. le Curé will *have his revenge* next Sunday by preaching them a sermon which he intends shall make their ears tingle; though no one will care a bit about it."

We observed, that it was wrong to turn the ministers of religion into ridicule, to [800] which our lively guide agreed, concluding with the usual shrug and inevitable remark of all Frenchmen—Béarnais and other—"*Mais, que voulez vous!*"

My companion's donation of a franc, was received with rapture by a general and an emperor, who came to our carriage with a plate, in the centre of which was an apple with numerous slits, in which were inserted certain borrowed napoleons, to excite to generosity. We were vehemently invited to mount to a place of honour to view the play at our ease; but we declined, as it was not the dramatic performance that delighted us, but the extraordinary effect of the costumes of the crowd below. All the young girls wore their new and most brilliant handkerchiefs tied on their heads with the utmost care, and exhibiting colours so rich and glowing, that, as they flitted about in the sun, they seemed so many *colibri* with changeable crests of all the hues of the rainbow. The

rich colours worn here give an air of gaiety and cheerfulness, agreeably contrasted with the dark and gloomy tints of the head-dresses at and near Pau; which, though gracefully tied, are usually sombre and dim.

The whole town of Aramitz was gay with carnival rejoicings, and as we drove along we came upon another crowd in another square, where we saw a party of six young men in black-and-green velvet dresses, and scarlet sashes, nimbly dancing the *Rondo Basque*; while the gorgeously-adorned young girls stood by, observing, but taking no part in the exercise. They seemed very agile and nimble, and kept up an incessant movement, not without grace; but it had an odd effect to see the men dancing alone, and that circumstance impresses one with the conviction of the dance being of eastern origin. We had not an opportunity of seeing any of the other dances so celebrated in the country, which are precisely similar to our morris-dances still exhibited, occasionally, in the country on May-day. [801]

The Basque country, properly so called, begins at Montory, and a perceptible change, singular enough, is observable in the country: a range of hills, of shapes impossible to describe—so witch-like and irregular is their outline—extends for some distance along the way, ushering the traveller into the pretty plain below.

At Tardets there is a bridge over the charming Gave of *Uhaitshandia*; and now begin the extraordinary names of places, which French, Béarnais, and Spanish alike find so difficult to pronounce or understand. Now the few familiar words which we comprehended in Béarnais were heard no more, and a language of the most singular yet musical sound took its place. The first objects we saw were two Andalusian women, ragged, filthy, and slovenly, to a degree quite amazing, their dingy white woollen gowns thrown over their heads; faded apple-green petticoats in thick plaits hanging from their shoulders, with no indication of waists, bare legs and feet, and bold, savage aspect. They laughed loudly at some remark *en passant* of our driver; who seemed accomplished in languages, being able to speak to all he met. Immediately afterwards we met some Basque women, whose costume had no other distinction but that of their headkerchiefs being white; this, however is rare, except on occasions of *fête*, as we always saw the same beautiful brilliant colours as before, throughout our journey. [802]

Mauléon, one of the chief towns of the Basque country, is charmingly situated in a rich country, on the Gaison Gave, surrounded by the varied hills of the Bois de Tibarène. Of all its former grandeur and strength scarce a vestige remains: one ruined fort, of a commanding height, above the town, alone attests its ancient glory: from this spot is a charming view, taking in all the town and plain and surrounding mountains. The churches, once of great importance, are dwindled to insignificance; and we were much disappointed to discover nothing interesting either at the antique church of Berautte or Licharre. We found, however, an equivalent in the beauty of the scenery round, and the charm of hearing the sweetest of languages from the lips of two pretty little girls of ten and eleven years of age, the daughters of our hostess, who herself had a melodious voice, and peculiarly pleasing manners. These little fairies constituted themselves our attendants during our stay at Mauléon, and as they spoke, equally well, French and Basque, we enjoyed their innocent prattle and intelligent remarks extremely. They were very eloquent in praise of a certain English traveller named *François*, who had stayed some time at their inn, and wanted to take them away to England, and they tried hard to persuade us that he *must* be a relation, because he *talked* and *drew* like us, and because we wanted to take them away too. [803]

I made a little vocabulary of Basque words under their tuition; and it was like listening to music to hear them utter the pretty phrases and words; *maita suthut hanich*—I love you much; *ene-madtea*—my friend; *ama*—my mother; *aita*—my father; *belhara*—grass; *nescatila*—little girl; *minyiate bat*—a fairy; *oheitza*—remembrance.

I procured a Basque dictionary at Mauléon, at a somewhat primitive library, where the usual commodities sold were candles and soap. At one end of the shop was a range of books on a shelf; and while the very civil master was gone to look for those more choice volumes which we required, his housekeeper stood by, in a state bordering on distraction at the sacrilege committed by us, in daring to remove from their positions tomes which her master evidently did not permit her to lay a finger on. In Basque, and all the French she had, did she clamour to us to desist, assuring us it was a thing unheard of, and would derange the whole economy of the establishment; and, certainly, as her anger increased with our indifference, she proved to us that it was [804]

possible to make discord out of sweet notes; however, the purchase of the books her master had found silenced and confounded her; and we escaped with our prize, much to the delight and amusement of our little guides, who thought it necessary, *en chemin*, to apologize for the old woman's rudeness.

The father of our favourites we found, though taciturn at first, a very well-informed man; he confirmed all that I had gathered from works I had read on the subject of the Basques—their language and manners; and regretted that the unpropitious state of the weather prevented our witnessing any of the usual out-of-door amusements, common at the season. He described the eloquence and wit of the common people as something wonderful; but their *comedies*, he said, were seldom fitted for more refined ears than their own. The character of their amusements, he added, was grave, as their improvised tragedies prove; the language lends itself to poetry with such singular facility, that poets are by no means rare; and, amongst the lower class, some are, as I had heard before, singularly gifted, but they never write down their compositions, which are, therefore, difficult to collect. The airs of their songs are almost always [805] melancholy and solemn, and require fine voices to give them effect. I have since been told, by a Basque gentleman of taste and information, precisely the same; and, as he sings well, he kindly allowed me to hear some of their melodies, which remind me much of the saddest of the Irish native airs. His opinion was, that there is great similarity in the character of the Basque and Irish; and he tells me, that the *sound* of many of their words is alike; but when they speak together all proves to be *mere* sound; for they do not understand a syllable of either tongue.

The greater part of the language seems to me corrupted by the introduction of French and Spanish words, probably required to express wants, which the original Basque had acquired in the course of time;

"When wild in woods the noble savage ran,"

he did not want much that he afterwards sought for words to express his desire to obtain. But the genuine words, in which there is no mixture of another language, may well puzzle the learned; for they are most singular: as for instance,

Oghia...	Bread	Egura...	Wood
Uhaitza...	River	Eskia...	Hand
Hoora...	Water	Mahatsac...	Grapes
Haicha...	Stars	Sahmahia...	Horse
Hala...	Ship	Etchia...	Habitation
Harhibat...	Stone	Begitatiha...	Face

Our next destination was to St. Jean Pied de Port; and we took our way across the [806] mountains of Musculdy, the scenery the whole way being exquisitely beautiful, and richly cultivated in the plains. We continued mounting without cessation for nearly two hours; and as we walked the greatest part of the time, we met with a few adventures by the way. We were joined, in a very steep part, by a party who were travelling from Mauléon to St. Just. We had been struck with the brilliant colours of the young woman's dress as we passed her and her mother, and a boy accompanying them; she was leaning against a stone wall, where she had rested her large white bundle, and her attitude was free and graceful in the extreme, as she bent her head on her hand evidently fatigued. She wore a headkerchief of deep chocolate-colour, striped with blue, and bordered with bright yellow; her stuff petticoat was scarlet, edged with black velvet; she had tucked up her green-striped gown, and thus displayed its crimson lining; her shawl was of fine red merinos, embroidered in glowing colours, of Spanish manufacture, as she afterwards informed us, *and smuggled*; her legs were bare, but she wore black shoes; and her umbrella, the constant appendage, was brown; her gait, as she walked along the road, with her white package on her head, was that of a heroine of a melo-drame. I never saw a more striking figure; for she was, [807] though not pretty, remarkably well-made and tall, and all her motions were easy and unconstrained. She did not seem so communicative as her mother,—a pretty little *old* woman, whose pride was evidently gratified by our admiration of her daughter's finery, and our pleasure in sketching her as she stood; her gratitude was so great on our allowing her boy and her bundles to be put on the carriage, that she became quite enthusiastic in our praise; and the present of a small piece of silver enchanted her. She actually cried with pleasure; and yet we found she was not poor; but had been to see a son, who had amassed several hundred francs and set up in a *cabaret* at

Mauléon: this explained the gorgeousness of his sister's costume, which, at the risk of spoiling, she continued to wear on her journey home to their village, aware of the sensation her macaw-like appearance created wherever she passed. [808]

On a high hill, opposite that we were mounting, we observed a chapel, which we found was dedicated to the Sainte Madeleine, and held in much reverence throughout the country: pilgrims coming from great distances to visit her shrine, and sick persons thronging there in the hope of a miracle being performed in their favour. The same occurs at another chapel, on a neighbouring height, dedicated to St. Antoine; but there, it seems, the young men resort, in order, by the saint's intercession, to obtain an exemption from the chance of conscription. They entreat of Heaven that they may choose a *good number*, and be allowed to remain at home; and so firmly are they convinced of the efficacy of the saint's prayers, that hundreds had, we understood, lately taken their way to the holy mountain; for this was the season for the fatal lots to be drawn. [809]

CHAPTER XVII.

ARNEGUY—THE CACOLET—ROLANDO'S TREE—SNOW-WHITE GOATS—COSTUME—SAUVETERRE—THE PASTOR—NAVARREUX—SPANISH AIR.

We arrived at St. Jean Pied de Port late in the day, and the aspect of affairs at Le Grand Soleil, where we stopped, was by no means exhilarating. Having passed through the black, dirty kitchen, and climbed the dingy staircase, we were shown several rooms, which we *could not have*, by a very sour-looking old woman, who tried to persuade us to content ourselves with apartments without fire-places. This we resisted determinedly, suggesting that ladies had a right to supersede male travellers, and, assisted by the eloquence of our invaluable *cocher*, we at length obtained possession of the disputed chambers. As it was soon discovered that we meditated remaining several days, no further opposition was made to our convenience, and the fat landlady, having reproved her thin sister into good humour, we were allowed to command, in the worst of all possible inns, where good-will held the place of performance in most instances, and where carelessness seemed carried to a perfectly Eastern excess. [810]

We began to make immediate enquiries as to the possibility of entering Spain, of visiting the convent of Roncesvalles and the neighbouring mountains; and every sort of contradictory information was given us, enough to bewilder an ignorant traveller into giving up the projected expedition altogether. However, as we resolved that we would not be altogether disappointed, and recollected all the romances invented to deter our daring, by our friends at Pau, we ordered a guide and *cacolet* and mule to be sent on before, and on the following morning set forth in the carriage as far as Arneguy, the last French town, from whence we were to cross the Gave of Bihobi, and trust ourselves to the perils of a Spanish journey.

Accordingly, we pursued the very good road to that frontier village—one of the most miserable I ever beheld, filled with soldiers and mud and ruin: here we alighted, and walked across the little bridge which divides the two kingdoms. Once *in Spain*, and having made a drawing of the spot, as a souvenir, we mounted our mule; seated comfortably in the arm chairs, slung at each side of the patient animal, and, with our muleteer and two servants on foot, began the scrambling ascent of one of the most rugged paths I ever beheld. [811]

Every step, however, exhibited new and startling beauties; and the further we advanced the more sublime the mountains became: the foaming stream rushing beneath us, the deep ravines and precipices, the wooded hills and enormous trees, all possessed a character quite unlike that of the two valleys of Béarn, which we had already seen; both of which led into Spain, as did this pass of Roncesvalles; but we now felt ourselves really in another country; and, as we passed the opposite village of Ondarol, and heard that the last houses in France were left behind, and all the mountains, on each side of the ravine, belonged to Spain, there was something singularly agreeable in the idea. Our *cocher François* had, at the village of Valcarlos, an opportunity of exhibiting his knowledge of Spanish; for the officer there, who took

cognizance of us, could not understand either *patois* or French.

We wound along the beautiful ravine of Valcarlos, by a road more stony and rugged than can be described, trusting to our mule, who kept his feet in a manner perfectly surprising; it was like mounting a ruined staircase, so steep was the path in many places; but, going slowly and carefully as we did, and seated in our comfortable panniers, we felt no inconvenience, and were scarcely conscious of the difficulties, sensibly understood by all our companions, who toiled through the mud, and over the stones and torrents with infinite cheerfulness and perseverance. [812]

The beeches and chesnuts here grow to an immense size, and look so old in their winter guise that one might almost believe they had spread the shade over the paladins of Charlemagne. We could not do otherwise than indulge in this idea, when we reached a spot where an enormous *plateau* of rock seemed to bar our further progress; and, beside it, we rested beneath a gigantic chesnut, which threw its naked arms far across the ravine below, and, when covered with leaves, must have been a majestic tree. A huge stone lay amongst others near it, and this was pointed out by our guide as the identical stone thrown by Rolando in his anger when his horse's foot slipped over the rock at the edge of which we stood. The print made by the hoof as it slid along the surface is *clearly visible* to poetical eyes, and this is one of the numerous *Pas de Roland* so celebrated in the Pyrenees, where the great hero's course is marked in many directions. [813]

As we desired to avoid the possibility of a similar accident happening to us, we dismounted from our *cacolet*, and walked across the ledge to some distance: and, after a short repose beneath the shelter of the overhanging rocks, which a violent shower made most convenient at the moment, we prepared to retrace our steps; satisfied with having advanced so far on the same route taken by "Charlemagne and all his peerage."

The return was infinitely less easy than the advance, for we had now to descend; and we felt the motion much more, for the mule could not so well keep its feet in spite of the guide's assistance. We had sundry adventures by the way at *Posadas*—tasted the bitter Spanish *ordinaire* wine from a wine-skin, and the excellent maize bread and cream cheese of the country, and returned to Arneguy, much gratified with our trip. [814]

These mountains must be exquisitely beautiful in summer, when all the fine trees are in full grandeur, for I never saw any larger or more flourishing. It is the custom for the French to decry everything Spanish, even to the natural productions; and I had often been told that the moment the French side was quitted all was barren and worthless; I found, however, on the contrary, that the mountain-scenery greatly increased in sublimity the nearer we advanced towards Roncesvalles, and on our return that which had looked well on our way had dwindled into tameness in comparison with what we had left. Our driver, in the true spirit of his country, laboured to convince us that even the Basque on the Spanish side was inferior to that on the French—a fact we were not in a condition to decide on, as readily as we could with respect to the scenery. I think, as a general rule, that a foreign traveller may always be sure, if a country is abused in France, it possesses attractions for him, and *vice versâ*; for the "toute beauté" of a French amateur is invariably a piece of formality or common-place, unendurable to the lovers of the really beautiful. [815]

Flocks of snow-white goats, with long hair, were climbing up the steepest parts of the mountains; and a few stragglers, with their pretty kids, greeted us on our rugged road: a party of Zingari, with scowling brows but civil demeanor, hurried past us, with a swiftness rather unusual to their indolent race, unless indeed they were afraid of pursuit—as our muleteer seemed to hint by his exclamation of alarm as they appeared. Besides these, and a traveller mounted on a mule, who was, we understood, a rich merchant of Pampeluna, who constantly made the *trajet* by that bad road, we were little disturbed in our solitude. The Gave sounding far below, the smaller brawling cataracts crossing our rocky path, the overhanging rocks and gigantic trees, the constantly-changing scene, and the novelty of the whole, made our wild and strange journey altogether delightful. We were congratulated on our return that the rain, which overtook us on our way, had not been snow; for in these regions the path is sometimes obstructed in the course of half-an-hour; and a sad story was related to us of a courier despatched to Roncesvalles in sunshine, having been overwhelmed by the snow on his return the same evening. Whether this was a *mountain* fable we could not be sure; but we had heard so many terrors, and experienced none, that we found it difficult to give credit to all the histories of travellers eaten by wolves and destroyed

by avalanches, such as had arrived at Pau from the heights of Gabas and Urdos throughout the winter, only to be contradicted after they had had their effect for the given time. [816]

From St. Jean Pied de Port—where the female costume is pretty, and whose arsenal, and the fine view from it, are all that claim the slightest attention in the most slovenly of ugly towns, and whose church portal tells of former magnificence long since swept away—we took our departure by St. Palais to Sauveterre, crossing the Pays Basque, which is perfectly lovely as to scenery, and, in fine weather, is worth a long journey to visit—so varied, rich, and agreeable is the country in all directions. Sauveterre is a neat, clear, respectable town, finely situated, well-enough paved, and having many attractions—particularly a magnificent ruin of a strong castle, which is called that of the Reine Jeanne, but is, evidently, originally of much more ancient construction. One high tower is very commanding, and must have been formidable in its time: that of the [817] church, on still higher ground above, is of the same date, and is very curious: on the whole, Sauveterre is as picturesque a town as any we had seen, and we were sorry that bad weather a good deal masked its beauties.

We paid a visit to the Protestant church; and the minister's wife, a very simple, kind person, who deeply regretted the absence of her husband—gone to look after his scattered flock, which is dispersed, in distant hamlets, all over that part of the country towards Navarreux. This excellent man is in the habit of walking many leagues, in the severest seasons, to visit his people, who reside by twos and threes in villages far remote; and he seems to spare no pains in his vocation. His establishment is of the simplest and most primitive kind, evidently quite unknown to luxury; and the sight of the good pastor—which we were fortunate enough to get on the morning of our departure—confirmed our preconceived opinion of his benevolence, if countenance be a faithful index of mind. Our interview happened in this sort.

We had decided to leave Sauveterre early, fearing the weather, and were just starting, when, at the carriage-door, we beheld two figures, which we at once recognized as the returned pastor and his wife: a violent shower greeted them; but, mindless of it, there they stood, under their umbrellas, determined to make our [818] acquaintance, and to thank my companion for a donation she had sent to the poor Protestants under his charge. His fine open, healthy countenance, and cheerful, good-humoured expression, gentlemanlike manners, and easy address, pleased us extremely; and the unassuming little wife, dressed in a cap like a *bourgeoise*—joining him in kind exclamations of sorrow at losing their friends of the moment—equally amused and gratified us with the *naïveté* of the whole proceeding. I have no doubt that our apparition in that solitary town was quite an event, and one which the good minister would have been sorry to miss. He had come back late the night before, through a deluge of rain, and by the most difficult cross-roads—of course flooded—after walking twenty or thirty miles; yet he had energy to rise early, dress himself in his best, and come to meet the strangers, before their departure.

I think he must really be a pattern of a minister, and is a worthy example for many richer and less zealous clergymen. The French government is not able to allow more than a thousand francs a-year to the Protestant ministers, and out of this he no doubt gives much in charity, for almost all his flock is poor, and I believe he has a family to support besides: yet he seemed cheerful and contented, and probably thinks himself well off, happy in the exercise of his duty, and in relieving the sufferings of his fellows. [819]

Navarreux is a strongly-fortified little town, looking extremely warlike, filled with troops: it would be difficult to say why, as it is so far from the frontier; but, probably, they are ready, as at Pau, in case of an outbreak on the part of the Spaniards, which seems improbable, but is talked of.[54] From hence to Pau the country is pretty; but the nearer approach to the wide, marshy lands round, renders the prospect infinitely less interesting, and the air less refreshing.

I had now accomplished, however imperfectly, a long-entertained intention of *visiting Spain*; and, although I had merely breathed Spanish air *for a few hours*, yet it has given me a sort of assurance that I shall, one day, be able to put my favourite project in execution—of travelling over that most poetical and interesting of all countries—at a time, I trust, when its government shall be well established, and peace and order so prevail, that the fear of brigands may not deter strangers from seeking its romantic cities, and crossing its wild and wondrous mountains.

For the present, I take leave of my readers; hoping that, in my next tour, they will indulgently accompany me to Madrid and the Alhambra.

THE END.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY R. CLAY, BREAD STREET HILL.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] See a description of the statues of Cœur de Lion, Henry and Elionor, and Isabella of Angoulême, in "A Summer amongst the Bocages and the Vines."

[2] A wretched and pointless satire had appeared under the title of *La Cordonnière de Loudun*, in which the Cardinal figured: Père Joseph insinuated that Grandier was the author, and the supposed insult was readily credited.

[3] A very excellent picture on this subject, by Jouy, is in the Musée at Bordeaux: I did not see it, but it has been described to me by a person on whose judgment I can depend, who considers it of very high merit, and worthy of great commendation.

[4] Calcaire hépathique. The stone used for the casing of the exterior of the Great Pyramid, and for the lining of the chambers and passages, was obtained from the Gebel Mokattam, on the Arabian side of the valley of the Nile. It appears to be similar to that named above, as it is described as being "a compact limestone," called by geologists "swine stone," or "stink-stone," from emitting, when struck, a fetid odour.

[5] The same legend is told as having happened in England on the domains of the family of Titchborne.

[6] For account of Jacques Cœur and his dwelling at Bourges, see "Pilgrimage to Auvergne."

[7] In the Romance of the Queen Mother, I have given a detailed account, from the most correct chroniclers, of the siege of La Rochelle, and its defence, in 1573.

[8] The *Iris zippium*.

[9] Since this was written, I grieve to observe, by the French newspapers, that the tower and part of the church of St. Eutrope, have been destroyed by lightning.

[10] This part of the world seemed always to be looked upon as the head quarters of sorcery; for in the Chronicles of Bordeaux we find, in the year 1435, the following notice:—"Les environs de Bordeaux sont *fort travaillez* par les sorciers et empoisonneurs, dont aucuns furent exécutes à mort et brûlé tous vifs."

[11] See for these particulars, Athanasie Maritime.—*Du Mège*.

[12] See description of *the Breche*, in the second volume of this work.

[13] *Du Mège (Statistique* III.) This observation scarcely appears to me correct, since the countries bordering on the Loire are certainly not more used to snows than those closer to the mountains. In Béarn these shelving roofs are constantly to be seen.

[14] See the Poems of Jasmin.

[15] "See Pilgrimage to Auvergne," chap. xiii. p. 271.

[16] See "A Summer amongst the Bocages and the Vines," vol. ii. chap. i. page 15.

[17] "Pilgrimage to Auvergne," chap, xiii, p. 210.

[18] On his statue at Nerac.

[19] The curl-papers.

[20] Pascal conceives that, in wedding Françonnette, he is devoted to death.

[21] Jasmin here quotes several *patois* songs, well known in the country.

[22] Both Gascons.

[23] The Athenæum.

[24] *Gave* is the generic name of all the mountain streams in this region, but that of Pau is called *"the Gave,"* par excellence.

[25] All hot! all hot!

[26] The *poule au Pot* is a general dish with the Béarnais.

[27] The celebrated Laws of Béarn are called *Les Fors*.

[28] This was written on the spot.

[29] Since this was written, the visit has been paid, and the ceremony gone through.

[30] For the whole account of the Hautes Pyrénées, I am indebted to my brother, Mr. Dudley Costello, who made the excursion while I remained at Pau.

[31] The popularity of this ballad is accounted for by the circumstance of the Prince of Béarn, Henry II. d'Albert, having been made prisoner with Francis; he was, however, more fortunate than the king, for he made his escape. The original runs thus:—

THE CAPTIVITY OF FRANCIS I.

Quan lou Rey parti de France,
Counqueri d'aütes pays,
A l'entrade de Pavi
Lous Espagnols bé l'an pris.

"Renté, renté, Rey de France,
Que si non, qu'en mourt ou pris,"
Quin seri lou Rey de France?
Que jamey you nou l'ey bist."

Queou lheban l'ale deoü mantoü
Troban l'y la flou de lys.
Quoü ne prenen et quoü liguen
Dens la prison que l'an mis.

Dehens üe tour escure,
Jamey sour ni lue s'y a bist;
Si nou per üe frinistote....
U poustillou bet beni.

"Poustillou qué lettres portis
Que si counte tà Paris?"
"La nouvelle que you porti
Lou Rey qu'ere mort ou pris."

"Tourne t'en poustillou en poste,
Tourne t'en entà Paris.
Arrecommandem à ma femme
Tabé mous infants petits.

"Que hassen batte la mounede,
La qui sie dens Paris,
Que men embien üe cargue
Por rachetam aü pays."

The chorus is usually at the end of each verse—"La lyron, la lyré," or "doundoun, doundone."

[32] Antoine de Bourbon.

[33] Smiling.

[34] Some historians say that Blanche was confined at the castle of Lescar, but there is no foundation for the assertion: no castle but that of Pau or Orthez would have been sufficiently strong to retain a prisoner of so much importance. Moret, and other Spanish authors, relate the event as above.

[35] This M. Mazure will by no means allow in his "Histoire du Béarn et du Pays Basque."

[36] M. Boucher. "Souvenirs du Pays Basque."

[37] "Chroniques Eccl. du Dioc. D'Auch."

[38] M. Francisque Michel's announced work bears the following title: "Recherches sur les Races maudites de la France et de l'Espagne. (Cagots des Pyrénées. Capots du Languedoc. Gahets da la Guienne. Colliberts du Bas Poitou. Caqueux de la Bretagne. Cacous du Mans. Marrons de l'Auvergne. Chreetas de Mayorque. Vacqueros des Asturies.)"

[39] Most of the scenes of the story in the Vallée d'Aspe have become familiar to me, and I can vouch for the truth of the descriptions.

[40] En and Ena are titles of Béarnaise nobility, answering to the Spanish Don and Doña.

[41] Witches or Sorcerers of Béarn.

[42] *Caver*. Chevalier, knight.

[43] At the period at which this story is laid, the Cagots were called *Chrestiaàs*, but the term *Cagot*, adopted later is more generally known in Béarn.

[44] By a charter of 1103, churches allowed an asylum within a space of thirty paces in circumference. *Ecclesiæ salvitatem habeant triginta passuum circumcirca.—Marca.*

[45] The castle of Artiguelouve is still standing—a curious monument of ancient grandeur; it is situated near Sauveterre.

[46] *i.e.* lifting their partners into the air.

[47] Tard-venus.

[48] Tutte de las bronchos.

[49] The number of twelve was reduced to eleven since the period that the village of Bidous was removed from the territorial jurisdiction of Béarn.

[50] This practice is similar to that of the Neapolitans, who wear a little hand in coral (*gettatura*) as a preservative against the evil eye.

[51] There are two songs beginning with the same words: both favourites.

[52] This song singularly resembles Burns' charming "Banks and braes" in its opening, though it is greatly inferior as a whole.

[53] At Utraritz, near Bayonne, they show, in the porch of the church, a similar recess, where once stood the *bénitier* of the Cagots.

[54] This has since occurred, and Espartero is in England and Queen Christine in Spain.

Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a

format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this

work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and

credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.