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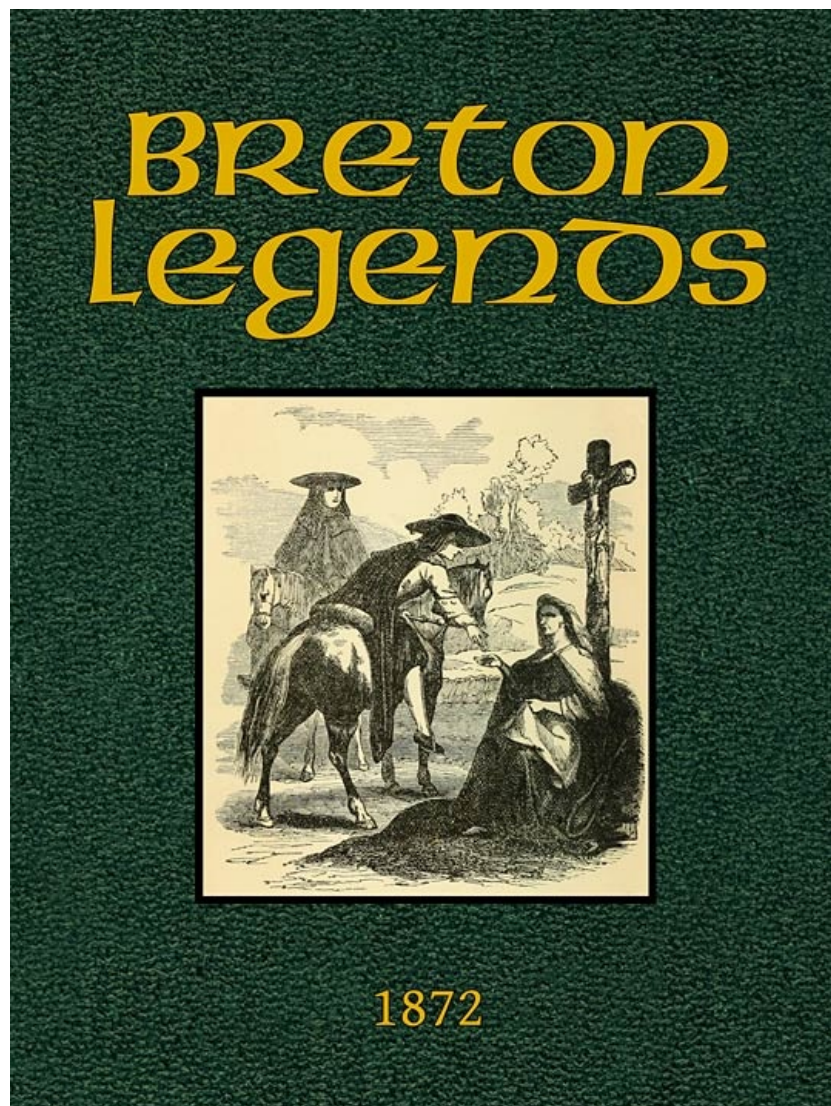
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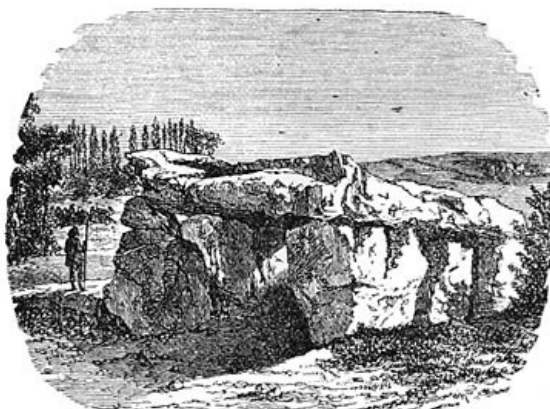
[Contents]





The Three Wayfarers.

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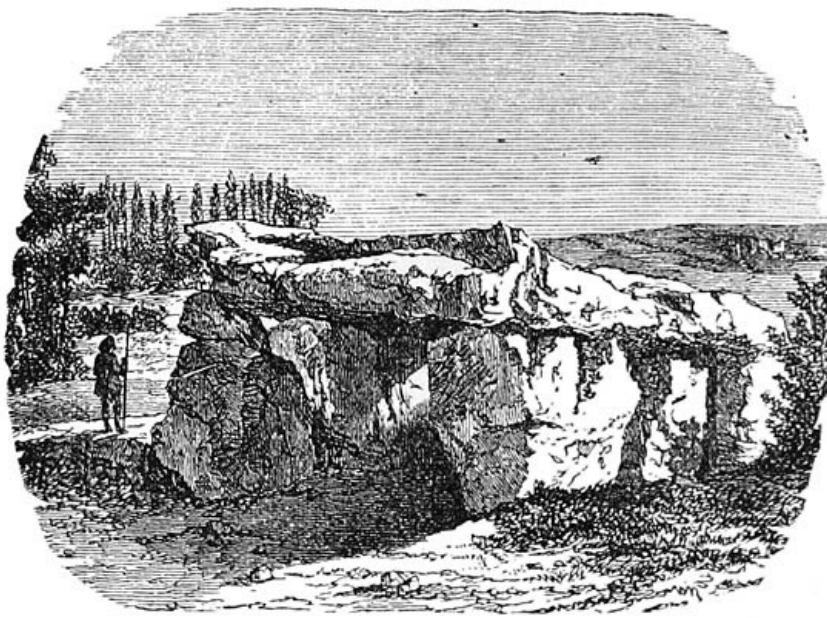
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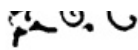
[Contents]

## PREFACE.



The various Collections of Household and Legendary Tales of different countries which have appeared of late years sufficiently attest the popular interest which attaches to these curious and venerable relics of bygone days. Even such eminent scholars as the Messrs. Grimm have not thought it beneath them to devote their time and research to the task of collecting the old fireside Stories and Legends of Germany; and the result of their labours is a volume of tales of remarkable interest and attractiveness, distinguished no less for variety and invention than for pathos, humour, and graceful simplicity.

Similar Collections have been published from time to time in relation to other countries (among others, a remarkable one on the Norse Legends, recently issued); and it seemed to the Editors of the present volume that the time had arrived when Brittany too might venture to put forward her claim in this respect to public attention.



A selection of some of the best of the Breton Legends is therefore presented to the reader in this little volume.

[vi]

It may be remarked, that the Breton Legends, though possessing much that is common to the German and other National Tales, have yet features peculiar to themselves. They are, we may say, deeply coloured by the character of the country in which they have their home. The sea-coast of Brittany, with its rugged rocks and deep mysterious bays and inlets; the lone country heaths in which stand the *Menhir* and *Dolmen*, with their dark immemorial traditions; the gray antiquated chateaus with their fosses and turrets,—all impart a wild and severe character to its legends, and strike the reader with a kind of awe which he scarcely feels in reading those of other countries. In addition to this, the way in which the religion of the Cross, and the doctrines and rites of the Church are interwoven with the texture of almost every one of the Breton Tales, seems to mark them off with still greater distinctness, lending them at the same time a peculiar charm which can hardly fail to commend them to the sympathies of the religious reader.

We may add that the moral lessons to be derived from many of these Legends are as striking as they are ingeniously wrought out.

The Tales are a translation from the French; and for this the Editors are indebted to the skill and good taste of a lady, who has entered most fully into the spirit and feeling of these simple but beautiful specimens of Legendary Lore.

[vii]

[Contents]

## CONTENTS.

	Page
<a href="#">THE THREE WAYFARERS</a>	1
<a href="#">THE LEGEND OF ST. GALONNEK</a>	14
<a href="#">THE KORILS OF PLAUDEN</a>	31
<a href="#">THE BLESSED MAO</a>	47
<a href="#">THE FATE OF KERIS</a>	63
<a href="#">THE STONES OF PLOUHINEC</a>	74
<a href="#">TEUZ-A-POULIET; OR, THE DWARF</a>	84
<a href="#">THE SPECTRE LAUNDRESSES</a>	96
<a href="#">ROBIN REDBREAST</a>	104
<a href="#">COMORRE</a>	118
<a href="#">THE GROAC'H OF THE ISLE OF LOK</a>	132
<a href="#">THE FOUR GIFTS</a>	150
<a href="#">THE PALACE OF THE PROUD KING</a>	167
<a href="#">THE PIPER</a>	172
<a href="#">THE WHITE INN</a>	177
<a href="#">PERONNIK THE IDIOT</a>	182
<a href="#">APPENDIX</a>	207

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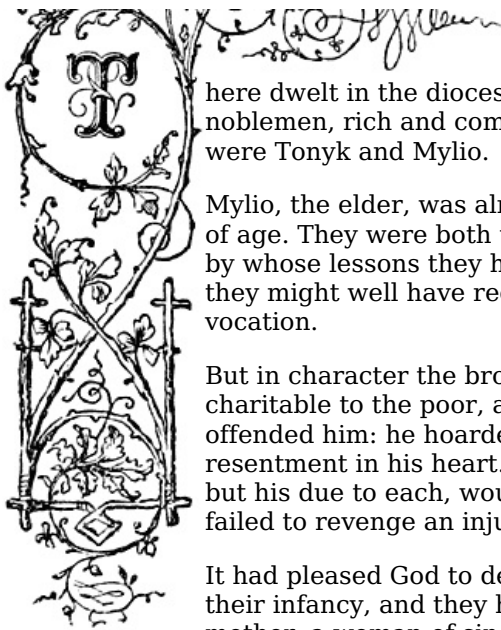
[Contents]



## BRETON LEGENDS.

### THE THREE WAYFARERS.





here dwelt in the diocese of Léon, in ancient times, two young noblemen, rich and comely as heart could desire. Their names were Tonyk and Mylio.

Mylio, the elder, was almost sixteen, and Tonyk just fourteen years of age. They were both under the instruction of the ablest masters, by whose lessons they had so well profited that, but for their age, they might well have received holy orders, had such been their vocation.

But in character the brothers were very unlike. Tonyk was pious, charitable to the poor, and always ready to forgive those who had offended him: he hoarded neither money in his hand nor resentment in his heart. Mylio, on the other hand, while he gave but his due to each, would drive a hard bargain too, and never failed to revenge an injury to the uttermost.

It had pleased God to deprive them of their father whilst yet in their infancy, and they had been brought up by their widowed mother, a woman of singular virtue; but now that they were growing towards manhood, she deemed it time to send them to the care of an uncle, who lived at some distance, and from whom they might receive good counsels for their walk in life, besides the expectation of an ample heritage.

So one day, after bestowing upon each a new cap, a pair of silver-buckled shoes, a violet mantle,<sup>1</sup> a well-filled purse, and a horse, she bade them set forth towards the house of their father's brother.

The two boys began their journey in the highest spirits, glad that they were travelling into a new country. Their horses made such good speed, that in the course of a few days they found themselves already in another kingdom, where the trees, and even the corn, were quite different to their own. There one morning, coming to a cross-road, they saw a poor woman seated near a wayside cross, her face buried in her apron.

Tonyk drew up his horse to ask her what she ailed; and the beggar told him, sobbing, that she had just lost her son, her sole support, and that she was now cast upon the charity of Christian strangers.

The youth was touched with compassion; but Mylio, who waited at a little distance, cried out mockingly,

"You are not going to believe the first pitiful story told you by the roadside! It is just this woman's trade to sit here and cheat travellers of their money."

"Hush, hush, my brother," answered Tonyk, "in the name of God; you only make her weep the more. Do not you see that she is just the age and figure of our own dear mother, whom may God preserve." Then stooping towards the beggar-woman, he handed her his purse, saying,

"Here, my good woman, I can help you but a little; but I will pray that God Himself may be your consolation."

The beggar took the purse, and pressed it to her lips; then said to Tonyk,

"Since my young lord has been so bountiful to a poor woman, let him not refuse to accept from her this walnut. It contains a wasp with a sting of diamond."

Tonyk took the walnut with thanks, and proceeded on his way with Mylio.

Ere long they came upon the borders of a forest, and saw a little child, half naked, seeking somewhat in the hollows of the trees, whilst he sung a strange and melancholy air, more mournful than the music of a requiem. He often stopped to clap his little frozen hands, saying in his song, "*I am cold,—oh, so cold!*" and the boys could hear his teeth chatter in his head.

Tonyk was ready to weep at this spectacle, and said to his brother,

"Mylio, only see how this poor child suffers from the piercing wind."

"Then he must be a chilly subject," returned Mylio; "the wind does not strike me as so piercing."

"That may well be, when you have on a plush doublet, a warm cloth coat, and over all your violet mantle, whilst he is wrapped round by little but the air of heaven."

[2]

[3]

[4]

"Well, and what then?" observed Mylio; "after all, he is but a peasant-boy."

"Alas," said Tonyk, "when I think that you, my brother, might have been born to the same hard fate, it goes to my very heart; and I cannot bear to see him suffering. For Jesus' sake let us relieve him."

So saying he reined in his horse, and calling to him the little boy, asked what he was about.

[5]

"I am trying," said the child, "if I can find any dragon-flies<sup>2</sup> asleep in the hollows of the trees."

"And what do you want with the dragon-flies?" asked Mylio.

"When I have found a great many, I shall sell them in the town, and buy myself a garment as warm as sunshine."

"And how many have you found already?" asked the young nobleman.

"One only," said the child, holding up a little rushen cage enclosing the blue fly.

"Well, well, I will take it," interposed Tonyk, throwing to the boy his violet mantle. "Wrap yourself up in that nice warm cloak, my poor little fellow; and when you kneel down to your evening prayers, say every night a 'Hail Mary' for us, and another for our mother."

The two brothers went forward on their journey; and Tonyk, having parted with his mantle, suffered sorely for a time from the cutting north wind; but the forest came to an end, the air grew milder, the fog dispersed, and a vein of sunshine kindled in the clouds.

They presently entered a green meadow, where a fountain sprung; and there beside it sat an aged man, his clothes in tatters, and on his back the wallet which marked him as a beggar.

[6]

As soon as he perceived the young riders, he called to them in beseeching tones.

Tonyk approached him.

"What is it, father?" said he, lifting his hand to his hat in respectful consideration of the beggar's age.

"Alas, my dear young gentlemen," replied the old man, "you see how white my hair is, and how wrinkled my cheeks. By reason of my age, I have grown very feeble, and my feet can carry me no further. Therefore I must certainly sit here and die, unless one of you is willing to sell me his horse."

"Sell thee one of our horses, beggar!" exclaimed Mylio, with contemptuous voice; "and wherewithal have you to pay for it?"

"You see this hollow acorn," answered the mendicant: "it contains a spider capable of spinning a web stronger than steel. Let me have one of your horses, and I will give you in exchange the acorn with the spider."

The elder of the two boys burst into a loud laugh.

"Do you only hear that, Tonyk?" said he, turning to his brother. "By my baptism, there must be two calf's feet in that fellow's shoes."<sup>3</sup>

[7]

But the younger answered gently,

"The poor can only offer what he has."

Then dismounting, he went up to the old man, and added,

"I give you my horse, my honest friend, not in consideration of the price you offer for him, but in remembrance of Christ, who has declared the poor to be His chosen portion. Take and keep him as your own, and thank God, in whose name I bestow him."

The old man murmured a thousand benedictions, and mounting with Tonyk's aid, went on his way, and was soon lost in the distance.

But at this last alms-deed Mylio could no longer contain himself, and broke out into a storm of reproaches.

"Fool!" cried he angrily to Tonyk, "are you not ashamed of the state to which you have reduced yourself by your folly? You thought no doubt that when you had

stripped yourself of every thing, I would go shares with you in horse and cloak and purse. But no such thing. I hope this lesson at least will do you good, and that, by feeling the inconveniences of prodigality, you may learn to be more prudent for the future."

"It is indeed a good lesson, my brother," replied Tonyk mildly; "and I willingly receive it. I never so much as thought of sharing your money, horse, or cloak; go, therefore, on your way without troubling yourself about me, and may the Queen of angels guide you."

[8]

Mylio answered not a word, but trotted quickly off; whilst his young brother followed upon foot, keeping him in sight as long as he was able, without a thought of bitterness arising in his heart.

And thus they went on towards the entrance of a narrow defile between two mountains, so lofty that their tops were hidden in the clouds. It was called the Accursed Strait; for a dreadful being dwelt among those heights, and there laid wait for travellers, like a huntsman watching for his game. He was a giant, blind, and without feet; but had so fine an ear for sound, that he could hear the worm working her dark way within the earth. His servants were two eagles, which he had tamed (for he was a great magician), and he sent them forth to catch his prey so soon as he could hear it coming. So the country people of the neighbourhood, when they had to thread the dreaded pass, were accustomed to carry their shoes in their hands, like the girls of Roscoff going to market at Morlaix, and held their breath lest the giant should detect their passage. But Mylio, who knew nothing of all this, went on at full trot, until the giant was awakened by the sound of horse's hoofs upon the stony way.

[9]

"Ho, ho, my harriers, where are you?" cried he.

The white and the red eagle hastened to him.

"Go and fetch me for my supper what is passing by," exclaimed the giant.

Like balls from cannon-mouth they shot down the depths of the ravine, and seizing Mylio by his violet mantle, bore him upwards to the giant's den.

At that moment Tonyk came up to the entrance of the defile. He saw his brother in the act of being carried off by the two birds, and rushing towards him, uttered a loud cry; but the eagles almost instantly vanished with Mylio in the clouds that hung over the loftiest mountain. For a few seconds the boy stood rooted to the spot with horror, gazing on the sky and the straight rocks that rose above him like a wall; then sinking on his knees, with folded hands, he cried,

"O God, the Almighty Maker of the world, save my brother Mylio!"

"Trouble not God the Father for so small a matter," cried three little voices close beside him.

Tonyk turned in amazement.

"Who speaks? where are you?" he exclaimed.

"In the pocket of thy doublet," replied the three voices.

Tonyk searched his pocket, and drew forth the walnut, the acorn, and the rushen cage, containing the three different insects.

[10]

"Is it you who will save Mylio?" said he.

"We, we, we," they answered in their various tones.

"And what can you do, you poor little nobodies?" continued Tonyk.

"Let us out, and thou shalt see."

The boy did as they desired; and immediately the spider crept to a tree, from which she began a web as strong and as shining as steel. Then mounting on the dragon-fly, which raised her gradually in the air, she still wove on her silvery network; the several threads of which assumed the form of a ladder constantly stretching upwards.

Tonyk mounted step by step on this miraculous ladder, until it brought him to the summit of the mountain. Then the wasp flew before him, and led him to the giant's den.

It was a grotto hollowed in the cliff, and lofty as a cathedral-nave. The blind and footless ogre, seated in the middle, swayed his vast body to and fro like a poplar



rocked by winds, singing snatches of a strange song; while Mylio lay on the ground, his legs and arms tucked behind him, like a fowl trussed for the spit. The two eagles were at a little distance, by the fireplace, one ready to act as turnspit, whilst the other made up the fire.

[11]

The noise which the giant made in singing, and the attention he paid to the preparations for his feast, prevented his hearing the approach of Tonyk and his three tiny attendants; but the red eagle perceived the youth, and, darting forward, would have seized him in its claws, had not the wasp at that very moment pierced its eyes with her diamond sting. The white eagle, hurrying to its fellow's aid, shared the same fate. Then the wasp flew upon the ogre, who had roused himself on hearing the cries of his two servants, and set herself to sting him without mercy. The giant roared aloud, like a bull in August. But in vain he whirled around him his huge arms, like windmill-sails; having no eyes, he could not succeed in catching the creature, and for want of feet it was equally impossible for him to escape from it.

At length he flung himself, face downwards, on the earth, to find some respite from its fiery dart; but the spider then came up, and spun over him a net that held him fast imprisoned. In vain he called upon the eagles for assistance: savage with pain, and no longer fearing now they saw him vanquished, their only impulse was to revenge upon him all the bitterness of their past long slavery. Fiercely flapping their wings, they flew upon their former master, and tore him in their fury, as he lay cowering beneath the web of steel. With every stroke of their beaks they carried off a strip of flesh; nor did they stay their vengeance until they had laid bare his bones. Then they crouched down upon the mangled carcass; and as the flesh of a magician, to say nothing of an ogre, is a meat impossible of digestion, they never rose again.

[12]

Meanwhile Tonyk had unbound his brother; and, after embracing him with tears of joy, led him from the cavern to the edge of the precipice. The dragon-fly and the wasp soon appeared there, harnessed to the little cage of rushes, now transformed into a coach. They invited the two brothers to seat themselves within it, whilst the spider placed herself behind like a magnificent lackey, and the equipage rolled onwards with the swiftness of the wind. In this way Tonyk and Mylio travelled untired over meadows, woods, mountains, and villages (for in the air the roads are always in good order), until they came before their uncle's castle.

There the carriage came to ground, and rolled onwards towards the drawbridge, where the brothers saw both their horses in waiting for them. At the saddle-bow of Tonyk hung his purse and mantle; but the purse had grown much larger and heavier, and the mantle was now all powdered with diamonds.

Astonished, the youth turned him towards the coach to ask what this might mean; but, behold, the coach had disappeared; and instead of the wasp, the spider, and the dragon-fly, there stood three angels all glorious with light. Awe-struck and bewildered, the brothers sank upon their knees.

[13]

Then one of the angels, more beautiful and radiant than his fellows, drew near to Tonyk, and thus spoke:

"Fear not, thou righteous one; for the woman, the child, and the old man, whom thou hast succoured were none others than our blessed Lady, her divine Son, and the holy saint Joseph. They sent us to guard thee on thy way from harm; and, now that our mission is accomplished, we return to Paradise. Only remember all that has befallen thee, and let it serve as an example for ever."

At these words the angels spread their wings, and soared away like three white doves, chanting the *Hosanna* as it is sung in churches at the Holy Mass.

[14]

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1 *Limestra*, mantle of some special material, which is highly valued by the Bretons.

2 *Aiguilles ailées*. The fly commonly called *demoiselle* in French, in Brittany is *nadoz-aër*; literally, "needle of the air."

3 A proverbial expression in Brittany to designate folly and impertinence.

[Contents]

## THE LEGEND OF SAINT GALONNEK.

Saint Galonnek was a native of Ireland, as, indeed, were almost all the teachers in Brittany of those days, and called himself Galonnus, being evidently of Roman origin. But after he had left his native land, and the fame of his good deeds had

spread far and wide, the Bretons, seeing that his heart was like one of those fresh springs of water that are ever bubbling beneath unfading verdure, changed his name to Galonnek, which signifies in their language *the open-hearted*.

And, in truth, never had any child of God a soul more tenderly awakened to the sufferings of his fellow-men. No sorrow was beneath his sympathy; but it was like the sea-breeze, springing with each tide, never failing to refresh the traveller weary on his way, or to fill the sails of the humble fishing-boat, and bring it safe to land.

His father and mother were people of substance, and though themselves buried in the darkness of paganism, spared not the tenderest solicitude in the education of their son. He was placed under the instruction of the most learned masters Ireland could afford, and above all, had the honour of being a pupil of St. Patrick, then found amongst them like a nightingale in the midst of wrens, or a beech-tree towering above the ferns on a common.

[15]

Under his teaching the boy grew up, learning only to regard himself in the person of God and his neighbours; and with so fervent a love for souls did the holy apostle of Ireland inspire Galonnek, that at the age of eighteen he had no higher wish than to cross over to Brittany, and preach the kingdom of Heaven to sorrowful sinners.

His father and mother, who had then long since been converted, desired to throw no hindrance in the way of his accomplishing this pious work; but embracing him with tears, they bade him God speed, assured that they should meet again once more before the throne of God.

Galonnek took his passage in a boat manned by evil-disposed sailors, whose design was to plunder him; but when they discovered that the holy youth was possessed of nothing but an iron crucifix and a holly-staff, they turned him out upon the coast of Cornouaille, where they abandoned him, helpless and without provisions.

Galonnek walked about a long time, not knowing where he was, but perfectly tranquil in his mind, certain that he was in his Master's kingdom. The sea that roared behind him, the birds that warbled in the bushes, and the wind murmuring in the leaves, all spoke alike to him, each with its own peculiar voice, the name of that Master whose creatures and subjects they were.

[16]

He came at length, towards evening, to a part of the country lying between Audierne and Plougastel-des-Montagnes, and there finding a village, he seated himself on the doorstep of the first house, awaiting an invitation to enter.

But, far from that, the owner of the house bade him rise and go away. Galonnek then went to the door of the next house, and received the same inhospitable order; and so on from door to door throughout the village. And from the expression every where used to him, *zevel*, this village was afterwards called Plouzevel, literally, *people who said, Get up*.

The saint was preparing to stretch his weary limbs by the roadside, when he perceived a cabin which he had not yet noticed, and drew near the door.

It was the dwelling of a poor widow, possessed only of a few acres of barren land, which she had no longer strength to till. But if the fruits of her land were little worth, those of her heart were rich and plentiful. So tenderly generous was her charity, that if any one asked her for a draught of goat's milk, she would give him cream; and if one begged for cream, she would have been ready to bestow the goat itself.

[17]

She received Galonnek as if he had been her dearly-beloved son, long absent, and supposed dead. She ministered to him of the best she had, listening with devotion to his holy teaching; and having already charity, the very key of true religion, she was ready to embrace with all her heart the faith of Christ. So early as the very next morning she begged the grace of baptism; and Galonnek, seeing that the love of her neighbours had already made her a Christian in intention, consented to bestow it. But water was wanted at the moment of the ceremony; and St. Galonnek going out, took a spade, and digging for a few moments in the old woman's little courtyard, there sprung out an abundant fountain; and he said,

"By the aid of this water your barren land will become fertile meadows covered with rich grass, and you will be able to feed as many cows in your new pastures as you have now goats browsing on your heath."

This miracle began to open the eyes of the villagers; and they gave permission to Galonnek to take up his abode in a forest which stretched in those days from Plouzevel to the sea-shore. There the holy disciple of St. Patrick built himself a hut of turf and boughs.

One day whilst praying in this oratory, he heard the hoofs of a runaway horse; and leaving his devotions to see what was the matter, he saw a knight thrown from his horse amidst the thicket.

[18]

Galonnek ran to his assistance; and having with much difficulty carried him to his hermitage, he began to bathe his wounds, to dress them with leaves for want of ointment, and to bind them up with strips torn from his own gown of serge.

Now it chanced that this knight was the Count of Cornouaille himself; and he was found presently by the attendants, whom he had outstripped, peacefully sleeping on the saint's bed of fern. But behold, when he awakened, that saint's prayers had stood instead of remedies, and all his wounds were healed.

And whilst all stood astonished at this miracle, St. Galonnek said gently,

"Do not be so much surprised; for if by faith mountains may be moved, why should not charity heal death itself?"

The count, filled with wonder and delight, declared that the whole forest should become the property of the man who had done so much for him; and not that only, but that he should have as much good meadow-land as could be enclosed within the strips he had torn from his gown to bind the wounds, each strip being reduced to single threads. Thus Galonnek became the owner of a whole parish; and a proverb arose, which is still current in those parts, *That it is with the length of a benefit received one must measure the field of gratitude.*

[19]

Yet Galonnek was none the richer, notwithstanding the noble liberality of the count. All the income of his estate was given to the poor, whilst he still lived on in his leafy hermitage. But as many young men were attracted from the neighbourhood by his reputation for holiness and learning, he built many other cells beside his own; and thus from his school in that solitary glade the light of the Gospel went forth in time through all the length and breadth of the country.

It was amidst the perfume of wild-flowers, beside the murmuring brook, that Galonnek taught his pupils. He would teach them to understand somewhat of the providence of God by making them observe the tender care with which the little birds prepare a downy nest for offspring yet unborn. He would point out to their attention how the earth yields moisture to the roots of trees, how the trees become a dwelling-place for thrushes and for finches, and how these again make musical the forest with their cheerful strains, to illustrate the advantage and necessity of mutual benevolence and brotherly love. And when need was to stimulate their efforts or their perseverance, he would lead them to behold the ant, unwearied in her toil, or the constant woodpecker whose tiny bill achieves the scooping of an oak.

[20]

But this teaching did not confine him in one place; and wherever he went his presence was as that of a star in the midst of darkness.

Now in those days the inhabitants of Brittany still exercised the right of *wrecking*, or in other words, reserved to themselves the privilege of plundering any unfortunate vessels thrown upon their coasts. They spoke of the sea as a cow given to their ancestors by God, and that brought forth every winter for their benefit; thus they looked on shipwrecks as a positive blessing.

One night, during a heavy storm, as Galonnek was returning to his forest from the sick-bed of a poor man, he saw the dwellers on the coast leading a bull along the rocks. His head was bound down towards his fore-legs, and a beacon-light was fastened to his horns. The crippled gait of the animal gave an oscillating motion to the light, which might be well mistaken at a distance for the lantern of a ship pitching out at sea, and thus deceive bewildered vessels, uncertain in the tempest of their course, into the notion of yet being far from shore. Already one thus treacherously beguiled was on its way to ruin, and might be seen close upon the rocks, its full white sails gleaming through the night; another moment and it would have been aground among the breakers.

[21]

Galonnek rushed amidst the peasants, extinguished the false beacon, and reproached them for such treachery. But they would not listen to him, and prepared to rekindle the light. Then the saint cried,

"By all your hopes in this world and the next, have done! for it is your own brethren and children that you are drawing to destruction."

And whilst they stood uncertain, God kindled up the sky with flashing lightning; and beholding the vessel as if it had been noonday, they saw that it was indeed a Breton ship.

Terrified by the dangers to which they had exposed themselves, they all fell down

at the saint's feet; the women kissed the hem of his garment with floods of tears, as if his hands had rescued their sons from the depths of the sea, and all with one voice exclaimed,

"But for him we should have become the murderers of our friends and neighbours."

"Alas, those whom you have already lured to death were equally your neighbours and your friends," replied St. Galonnek; "for we are all descended from Adam, and have been ransomed by the blood of the same God."

[22]

The peasants, deeply moved, perceived their guilt, and promised to renounce this custom of their fathers.

Much about the same time, the country of Pluguffant was ravaged by a dragon, which devoured whole flocks with their shepherds and dogs. In vain had the most courageous men banded themselves together to destroy it. The ferocious monster had put them all to flight; and now nobody dared to stir out of doors to lead his cattle to water, or go and work in the fields. As soon as Galonnek knew this sad state of things, he set out for the court of the Count of Cornouaille, and asked there which knight was the most valiant before God and man. Every voice declared him to be Messire Tanguy de Carfor, who had made a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, and killed more than a thousand Saracens with his own hand.

Galonnek desired him to gird on his sword and armour, and to come and fight the dragon, which God had given him a *mission to destroy*. Carfor instantly armed himself, and accompanied the saint to the monster's den, from which he came out, howling frightfully at their approach.

Carfor hesitated in spite of himself at so unwonted an appearance; but Galonnek said to him,

"For your soul's sake, messire, have confidence in God, and you shall kill this monster as easily as a gadfly."

[23]

Thus encouraged, the knight advanced to the attack, and with scarce an effort pierced the dragon three times through with his sword, whilst the saint called upon the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity.

Galonnek also freed the country from many other scourges, such as wolves, reptiles, and mosquitoes with fiery stings; and being now old enough to receive holy orders, he was ordained by St. Pol; and built a little chapel beside his oratory, where every day he celebrated Mass.

Meanwhile the leafy cells around him multiplied so fast, that at last they were united in a monastery, called by Galonnek *Youlmad*, or *the house of good desires*.

He was engaged in drawing up a rule for this monastery, when he was interrupted by a disturbing rumour which arose in the neighbourhood.

It was said that a woman clothed in red, and with a ghastly countenance, had taken passage in a fishing-boat from Crozon. She landed near Poullons; and when questioned as to her name on departing, she had replied that she was called the Lady of Pestilence. And, in fact, it came to pass, that within a very few days both men and animals were smitten with a contagious disease, which carried them off after a few hours' illness. So great was the mortality, that wood sufficient for the coffins could not be found; and for want of grave-diggers, the corpses were laid to rest in furrows hollowed by the plough.

[24]

Those who were well off gathered all their effects together in wagons, and harnessing all the horses they possessed, drove away at full speed to the mountains, which the pallid woman had not passed. But the poorer people, who had no means of conveyance, and were unwilling to leave their little all, awaited their doom at home, like sheep lying down to rest around the butcher's door.

In this extremity, however, they were not abandoned by Galonnek. He went from hut to hut, carrying aid or consolation. Linen for shrouds and wood for coffins might indeed be wanting; but he swathed the fever-spotted dead in leafy twigs, and bore them in his own arms to consecrated earth, laying them down tenderly as sleeping infants in their cradle-bed. Then planting a branch of yew, and another of blossoming broom, he entwined them in the form of a cross, and set them as an emblem on the grave; the yew symbolising the sorrow which underlies the whole course of life, and the blossoming broom the transitory joys which gleam across it. And it is said, that when at last the pestilence was stayed, these holy crosses covered a space of three days' journey. So many generous and pious acts had spread the fame of Galonnek both far and wide, and all Cornouaille was inflamed with devotion. Persons came from all parts to the convent of *Good Desires* to listen

[25]

to his teaching, to ask his prayers, and to offer him gifts; but these the saint only accepted for the purposes of charity.

"The priest," he used to say, "is only as a canal, which serves to carry water from overflowing streams to arid barren plains."

Another of his sayings was, "God has given us two hands; one with which to receive His good treasures, and the other to administer the same to those who need."

And thus, although the neighbouring nobles had loaded him with presents, his monastery and church were radiant only with his good actions. He was accustomed to sleep upon an osier hurdle, and wore nothing better than a gown of faded serge. But all this external poverty threw out with stronger lustre the brightness of his hidden worth; and Galonnek was like one of those caskets made of earth or bark, in which are treasured rubies and carbuncles.

The see of Cornouaille becoming vacant, Galonnek was summoned with one voice to fill it. He was anxious to refuse; but St. Pol himself came to find him out, and said to him that God's stars have no right to conceal themselves in the grass, but must take their places in the firmament. Then St. Galonnek resigned himself; but when the moment came for leaving the turfen oratory, where he had spent the best part of his life, his heart became so heavy that he burst into tears, and cried aloud, "Alas, how shall I become worthy of the new office which my brethren impose upon me?" Then, falling on his knees, he prayed most fervently until God put strength into his heart. When he arose, he took the humble chalice he had been accustomed to use, his sole possession, save the memory of his good deeds, and went on foot to the capital of Cornouaille, where he was consecrated Bishop.

[26]

Here began for St. Galonnek a new life of courage and self-denial. He had to fight for the poor against the rich, for the weak against the mighty. When his friends and disciples beheld him engage, all unprotected, in these dangerous struggles, even the most courageous were at times dismayed; but Galonnek would say with a smile, "Fear not, my friends, their weapons cannot touch me. God Himself has forged for me a breastplate with the tears of the sorrowful, the miseries of the poor, and the despair of the oppressed. Behind this armour I can feel no hurt. Blows can only do us mischief by glancing across us at any of those who have taken up our cause; for from our very heart distils a balsam that can heal as they come all the wounds inflicted from without."

[27]

Moved by the sight of so much virtue, many powerful noblemen, who had hitherto persisted in idolatry, came to ask of Galonnek instruction and the grace of baptism; but he would only grant this favour in reward for some good work. If any one had sinned, and came to seek for absolution, Galonnek would give him for a penance some virtuous action to perform, some charitable service to his fellow-men. He taught them to regard God as the surety for recompenses merited but not received, to invest their lives in Paradise, to break every tie which holds the soul in bondage, that it may spring forward with unfettered flight in the love of God and man.

About this time the Count of Cornouaille died, and was succeeded by his son Tugduval. He was a conceited, vain-glorious youth, who could not endure the least contradiction, and had not yet lived long enough to find that life is an instrument on which the first chords we strike are invariably false.

So unjust had he shown himself in many instances to the townspeople and gentry, that they banded together and drove him from the city. But Tugduval asked assistance from the Count of Vannes, and soon returned with an army to which the rebels could offer no resistance. Multitudes were slain in battle, and the survivors taking refuge in the city, were besieged there by the count.

[28]

He rode round the city-walls, like a hungry wolf parading a sheepfold, swearing never to forgive one of the rebels, or those who had given them shelter.

So battering-rams were brought, and raised against the walls; and when once a passage was forced, he mounted his war-horse, and ordering every soldier to take a naked sword in one hand, and a lighted torch in the other, he rushed at their head into the affrighted city.

But Galonnek had seen the terror of the conquered people, who only looked for fire and sword; and coming out of the cathedral, with all his priests in procession, bearing crosses and all their sacred relics, he came the first to meet Tugduval, his bald head uncovered, and his chalice in his hand.

The young count, astonished, checked his horse; but Galonnek went straight up to his saddle-bow, there paused, and said in a gentle voice, "If any will devour the

flock, he must begin by slaying the shepherd. I am here at your mercy, and am ready to purchase with my blood forgiveness for the rest."

At the sight of this holy old man, whom he had early been taught to reverence, and at that voice which had always sounded like a benediction, Tugduval felt his rage dissolve away; and letting fall his sword, he bent over his horse's neck, and kissed devoutly the chalice carried by St. Galonnek. At that instant all the soldiers, as if touched by the same emotion, put out their torches, and turned their sword-points to the ground, crying as with one voice, "Quarter, quarter for all!"

[29]

The young count waited not a repetition of this prayer; but dismounting hastily, he followed the Bishop to the cathedral, where the conquerors and the conquered joined in songs of thanksgiving to God.

This was the last great act of St. Galonnek's life. A very few months after, he felt his strength decay, and knew that his end was near. He did not, however, on that account relax in his good works. Returning one day from a visit to a poor widow bereaved of her last son, he suddenly found himself unable to proceed, and sat down to rest upon a stone by the wayside. There a pedlar from the mountains found him, some time after, sitting motionless; and thinking that he slept, the man approached him, when he saw that he was dead. Judging from the poverty of his apparel, the pedlar took him for a hermit of the neighbourhood, and out of Christian charity wrapped the body in his mantle for a funeral shroud. A shoemaker's wife, who lived a few steps off, contributed an old chest to serve as a coffin, so that Bishop Galonnek came to his grave like a beggar.

[30]

But the truth was soon discovered by the miracles which were wrought at his tomb; and the body being taken from the earth, was carried with great state to the city, and buried at the foot of the high altar in the cathedral. St. Pol was requested to write an epitaph upon him; but the apostle of Léon replied that none but an archangel could compose one; so they merely covered the grave with a plain granite slab, on which was carved the name of Galonnek.

Ages have passed away, and yet this stone still remains, and thither the Breton mothers come to lay their new-born babes one instant on its consecrated bosom, whilst they repeat the usual form of prayer:

"Saint Galonnek, bestow upon my child two hearts. Give him the heart of a lion, that he may be strong in well-doing; and give him the heart of a turtle-dove, that he may be full of brotherly love."

The feast of St. Galonnek is celebrated on the 1st of April, when the buds of the hedgerows are bursting into leaf, and "the time of the singing of birds is come."

[31]

[Contents]

## THE KORILS OF PLAUDEN.

There dwelt formerly in the land of White-Wheat, as well as in Cornouaille, a race of dwarfs, or Korigans, who, being divided into four nations or tribes, inhabited the woods, the commons, the valleys, and the farms. Those dwelling in the woods were called *Kornikaneds*, because they played on little horns, which hung suspended from their girdles; the inhabitants of the commons were called *Korils*, from their spending all their nights in dancing by moonlight; the dwellers in the valleys were *Poulpikans*, from their homes lying so low; and the *Teuz* were wild black men, living near the meadows and the wheat-fields; but as the other Korigans accused them of being too friendly with Christians, they were forced to take flight into Léon, where probably there may still be some of them remaining.

At the time of which I speak, there were only then hereabouts the Kornikaneds, the Poulpikans, and the Korils; but they abounded in such numbers, that after dark few people cared to venture near their stony palaces.

Above all, there lay in Plauden, near the little market-town of Loqueltas, a common known as Motenn-Dervenn, or *place of oaks*, whereon there stood an extensive Koril village, that may be seen there to this very day. The mischievous dwarfs came out to dance there every night; and any one adventurous enough to cross the common at that time was sure to be entrapped into their mazy chain, and forced to wheel about with them till earliest cockcrow; so that the place was universally avoided after nightfall.

[32]

One evening, however, Benead Guilcher, returning with his wife from a field,

where he had been doing a day's work in ploughing for a farmer of Cadougal, took his way across the haunted heath because it was so much the shortest road. It was still early, and he hoped that the Korigans might not have yet begun their dance; but when he came half-way over the Motenn-Dervenn, he perceived them scattered round about the blocks of stone, like birds on a field of corn. He would fain have turned him back; but the horns of the wood-dwarfs, and the call-cries of the valley-imps, already rose behind him. Benead felt his legs tremble, and said to his wife,

"Saint Anne, we are done for! Here come the Kornikaneds and the Poulpikans to join the Korils for their midnight ball. They will make us dance with them till daybreak; and it is more than my poor heart can endure."

And, in fact, the troops of Korigans assembling from all parts, came round about poor Guilcher and his wife like flies in August to a drop of honey, but started back on seeing in his hand the little fork Benead had been using to clear the ploughshare, and began to sing with one accord,

"Let him be, let her be,  
The plough-fork has he!  
Let them go on their way,  
The fork carry they!"

Guilcher instantly perceived that the instrument he held in his hand acted as a charm against the power of the Korigans; and he and his wife passed unmolested through the very midst of them.

This was a hint to every body. From that day forward it became a universal custom to take out the little fork of an evening; and thus armed, any one might cross the heaths and valleys without fear of hindrance.

But Benead was not satisfied with having rendered this service to the Bretons; he was an inquisitive as well as an intelligent man, and as merry a hunchback as any in the four Breton bishoprics. For I have omitted to tell you that Benead carried from his birth a hump betwixt his shoulders, with which he would thankfully have parted at cost-price. He was looked on also as an honest workman, who laboured conscientiously for daily bread, and moreover well deserved the character of a good Christian.

One evening, unable to resist the wish, he took his little fork, commended himself devoutly to St. Anne, and set off towards the Motenn-Dervenn.

The Korils saw him from a distance, and ran to him, crying,

"It is Benead Guilcher!"

"Yes, it is I, my little men," replied the jovial hunchback; "I have come to pay you a friendly visit."

"You are welcome," replied the Korils. "Will you have a dance with us?"

"Excuse me, my good folks," replied Guilcher, "but your breath is too long for a poor invalid."

"We will stop whenever you like," cried the Korils.

"Will you promise that?" said Benead, who was not unwilling to try a round with them, as much for the novelty of the thing as that he might have it to talk about.

"We will promise thee," said the dwarfs.

"By the Saviour's cross?"

"By the Saviour's cross."

The hunchback, satisfied that such an oath secured him from all dangers, took his place in the chain; and the Korils began their round, singing their accustomed song:

"Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday;  
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday."<sup>1</sup>

In a few minutes Guilcher stopped.

"With all due deference to you, good gentlefolks," said he to the dwarfs, "your song and dance seem to me very monotonous. You stop too early in the week; and without having much claim to be a skilful stringer of rhymes, I fancy I can lengthen the chorus."

[33]

[34]

[35]

"Let us see, let us see!" cried the dwarfs.

Then the hunchback replied,

"Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday, Saturday."

A great tumult arose amongst the Korils.

"Stard! stard!"<sup>2</sup> cried they, surrounding Guilcher; "you are a bold singer and a fine dancer. Repeat it once more."

The hunchback repeated,

"Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday, Saturday,"

whilst the Korils wheeled about in mad delight. At last they stopped, and pressing round about Guilcher, they cried with one voice,

"What will you have? what do you want? riches or beauty? Speak a wish, and we will fulfil it for you."

"Are you in earnest?" asked the labourer.

"May we be doomed to pick up grain by grain all the millet in the diocese, if we deceive thee," they replied.

"Well," said Guilcher, "if you want to make me a present, and leave me to choose what it shall be, I have one thing only to desire from you, and that is, that you take away what I have got here set betwixt my shoulders, and make me as straight as the flagstaff of Loqueltas."

"Good, good!" replied the Korils. "Be easy, come here." And seizing Guilcher, they threw him in the air, tossing him from one to another like a worsted ball, until he had made the round of the entire circle. Then he fell upon his feet, giddy, breathless, but—without his hump! Benead had grown younger, fatter, beautiful! Except his mother, no one could have recognised him.

You may guess the surprise his appearance created on his return to Loqueltas. No one could believe it was Guilcher; his wife herself was doubtful about receiving him. Before she could recognise in him her old humpback, he was compelled to tell her exactly how many headdresses she had in her press, and what was the colour of her stockings. At last, when every body knew for certain that it was he, they became wonderfully anxious to find out what had effected so strange a transformation; but Benead thought that if he told the truth, he should be looked on as an accomplice of the Korigans; and that every time an ox strayed, or a goat was lost, he should be applied to for its restoration. So he told all those who asked him questions, that it happened unknown to him whilst sleeping on the heath. Thenceforth went all the crooked folk who were silly enough to believe him, and spent their nights upon the open heath, hoping to rise like arrows in the morning; but many people suspected that there was a secret in the matter, which Guilcher was unwilling to disclose.

Amongst these latter was a tailor with red hair and squinting eyes, called, from his stammering speech, Perr Balibouzik. He was not, as is usual with his craft, a rhymester, lively on his board as a robin on its twig, and one who scented pancakes from afar as dogs do game; Balibouzik never laughed, never sung, and fed upon such coarse black barley bread that one could count the straws in it. He was a miser, and, worse than that, a bad Christian; lending out his money at such heavy interest, that he ruined all the poor day-labourers of the country. Guilcher had long owed him five crowns, and had no means of paying them. Perr went in quest of him, and demanded them once more.

The *ci-devant* hunchback excused himself, promising to pay after fair-time; but Balibouzik declared that the only condition upon which he would agree to any further delay was that of being at once put in possession of the secret how to grow young and handsome. Thus driven to extremities, Guilcher related his visit to the Korils, what words he had added to their song, and how the choice had been given him between two wishes.

Perr made him repeat every detail many times over, and then went away, warning his debtor that he would give him eight days longer to lay hands on the five crowns.

But what he had heard awakened within him all the rage of avarice. He resolved that very night to visit the Motenn-Dervenn, to mix in the dance of Korigans, and

[36]

[37]

[38]



to gain the choice between two wishes, as proposed to Guilcher,—namely, riches and beauty.

So soon, therefore, as the moon arose, behold Balibouzik the Squinter on his way towards the common, carrying a little fork in his hand. The Korils saw him, ran to meet him, and demanded whether he would dance. Perr consented, after making the same conditions as Benead, and joined the dancing company of little black men, who were all engaged in chanting the refrain which Guilcher had increased:

“Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday, Saturday.”

“Wait!” cried the tailor, seized with sudden inspiration; “I also will add something to your song.”

“Add, add!” replied the Korils.

And all once more exclaimed,

“Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday, Saturday.”

They stopped, and Balibouzik stammered out alone,

“And the Sun—Sun—Sunday too.”

The dwarfs uttered a prolonged murmur.

“Well?” they cried all at once.

“Sun—Sunday too,”

repeated the tailor.

“But go on, go on.”

“Sun—Sunday.”

“Well, well, well?”

“Sun—Sunday too!”

The Koril chain was broken up; they ran about as if furious at not being understood.

The poor stammerer, terrified, stood speechless, with his mouth wide open. At length the waves of little black heads grew calmer; they surrounded Balibouzik, and a thousand voices cried at once,

“Wish a wish! wish a wish!”

Perr took heart.

“A wi-wi-sh,” said he. “Guilcher cho-o-ose between riches and beauty.”

“Yes, Guilcher chose beauty, and left riches.”

“Well, for my part, I choose what Guilcher left.”

“Well done!” cried the Korils. “Come here, tailor.”

Perr drew near in transport. They took him up as they had done Benead; threw him from hand to hand all round their circle; and when he fell upon his feet, he had between his shoulders what Guilcher had left—that is to say, a hump.

The tailor was no more Balibouzik simply, he was now Tortik-Balibouzik.

The poor deformed creature came back to Loqueltas shamefaced as a dog who has had his tail cut off. As soon as what had happened to him was known, there was not a creature but longed to get sight of him. And every one beholding his back, grown round as that of a well-digger, uttered an exclamation of astonishment. Perr raged beneath his hump, and swore to himself that he would be revenged upon Guilcher; for that he alone was the cause of this misfortune, being a favourite of the Korigans, and having doubtless begged them thus to insult his creditor.

So the eight days once expired, Tortik-Balibouzik said to Benead, that if he could not pay him his five crowns, he would go and send the officers of justice to sell all he had. Benead entreated in vain; the new hunchback would listen to nothing, and announced that the very next day he should send to the fair<sup>3</sup> all his furniture, his

tools, and his pig.

Guilcher's wife uttered loud cries, reiterating that they were disgraced before the parish, that nothing now was left for them but to take up the wallet and white staff of mendicants, and go begging from door to door; that it was well worth Benead's while to have become straight and noble in appearance only to take up the straw girdle;<sup>4</sup> and thousands of other unreasonable sayings, after the fashion of women when they are in tribulation,—and when they are not.

To all these complaints Guilcher replied nothing, unless it were that submission to the will of God and His Blessed Mother was above all things necessary; but his heart was humbled to the core. He reproached himself now with not preferring wealth to beauty, when he had the choice; and he would only too willingly have taken back his hump, well garnished with gold, or even silver, crowns. After seeking in vain for a way out of his trouble, he made up his mind to revisit Motenn-Dervenn. [42]

The Korils welcomed him with shouts of joy, as before, and made him join them in their dance. Benead had no heart for merriment; but he would not damp their mirth, and began to jump with all his might. The delighted dwarfs skipped about like dead leaves driven by the winter's wind.

As they ran they repeated the first line of their song, their companion took up the second; they went on to the third, and, that being the last, Guilcher was compelled to finish the tune without words, which in a short time grew tiresome to him.

"If I might venture to give you my opinion, my little lords," said he, "your song has the same effect upon me as the butcher's dog, it goes upon three legs."

"Right, right!" cried all the voices.

"I think," said Benead, "it would be much the best way to add another foot."

"Add, add!" replied the dwarfs.

And all sung out with one accord, and in a piercing utterance, [43]

"Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday, Saturday,  
And the Sunday too!"

There was a short silence; the dwarfs waited to see what Guilcher would say.

"All the week have you!"

finished he gaily.

Thousands of cries which made but one cry rose up from all corners of the common. The whole heath was instantly covered with jumping Korigans. They sprung out from tufts of grass, from bushes of broom, from rocky clefts,—one would have said it was a very hive of little black men; whilst all gambolling amongst the heather, they exclaimed,

"Guilcherik, our saviour! he  
Has fulfill'd the Lord's decree!"

"By my soul! what does all this mean?" cried Benead in astonishment.

"It means," replied the Korigans, "that God had sentenced us to dwell here amongst men, and every night to dance upon the common, until some good Christian should finish our refrain. You first lengthened it, and we hoped that the tailor you sent would have completed it; but he stopped short on the very point of doing so, and for that we punished him. You fortunately have done what he could not; our time of trial now is over, and we shall go back to our kingdom, which spreads under ground, beneath the very sea and rivers," [44]

"If this is so," said Guilcher, "and you really are so far indebted to me, do not go away and leave a friend in trouble."

"What do you want?"

"The means of paying Balibouzik to-day, and the baker for ever."

"Take our bags, take our bags!" exclaimed the Korigans.

And they threw at Benead's feet the little bags of rusty cloth which they wore strapped on their shoulders.

He gathered up as many as he possibly could carry, and ran all joyous home.

"Light the resin," cried he to his wife, on entering, "and close the screen, that nobody may see us; for I bring home wealth enough to buy up three whole parishes, their judges, rectors, and all."

At the same time he spread out upon the table the multitude of little bags, and set himself to open them. But, alas, he had been reckoning the price of his butter before he had bought the cow.<sup>5</sup> The bags enclosed nothing more than sand, dead leaves, horsehair, and a pair of scissors.

[45]

On seeing this he uttered such a dreadful cry that his wife, who had gone to shut the door, came back to ask him what could be the matter. Then Benead told her of his visit to the Motenn-Dervenn, and all that had occurred there.

"St. Anne have pity on us!" cried the frightened woman; "the Korigans have been making sport of you."

"Alas, I see it but too well," replied Guilcher.

"And you have dared, unhappy man, to touch these bags, the property of the accursed."

"I thought I should find something better in them," exclaimed Benead piteously.

"Nothing good can come from good-for-nothings," replied the old woman. "What you have got there will bring an evil spell upon our house. Heavens! if only I have a drop of holy water left."

She ran to her bed, and taking from the wall a little earthen holy water-stoup, she steeped in it a branch of box; but scarcely had the dew of God been sprinkled on the bags, when the horsehair changed at once to necklaces of pearls, the dead leaves into gold, and the sand to diamonds. The enchantment was destroyed, and the wealth that the Korigans would fain have hidden from a Christian eye was forced to reassume its proper form.

[46]

Guilcher repaid Balibouzik his five crowns. He gave to every poor person in the parish a bushel of wheat, with six ells of cloth; and he paid the rector handsomely for fifty Masses; then he set out with his wife for Josselin, where they bought a mansion, and where they reared a family who now are gentlefolks.

[47]

1 The song of the Korigans runs thus: *Di-lun, di-meurs, di-merc'her*. The conclusion of this tale will explain the reason of their keeping only to these first three days.

2 Cry of encouragement amongst the Bretons. In the same sense they use also the word *hard!* but the Celtic origin of this last word seems rather doubtful.

3 *Mettre en foire*. Breton expression, signifying a sale at the house of a debtor.

4 Breton expression, derived from an old custom of parading all insolvents about the parish with a girdle of straw.

5 Equivalent to the French proverb, "One must not sell the bear-skin till the bear is killed."

[Contents]

## THE BLESSED MAO.

Those Christians who stand in need of heavenly aid cannot do better than apply themselves to our Lady of All-Help near Faou. In that place has been built, expressly in her honour, the very richest chapel ever yet raised for her by human hands. The whole inside is ornamented with golden images, and the belfry-tower, which is made exactly like the one at Kreisker, is perforated like a Quimper fritter. There stands also near the church a stone fountain, famed for healing the infirmities both of body and soul.

It was at this chapel that Mao stopped on his road to pray. Mao came from Loperek, which is a pleasant little parish between Kimerc'h and Logoma. His friends and relations were all dead, and his guardian had sent him off to seek his living where he liked, with a good club-stick in his hand and three silver crowns in his purse.

After saying devoutly at the foot of the high-altar all the prayers he had ever learned from the curé, or the old woman who had nursed him, Mao went out of church to go on his way. But as he passed the palisades, he saw a crowd of people

gathered around a corpse upon the grass, and learnt upon inquiry that it was the body of a poor beggar-man, who had yielded up his soul the morning before, and who could not be buried for want of the money-payment.

“Was he, then, a heathen, or a wretched reprobate who had been unfaithful to his Christian duties, that no one will do him this charitable service?” asked Mao.

“He was a sheep of the true fold,” replied one who stood by; “and however hardly he might be pressed by hunger, he would not pluck the three apples, or even ears of corn, which are permitted by old usage to be gathered by the passing stranger. But poor Stevan has not left the means of paying for his funeral, and so here he is allowed to lie. If I were not as poor myself, I would not have allowed him to lie here so long.”

“Alas,” cried Mao, “are the people so cruel in this part of the world, that they suffer the poor to enter the church-doors whilst living, but not after death? If money is all that is wanted, here are three crowns; they are all I have, but I will gladly give them to unlock holy ground to one of the faithful departed.”

The sexton and the priest were now sent for, and the body of the poor beggar was solemnly committed to the grave. As for Mao, he made a simple cross of two yew-branches, set it on the grave of the poor beggar; and after having devoutly repeated a *De profundis*, he set off once more upon his journey towards Camfront.

After a time, however, Mao grew both hungry and thirsty, and remembering that he had nothing left of what his guardian had bestowed, he set himself to gather blackberries, wild-sorrel, and sloes from the hedges. And whilst thus employed, he watched the birds that picked their living from the bushes, and said within himself, “After all, these birds are better off than baptised creatures. They have no need of inns, of butchers, bakers, or gardeners; God’s open sky belongs to them, and His earth is stretched before them like a table always spread; the little insects are to them as game, the grass in seed their fields of corn, the fruit of the wild-rose or hawthorn their dessert; they are at liberty to gather all without payment or permission asked. No wonder that the birds are joyous, and sing from morning till night.”

Turning these thoughts in his mind, Mao slackened his pace, and at last sat himself down under the shade of an old oak-tree, where he fell asleep. But behold, in his sleep, a holy man appeared suddenly before him, clad in shining raiment, who thus spoke:

“I am the poor beggar Stevan, for whom you purchased a consecrated grave. The Blessed Virgin Mary, whom I endeavoured to serve while on earth, now reckons me amongst her court, and has vouchsafed to me the privilege of bringing you good news. Think not the birds of the air can possibly be happier than baptised creatures; for the Son of God has shed His blood for these, and they are the favourites of the Holy Trinity. And now hear what the Three Divine Persons will do to recompense your piety. There stands hereabouts, beyond the meadows, an old manor house: you will know it by its weather-vane, which is painted red and green. A man of rank dwells there; his name is Trehouar; and he has a granddaughter, lovely as the day, and gentle as a new-born child. Go you, and knock this evening at his door, saying that *‘you are come, he knows for what.’* He will receive you, and you will of your own self make out the rest. Only remember, that if you are in want of help, you must say,

‘Dead beggar, make haste, make haste to me;  
For I am sorely in need of thee.’”

With these words the holy man vanished, and Mao awoke. His first impulse was to thank God for vouchsafing such protection over him; and this done, he set off across the meadows to find the manor-house. As night was coming on, he had some doubts of being able to do so; but at last he observed a flight of pigeons, which he set himself to follow, feeling certain they could only lead him to the house of a noble. And, in fact, he soon perceived the red-and-green weather-vane overtopping a little orchard of black-cherry trees laden with fruit; for this was a part of the country famous for black cherries. It is from the mountain parishes that all those cherries are brought which may be seen spread out on straw at the Léon festivals, and with which the young men fill their great beaver hats for the damsels of their choice.

Mao crossed the lawn, shaded with walnut-trees, and then knocked at the most insignificant door he could find, saying, according to the directions, that *“he was come for—they knew what.”* The master of the house was soon fetched. He came, his head shaking, for he was old and feeble, and leaning on the arm of his fresh young granddaughter. To have seen them together, you would have thought of an old tottering wall supported by a blooming honeysuckle.

The old gentleman and his granddaughter welcomed the young man with the greatest politeness; a worked ottoman was drawn for him close beside the grandfather's arm-chair, and he was treated with sweet cider whilst they waited for supper.

Mao was much surprised to see the way in which he was received, and found great delight in watching the young girl, who prepared every thing with tripping step, singing the while like a very lark.

[52]

At last, when supper was over, and Liçzenn,—for so the old man called his grandchild,—had cleared all away, he said to Mao,

"We have treated you to the best of our ability, and according to our means, young man, though not according to our wishes; for the mansion of the Trehouars has been long afflicted by a most grievous plague. Formerly you might have counted twenty horses, and full forty cows, here; but the evil spirit has taken possession of the stalls and stables; cows and horses have disappeared one after another, and that as often as they have been replaced, until the whole of my savings have been thus consumed. All religious services to rid us of this destructive demon have hitherto failed. There has been nothing for us but to submit; and for want of cattle my whole domain now lies uncultivated. I had put some confidence in my nephew Matelinn, who is gone to the war in France; but as he does not return, I have given notice throughout the country, both from the altar and elsewhere, that the man who can deliver the manor from this curse shall both marry Liçzenn, and inherit my property after me. All those who have hitherto made the attempt, by lying in wait in the stables, have disappeared like the cows and horses. I pray God that you may be more fortunate."

[53]

Mao, whom the remembrance of his vision secured against all fear, replied that, by the aid of the Blessed Virgin, he hoped to triumph over the hidden foe. So, begging that he might have a fire to keep him warm, he took his club-stick, and went forth.

The place to which he was conducted was a very large shed, divided in two parts for the use both of the cows and horses; but now all was empty from one end to the other, and the cobwebs hung in thick festoons from the racks.

Mao kindled a fire of broom upon the broad paving-stones, and began to pray.

The first quarter of an hour he heard nothing but the crackling of the flame; the second quarter of an hour he heard nothing but the wind that whistled mournfully through the broken door; the third quarter of an hour he heard nothing but the little death-watch tapping in the rafters overhead; but the fourth quarter of an hour, a dull sound rumbled beneath the pavement; and at the further end of the building, in the darkest corner, he saw the largest stone rise slowly up, and the head of a dragon coming from below. It was huge as a baker's kneading-trough, flattened like a viper's, and all round the forehead shone a row of eyes of different colours.

[54]

The beast raised his two great fore-feet armed with scarlet claws upon the edge of the pavement, glared upon Mao, and then crept hissing from his hole. As he came on, his scaly body could be seen unrolling from beneath the stone like a mighty cable from a ship's hold.

Courageous as was the youth, at this spectacle his blood ran cold; and just as he began to feel the dragon's breath, he cried aloud,

"Dead beggar, make haste, make haste to me;  
For I am sorely in need of thee."

In an instant the shining form he had invoked was at his side.

"Fear nothing," said the saint; "those who are protected by the Mother of God are always victorious over the monsters of the earth. Raise your club and lay the dragon dead at your feet;" and with these words he raised his hand, pronouncing some words that can only be heard in heaven. Mao aimed a fearful blow at the dragon's head, and that very moment the huge monster sank dead upon its side.

The next morning, when the sun rose, Mao went to awaken all the people at the manor, and led them to the stables; but at sight of the dead monster even the most courageous started back at least ten paces.

"Do not be afraid," said the young man; "the Blessed Mother came to my assistance, and the beast that fed on cattle and their guardians is nothing now but lifeless clay. Only fetch some ropes, and let us drag it from this place to some lonely waste."

[55]

So they did as he desired; and when the dragon was drawn forth from his den, the

whole length of his body was so great that it extended twice round the black-wheat barn-floor.<sup>1</sup>

The old man, happy in his deliverance from so dangerous an enemy, fulfilled the promise he had made to Mao, and gave to him Liçzenn in marriage. She was led to church at Camfront, her left arm circled, after the custom of the country, by as many rows of silver-lace as there were thousands of francs in her dowry; and the story goes that she had eighteen.

As soon as he was married, Mao bought cattle, hired servants, and soon brought the land about the manor to a more flourishing condition than it had ever known before.

Then went the grandfather to seek his recompense from God, and left all that he possessed to the young couple.

So happy were they in each other and themselves, that no baptised creature ever felt the like,—so happy, that when they knelt in prayer, they could think of nothing to request from God that He had not already blest them with; so they had nothing to do but to thank Him. But one day, as they were sitting down to supper with their servants, one of their attendants introduced a soldier, so tall that his head reached the rafters; and Liçzenn knew him for her cousin Matelinn. He had come back from the French war to marry his cousin; and learning what had come to pass during his absence, he had felt the bitterest rage. Nevertheless, he betrayed nothing of his thoughts to Mao and his wife; for his was a deceitful heart.

[56]

Mao, who suspected nothing, received him with affectionate kindness; set before him the best of every thing in the house; had the handsomest room prepared for his reception; and went out to show him all the fields, now ripe for harvest.

But the higher Matelinn saw the flax, and the heavier the ears of corn, the more he was enraged at not being the possessor of all this; to say nothing of his cousin Liçzenn, who had grown more charming than ever. So one day he proposed to Mao that they should hunt together on the downs of Logoma, and thus contrived to lead him towards a distant heath, where he had an old deserted windmill, against which bundles of furze for the baker's oven at Daoulas had been heaped up in great piles. When they reached this place, he turned his face towards Camfront, and said suddenly to his young companion,

[57]

"Ah! I can see the manor all this way off, with its great courtyard."

"Which way?" asked Mao.

"Behind that little beech-wood. Don't you see the great hall-windows?"

"I am too short," said Mao.

"Ah, you are right, so you are; and it is a pity too, for I can see my cousin Liçzenn in the little yard beside the garden."

"Is she alone?"

"No; there are some gentlemen with her whispering in her ear."

"And what is Liçzenn doing?"

"Liçzenn is listening to them, whilst she twists her apron-string."

Mao raised himself upon the tips of his toes. "Ah, I wish I could see," said he.

"Oh, it is easy enough," replied Matelinn "you have only to climb up to the top of the mill, and you will be higher than I am."

Mao approved of this advice, and climbed up the old ladder. When he reached the top, his cousin asked him what he saw?

"I see nothing but the trees, which seem as near the ground as wheat of two months' growth," said Mao, "and houses looking in the distance small as the sea-shells stranded on the shore."

[58]

"Look nearer," returned Matelinn.

"Nearer, I can only see the ocean, with its boats skimming the water like seagulls."

"Look nearer yet," said the soldier.

"Still nearer is the common, bright with rose-blossoms and the purple heath."

"Look down beneath you."

"Beneath me!" cried Mao, in terror. "Instead of the ladder to descend by, I see flames rushing upwards to devour me."

And he saw rightly; for Matelinn had drawn away the ladder, and set fire to the surrounding fagots, so that the old mill stood as in a furnace.

Mao in vain besought the giant not to leave him there to perish in so horrible a manner. He only turned his back, and went off whistling down the moor.

Then the young man, feeling himself nearly suffocated, invoked the saint once more:

"Dead beggar, make haste, make haste to me;  
For I am sorely in need of thee."

Instantly the saint appeared, holding in his right hand a glittering rainbow, one end of which was resting on the sea, and in his left Jacob's mysterious ladder, that once led from heaven to earth. With the rainbow he put out the fire, and by the ladder's aid poor Mao reached the ground, and went safely home.

On beholding him, Matelinn was seized with surprise and consternation, sure that his cousin would hasten to denounce him before the magistrates; and rushing to fetch his arms and war-horse, was hurrying from the courtyard, when Mao came to him, and said,

"Fear nothing, cousin; for no man saw what passed upon Daoulas common. Your heart was hurt that God had given me more good things than yourself; I wish to heal its wounds. From this day forward, so long as I live, you shall share with me half of all that I possess, save and except my darling Liçzenn. So come, my cousin, harbour no more evil thoughts against me."

The deed of this convention was drawn up by the notary in the usual form; and Matelinn received henceforward, every month, the half of all the produce of the fields, the courtyard, and the stables.

But this noble generosity of Mao served only to increase the spite and venom of his heart; for undeserved benefits are like wine drank when one is not thirsty,—they bring us neither joy nor profit. He did not wish Mao dead, because then he would have lost his share in Mao's wealth; but he hated him, even as a caged wolf hates the hand that feeds him.

What made him still more angry was, to see how every thing prospered with his cousin. To crown his felicity, he had a son born to him, both strong and beautiful, and one *that wept not at his birth*, the nurses said. Mao sent the news out to the first people of the neighbourhood, entreating them to come to the baptismal feast. And they came from more than six leagues round,—from Braspars, Kimerc'h, Loperek, Logoma, Faou, Irvillac, and Saint Eloi,—all mounted on handsomely-equipped horses, with their wives or daughters behind them. The baptism of a prince of Cornouaille himself could not have brought together a more goodly assembly.

When all were drawn up ready in the front of the manor-house, and Mao came to Liçzenn's chamber for the new-born babe, with those who were to hold it at the font, and his nearest friends, Matelinn presented himself also, with a traitor's joy depicted on his countenance. On seeing him, the mother uttered a cry; but he, approaching, bent over her with specious words, and thanked her for the present she had made him.

"What present?" asked the poor woman, in surprise.

"Have you not added a new-born infant to my cousin's wealth?" said the soldier.

"Certainly," replied Liçzenn.

"A parchment deed confirms to me," said Matelinn, "half of every thing Mao possesses, save and except yourself; and I am consequently come to claim my share of the child."

All who were present uttered a great cry; but Matelinn repeated calmly that he would have his half of the child; adding that if they refused it to him, he would take it himself, showing as he spoke a huge knife, which he had brought with him for the purpose.

Mao and Liçzenn in vain, with bended knees and folded hands, besought him to renounce his rights; the giant only answered by the whetting of his knife against

[59]

[60]

[61]

the steel which dangled at his waist; and at last he was about to snatch the infant from its poor young mother's arms, when Mao all at once recalled the invocation to the dead beggar, and repeated it aloud. Scarcely had he finished, when the room was lighted with a heavenly radiance, and the saint appeared upon a shining cloud, the Virgin Mary at his side.

"Behold me here, my friends," said the Mother of God, "called by my faithful servant from celestial glory to come and decide between you."

"If you are the Mother of God, save the child," cried Liçzenn.

"If you are the Queen of Heaven, make them render me my dues," said Matelinn audaciously.

"Listen to me," said Mary. "You first, Mao, and you, Liçzenn, come near me with your new-born child. Till now I have given you the joys of life; I will do more, and give you for the future the delights of death. You shall follow me into the Paradise of my Son, where neither griefs, nor treachery, nor sicknesses can enter. As for you, Goliath, you have a right to share the new benefit conferred on them; and you, like them, shall die, but only to go down twelve hundred and fifty leagues below the surface of the earth,<sup>2</sup> into the kingdom of the wicked one, whose servant you are."

[62]

Saying these words, the Holy Mary raised her hand on high, and the giant was buried in a gulf of fire; whilst the young husband, with his wife and child, sank gently towards each other as in peaceful sleep, and disappeared, borne upwards on a cloud.

[63]

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<sup>1</sup> In many farms there is a small threshing-floor reserved especially for black wheat.

<sup>2</sup> This is the exact distance at which the Bretons define Hell to lie.

[Contents]

## KERIS.

In the olden times a king named Grallon reigned over the land of Cornouaille. He was as good a man as any son of Adam, and gave a cordial welcome at his court to all who had in any way distinguished themselves, were they plebeian or noble in their birth. Unfortunately his daughter was an ill-conducted princess, who, in order to evade his parental rule, had taken herself off to live at Keris, some few leagues from Quimper.

One day, whilst King Grallon was out hunting in a forest at the foot of Menéhom, he and all his followers lost their way, and came at last before the cell of the holy hermit Corentin. Grallon had often heard tell of this saintly man, and was delighted to find he had discovered his retreat; but as for the attendants, who were dying with hunger, they looked with any thing but satisfaction upon the humble cell, and whispered discontentedly amongst themselves that they should certainly have to sup on pious prayers.

Corentin, enlightened by God's grace, perceived their thoughts, and asked the king whether he would accept a little refreshment. Now Grallon, who had eaten nothing since cockcrow that morning, was extremely willing; so the saint, calling the king's cupbearer and cook, desired them to prepare his majesty a good repast after his long abstinence.

[64]

Then, leading them both to a fountain which bubbled near his cell, he filled with water the golden pitcher carried by the first, and cut a morsel from a little fish swimming in the basin, which he gave to the second, desiring them both to spread the board for the king and all his train. But the cupbearer and the cook began to laugh, and asked the holy man if he could possibly mistake the king's courtiers for miserable beggars, that he presumed to offer them his scraps of fish-bone and his frog-wine. Corentin quietly besought them not to be disturbed, for that God would provide for all.

Consequently they resolved to follow out the saint's directions, and found, to their astonishment, his words come true. For while the water he had poured into the golden pitcher came out a wine as sweet as honey and as hot as fire, the morsel of fish became an ample meal for twice as many guests as the king's suite contained.

Grallon was told by his two servants of this miracle; and they moreover showed him, as a greater wonder, the very same little fish from which Corentin had cut a



portion, swimming safe and sound in the fountain, as whole as if the saint's knife had never come near him.

[65]

At this sight the King of Cornouaille was struck with admiration, and exclaimed to the hermit, "Man of God, this place is not for you; for He who is my Master as well as yours has forbidden us to hide a light beneath a bushel. You must leave this hermitage, and come with me. You shall be Bishop of Quimper, my palace shall be your dwelling-place, and the whole city your possession. I will build a monastery for your disciples at Landevenec, and the abbot shall be chosen by yourself."

The good king kept his promise; and giving up his capital to the new Bishop, he went to dwell himself in the town of Is.

This town then stood upon the very spot now covered by the Bay of Douarnenez. It was so large and so beautiful, that when the people of old times were seeking for a title worthy of the capital of France, they could find nothing better than to call it Par-is, that is to say, *The like of Is*. It was lower than the sea itself, and was defended from all fear of inundation by huge dikes, with doors to open occasionally and let the tide in or out. Grallon's daughter, the Princess Dahut, carried the silver keys which locked these doors suspended round her neck, from which fact the people generally called her Alc'huèz, or more shortly Ahèz.<sup>1</sup> Now she was a great magician, and had adorned the town with numberless works of art far surpassing the skill of any human hand. All the Korigans<sup>2</sup> throughout Cornouaille and Vannes had assembled at her call to make the dikes and forge the iron doors; they had plated the palace all over with a metal resembling gold (Korigans being clever workers in metal), and had fenced in the royal gardens with balustrades glittering like polished steel.

[66]

They it was that kept Dahut's beautiful stables in such perfect order,—those stables that were paved with black, red, or white marble, according to the different colours of the horses in the stalls. And to the Korigans also was intrusted the care of the harbour, where the sea-dragons were kept; for by her powerful art had Dahut gained a wonderful ascendancy over the monsters of the deep, so that she had placed one at the disposal of each inhabitant of Keris, that it should serve him like a horse, on which he might safely go across the waves to fetch rich treasure from another shore, or to attack the ships of foreign enemies. So these citizens were rich to that degree they actually measured out their corn in silver vessels. But wealth had hardened and perverted their hearts; beggars were hunted like wild-beasts from the city, for they could not endure the sight of any in their streets but merry prosperous folks dressed out in smart apparel. Our Lord Himself, had He appeared amongst them clad in sackcloth, would have been driven away. The only church remaining in the city was so forsaken, that the very beadle had lost the key of it; nettles grew upon its steps, and against the door-posts of the principal entrance birds had built their nests. The people of the place spent their days and nights in public-houses, dancing-rooms, or theatres; the one only object of their lives being apparently to ruin their immortal souls.

[67]

As for Dahut, she set them the example; day and night it was a gala in the palace. Gentlemen, nobles, and princes came from the remotest lands to visit this far-famed court. Grallon received them with courtesy, and Dahut with something more. If they were good-looking, she bestowed on them a magic mask, by means of which they were enabled to keep private appointments with her in a tower standing near the floodgates.

There they might remain talking with her until the hour when the sea-swallows, beginning their flight, passed before the tower-windows; when Dahut hastily bade them farewell, and, in order that they might go out, as they came, unseen, she once more brought forth her magic mask; but, alas, this time it closed upon them of its own accord with a strangling embrace. Then a black man took up the dead body, threw it across his horse like a sack of wheat, and went to fling it down the precipice between Huelgoat and Poulaouën. This is indeed only too true; for even to this day can be heard from the depths of the ravine the melancholy wailing of these wretched souls at evening hour. May all good Christians bear them in remembrance at their prayers!<sup>3</sup>

[68]

Corentin, who heard of all the goings-on at Keris, had many a time warned Grallon that the forbearance of God was drawing to a close;<sup>4</sup> but the king had lost all his power, and dwelt quite solitary in one wing of his palace, like a grandfather who has made over all his property to his heirs; and as for Dahut, she cared nothing for the threats or warnings of the saint.

[69]

Well, one evening, when she was keeping festival as usual, she was informed that a powerful prince from the very ends of the earth had arrived to see her, and he was instantly announced.

He was a man of vast stature, clad from head to foot in scarlet, and so bearded

that even his two eyes, glittering as stars, could scarcely be seen. He began by paying compliments in rhyme to the princess—no poet or minstrel could have conceived the like; and then he went on talking with such brilliant wit, that the entire assembly were struck dumb with astonishment. But what moved the friends of Dahut with the greatest wonder was to find how far more skilful than themselves this stranger was in sin. He was familiar, not only with all that human malice has invented since the creation of the world, in every region where mankind has dwelt, but with all that it ever shall invent until the moment when the dead shall rise again from their cold graves to stand before the judgment-seat of God. Ahèz and her court perceived that they had found their master, and one and all resolved to put themselves under the teaching of the bearded prince.

[70]

By way of beginning, he proposed to them a new dance, danced in hell by the Seven Deadly Sins. So he called in for the purpose a musician he had brought with him. This was a little dwarf, clad in goat-skin, and carrying a sort of bagpipe under his arm.

Scarcely had he begun to play before Dahut and her courtiers were seized with a sort of frenzy, and began to whirl about like the waves of the sea in a furious storm. The stranger instantly took advantage of the confusion to snatch the silver keys of the floodgates from the princess's neck, and to vanish from the saloon.

Meanwhile Grallon sat all solitary in the great gloomy hall of his own lonely palace. He was near the hearth; but the fire was almost out. His heart grew every moment more and more heavy with sad thoughts, when all at once the great folding-doors flew open, and St. Corentin appeared upon the threshold, with a halo of glory round his brow, his pastoral staff in his hand, and a cloud of incense floating all about him.

"Rise, great king," said he to Grallon; "take whatever precious things may still be left you, and flee away; for God has given over to the power of the demon this accursed city."

Grallon, terrified, started up; and calling to some faithful old servants, took what treasure he possessed; and mounting his black horse, followed after the saint, who shot like an arrow through the air.

[71]

As they passed before the dikes, they heard a wild roar of waters, and beheld the bearded stranger, now restored to his own demoniac form, opening the floodgates with the silver keys he had taken from the Princess Dahut. The sea already streamed like a torrent on towards the devoted city; and the white waves, rearing their foamy crests above the lofty roofs, seemed rushing to its overthrow. The dragons chained within the harbour roared with terror, for even the beasts could feel their end at hand.

Grallon would fain have uttered a cry of warning, but St. Corentin once more entreated him to fly, and he plunged onwards at full gallop towards the shore; on, on through streets and squares and high roads, ever followed by the raging ocean, with the horse's hind hoofs always in the surge. So passed he by the palace of Dahut herself, who darted down the marble steps, her wild locks floating on the breeze, and sprang behind her father on the saddle. The horse stood still suddenly, staggered, and already the water mounted to the old king's knees.

"Help, help, St. Corentin!" he cried in terror.

"Shake off the iniquity you carry at your back," replied the saint, "and, by the help of God, you shall be saved."

[72]

But Grallon, who was, after all, a father, hesitated what to do. Then St. Corentin touched the princess on the shoulders with his pastoral staff, and she sank downwards to the sea, disappearing in the depths of the gulf, called after her the Gulf of Ahèz.

The horse, thus lightened of his load, made a spring forwards, and so gained Garrec Rock, where to this very day may be seen the print-marks of his iron shoes.<sup>5</sup>

The first act of the king was to fall upon his knees, and pour forth thanks to God; then turning towards Keris,<sup>6</sup> he tried to judge how great was the danger from which he had been so miraculously rescued, but in vain he sought the ancient Queen of Ocean.

There, where had stood but a few moments before a harbour, palaces, treasures of wealth, and thousands of people, was to be seen nothing now but a smooth bay, on whose unruffled surface the stars of heaven looked calmly down; but beyond, in the horizon, just over the last ruins of the submerged dikes, there appeared the

[73]

great red man, holding up with a triumphant air the silver keys.

Many are the forests of oak that have sprung up and withered since this awful warning; but through every generation fathers have told it to their children until this day. Up to the time of the great Revolution, the clergy of the different river-side parishes were wont to embark every year in fisher-boats, and go to say Mass over the drowned city. Since that time this custom has been lost, with many another one; but when the sea is calm, the remains of the great town may clearly be seen at the bottom of the bay, and the neighbouring downs are full of relics which bear witness to its wealth.

[74]

1 Good or bad, these etymologies of Ahèz and Par-is are accepted by the Bretons. The last word is even treasured in a proverb,

“Since the town of Is was drowned,  
The like of Paris is not found.”

2 See the Korigans of Plauden, p. 31.

3 This legend still finds credence. The spot is shown, not far from Carhaix, whence Grallon's daughter caused her lovers' bodies to be thrown; and some antiquaries are also of opinion that Dahut often visited this town, which has received from her its name of Ker-Ahèz (town of Ahèz); at any rate, the old paved road which leads from the Bay of Douarnenez to Carhaix proves beyond a doubt that there was frequent intercourse between Keris and this city.

4 All that follows is more properly ascribed to St. Corentin's disciple Gwenolé.

5 The peasantry still show the marks.

6 There appears to exist incontestable evidence of a city named Is lying buried beneath the Bay of Douarnenez; and the relics which have been discovered from time to time prove beyond all doubt that art had been brought to very high perfection in those early times. It was supposed to date about the fourth century.

[Contents]

## THE STONES OF PLOUHINEC.

Plouhinec is a poor little market-town beyond Hennebon, towards the sea. Bare commons or little fir-woods stretch all round it, and enough grass to fit an ox for the butcher's knife, or so much bran as would fatten one descendant of the Rohans,<sup>1</sup> has never yet been yielded by the entire parish.

But if the people of those parts have reason to complain for want of corn and cattle, they abound in flints to that degree that they could furnish materials for the rebuilding of Lorient; and out beyond the town there lies a great wide common, whereon are set by Korigans two rows of tall stones that might be taken for an avenue, did they but lead to any thing.

Near this place, hard by the banks of the River Intel, there lived in former days a man named Marzinne. He was wealthy for those parts, that is to say, he could salt down a little pig once a year, eat as much black bread as he cared for, and buy himself a pair of wooden shoes when Laurel Sunday came round.<sup>2</sup>

[75]

And he was looked upon as proud by his neighbours, and had taken upon him to refuse the hand of his sister Rozenn to many a young fellow who laboured for his daily bread.

Amongst others to Bernèz, a diligent labourer and a worthy Christian; but one whose only treasure, coming into life, had been that of a good will. Bernèz had known Rozenn as a little girl, when he first came to work in the parish from Ponscorff-Bidré; and by degrees, as Rozenn grew up, the attachment of Bernèz had grown stronger and stronger.

It may be easily believed that Marzinne's refusal was a terrible heartsore for him; nevertheless he kept up his courage, for Rozenn always received him kindly.

Well, Christmas-eve came round; and as a raging storm kept every one at the farm from going to the midnight Mass, they all sat round the fire together, with many young men from the neighbourhood, and amongst them Bernèz. The master of the house, willing to show off, had caused a supper of black-puddings, and hasty puddings made with wheat flour and honey, to be prepared; so that they all sat gazing towards the hearth, except Bernèz, whose eyes were fixed upon Rozenn.

But just as all the benches were drawn round the table, and every wooden saucer ready to be dipped into the steaming bowl, an old man suddenly pushed open the

[76]

door, and wished the assembled company a good appetite. He was a beggar from Pluvigner, one who never set his foot on the church-floor, and of whom all good folks stood in dread. It was said that he bewitched cattle, turned standing corn black, and sold to wrestlers magic herbs. He was even suspected of becoming a goblin<sup>3</sup> at his pleasure.

However, wearing as he did the garb of a mendicant, he was welcomed by the farmer to the fireside; a three-legged stool was placed at his disposal, and he received a portion with the guests.

When the beggar had done eating and drinking, he asked for a night's lodging, and Bernèz showed him his way into the stable, where a bald old ass and sorry ox were already established. The beggar stretched himself down between the two to share their warmth, and rested his head upon a pillow of turf.

But just as he was dropping off to sleep the clock struck twelve. Then the old ass shook his long ears, and turned towards the ox.

"Well, my cousin," said he, in friendly tones, "and how has it gone with you since last Christmas, when we talked together?"

[77]

Instead of answering, the horned beast looked sideways at the beggar, and muttered,

"It was hardly worth while for the Almighty to vouchsafe us speech together on a Christmas-eve, and thus to acknowledge the assistance rendered by the presence of our ancestors at the birth of the Saviour, if we are compelled to put up with this fellow as our auditor."

"You are very proud, my friend," answered the ass gaily. "It is I rather who have reason to complain, I, whose noble ancestor once carried the Saviour to Jerusalem, proved by the cross imprinted ever since upon the shoulders of our family. But I can be well satisfied with whatever Providence has seen fit to grant me. Besides which, you see well enough that the sorcerer is asleep."

"All his witchcrafts have been powerless to enrich him," said the ox; "and he has thrown his soul away for little enough. The devil has not even hinted to him of the lucky chance he might have hereabouts in the course of a few days."

"What lucky chance?" asked the ass.

"How!" cried the ox; "don't you know, then, that each hundred years the stones on Plouhinec Common go down to drink at the river Intel, and that whilst away the treasures they conceal are left exposed?"

[78]

"Ah, I remember now," interrupted the ass, "but then the stones return so quickly to their places, that it is impossible to avoid being crushed to pieces by them if you have not as your safeguard a twig of cross-wort surrounded by the five-leaved clover."

"And besides," continued the ox, "the treasures you may carry off all fade to dust unless you offer in return a baptised soul. A Christian must suffer death before the devil will permit you to enjoy in peace the wealth of Plouhinec."

The beggar was not asleep, but had listened breathless to this conversation.

"Ah, my good friends," thought he to himself, "you have made me richer than the wealthiest in all Vannes or Lorient. Be easy; the sorcerer of Pluvigner shall not lose Paradise for nothing."

He slept at last; and rising at the break of day, he wandered through the country seeking for the cross-wort and the five-leaved clover."

He was forced to look long and wander far, where skies are milder and plants always green, before he was successful. But on the eve of New-Year's Day he came again to Plouhinec, with the countenance of a weasel that has just found out the entrance to a dovecote.

In crossing the common, he came upon Bernèz busy striking with a pointed hammer on the tallest of the stones.

[79]

"Heaven preserve me!" cried the sorcerer, laughing, "are you anxious to dig yourself a dwelling in this rocky mass?"

"No," answered Bernèz quietly; "but as I am just now out of work, I thought that perhaps if I carved a cross upon one of these accursed stones, I should perform an act agreeable in the sight of God, and one that may stand me in good stead some

other day.”

“Then you have something to ask of Him?” said the old man.

“All Christians need to beg from Him salvation for their souls,” replied the youth.

“And have you nothing too to say to Him about Rozenn?” pursued the beggar, in a lower voice.

Bernèz looked full at him.

“Ah, you know that?” said he. “Well, after all, there is no shame or sin in it. If I seek for the maiden, it is that I may lead her to the presence of the priest. Unhappily Marzinne is waiting for a brother-in-law who can count more *reals* than I have silver coins.”

“And if I could put you in the way of having more louis-d’or than Marzinne has *reals*?” said the sorcerer in an under-tone.

“You!” cried Bernèz.

“I!”

“And how much do you ask for this?”

“Only to be remembered in your prayers.”

“Then there will be nothing that can compromise my soul?”

“Only courage is required.”

“Tell me, then, what must be done,” cried Bernèz, letting fall his hammer. “If needs be, I am ready to encounter any difficulty.”

The beggar, seeing him thus disposed, related how that on that very night the treasures of the common would be all exposed; but he said nothing at the same time of the way by which the stones were to be avoided as they came trooping back. The young fellow thought nothing was wanting but boldness and a swift step; so he said,

“As sure as I am a living man I will profit by this opportunity, old man; and I shall always be at your service for the notice you have given me of this great chance. Only let me finish the cross I have begun engraving on this stone; when the time comes, I will join you near the little pine-wood.”

Bernèz kept his word, and arrived at the appointed place an hour before midnight. He found the beggar carrying a wallet in each hand, and one suspended round his neck.

“Come,” said he to the young man, “sit down there, and think of all that you will do when you have silver, gold, and jewels to your heart’s content.”

The young man sat down on the ground and answered, “If I have silver to my heart’s content, I will give my gentle Rozennik<sup>4</sup> all that she wishes for, and all that she can wish for, from linen to silk, from bread to oranges.”

“And if you have gold?” added the sorcerer.

“If I have gold at will,” replied the youth, “I will make wealthy all my Rozennik’s relations, and all the friends of her relations, to the utmost limits of the parish.”

“And if at last you should have jewels in plenty?” continued the old man.

“Then,” cried out Bernèz, “I would make all the people in the world happy, and I would tell them it was my Rozennik’s desire.”

Whilst talking thus, the hour slipped away, and midnight came.

At the same instant a great sound arose upon the heath, and by the light of the stars all the huge stones might be seen leaving their places, and hurrying towards the river Intel. They rushed down the slope, grazing the earth as they went, and jostling each other like a troop of drunken giants. So they swept pell-mell past the two men, and were lost in darkness.

Then the beggar flew towards the common, followed by Bernèz; and there, in the very spots where just before huge stones had reared themselves, they now saw large holes piled to the brim with gold, with silver, and with precious stones.

Bernèz uttered a cry of admiration, and made the sign of the cross; but the

sorcerer made haste to cram all his wallets, turning meanwhile an attentive ear towards the river's bank.

He had just finished lading the third bag, whilst the young man stuffed the pockets of his linen vest, when a dull sound like that of an approaching storm was audible in the distance.

The stones had finished drinking, and were coming back once more.

They rushed, stooping forwards like runners in a race, and bore down all before them.

When the youth perceived them, he started upright, and exclaimed,

"Ah, Blessed Virgin, we are lost!"

"I am not," said the sorcerer, taking in his hand the cross-wort and the five-leaved clover, "for I have that here which will secure my safety; but a Christian must be sacrificed to make good all these treasures, and the bad angel put thee in my way. So give up Rozenn, and prepare to die."

While yet he spoke the stony army was at hand; but holding forth his magic nosegay, they turned aside to right and left to fall upon Bernèz. He, feeling sure that all was over for him, sank down upon his knees and closed his eyes; when the great stone that led the troop stopped all at once, and barring the way, set itself before him as a protecting rampart. [83]

Bernèz, astonished, raised his head, and recognised the stone on which his hand had traced a cross. Being thenceforward a baptised stone, it could have no power to harm a Christian.

Remaining motionless before the young man until all its fellows had regained their places, it then rushed forwards like a sea-bird to retake its own, and met upon its way the beggar hampered with his three ponderous bags of gold.

Seeing it advance, he would have defied it with his magic plants; but the stone, become Christian, was no longer subject to the witchery of the demon, and hurrying onwards, crushed the sorcerer like an insect.

Bernèz had not only all his own collection, but the three full wallets of the mendicant, and became thus rich enough to wed his Rozenn, to bring up a numerous family, and to succour his relations, as well as the poor of the whole country around, to the end of his long life. [84]

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1 The pigs in Brittany are called, no one knows why, *mab-rohan*, sons of Rohan.

2 Easter Sunday. So called because blessed laurel is distributed at church upon this day.

3 *Gobelinn*. None other than the *loup-garou*, or were-wolf.

4 'Rozennik' is the diminutive of Rosenn; so 'Guilcherik,' "Korils of Plauden," p. 43.

## TEUZ-A-POULIET;<sup>1</sup> OR, THE DWARF.

The vale of Pinard is a pleasant slope which lies behind the city of Morlaix. There are plenty of gardens, houses, shops, and bakers to be found there, besides many farms that boast their ample cowsheds and full barns.

Now, in olden times, when there was neither conscription nor general taxation, there dwelt in the largest of these farms an honest man, called Jalm Riou, who had a comely daughter, Barbaik. Not only was she fair and well-fashioned, but she was the best dancer, and also the best drest, in all those parts. When she set off on Sunday to hear Mass at St. Mathieu's church, she used to wear an embroidered coif, a gay neckerchief, five petticoats one over the other,<sup>2</sup> and silver buckles in her shoes; so that the very butchers' wives were jealous, and tossing their heads as she went by, they asked her whether she had been selling the devil her black hen.<sup>3</sup> But Barbaik troubled herself not at all for all they said, so long as she continued to be the best-dressed damsel, and the most attractive at the fair of the patron saint. [85]

Barbaik had many suitors, and among them was one who really loved her more than all the rest; and this was the lad who worked upon her father's farm, a good labourer and a worthy Christian, but rough and ungainly in appearance. So

Barbaik would have nothing to say to him, in spite of his good qualities, and always declared, when speaking of him, that he was a colt of Pontrieux.<sup>4</sup>

Jégu, who loved her with all his heart, was deeply wounded, and fretted sorely at being so ill-used by the only creature that could give him either joy or trouble.

One morning, when bringing home the horses from the field, he stopped to let them drink at the pond; and as he stood holding the smallest one, with his head sunk upon his breast, and uttering every now and then the heaviest sighs, for he was thinking of Barbaik, he heard suddenly a voice proceeding from the reeds, which said to him,

"Why are you so miserable, Jégu? things are not yet quite so desperate."

[86]

The farmer's boy raised his head astonished, and asked who was there.

"It is I, the Teuz-à-pouliet," said the same voice.

"I do not see you," replied Jégu.

"Look closely, and you will see me in the midst of the reeds, under the form of a beautiful green frog. I take successively whatever form I like, unless I prefer making myself invisible."

"But can you not show yourself under the usual appearance of your kind?"

"No doubt, if that will please you."

With these words the frog leaped on one of the horses' backs, and changed himself suddenly into a little dwarf, with bright green dress and smart polished gaiters, like a leather-merchant of Landivisiau.

Jégu, a little scared, drew back a step or two; but the Teuz told him not to be afraid, for that, far from wishing him harm, he was ready to do him good.

"And what makes you take this interest in me?" inquired the peasant, with a suspicious air.

"A service which you rendered to me the last winter," said the Teuz-à-pouliet. "You doubtless are aware that the Korigans of the White-Wheat country and of Cornouaille declared war against our race, because they say we are too favourably disposed to man.<sup>5</sup> We were obliged to flee into the bishopric of Léon, where at first we concealed ourselves under divers animal forms. Since then, from habit or fancy, we have continued to assume them, and I became acquainted with you through one of these transformations."

[87]

"And how was that?"

"Do you remember, three months ago, whilst working in the alder-park, finding a robin caught in a snare?"

"Yes," interrupted Jégu; "and I remember also that I let it fly, saying, 'As for thee, thou dost not eat the bread of Christians: take thy flight, thou bird of the good God.'"

"Ah, well, that robin was myself. Ever since then I vowed to be your faithful friend, and I will prove it too by causing you to marry Barbaik, since you love her so well."

"Ah, Teuz-à-pouliet, could you but succeed in that," cried Jégu, "there is nothing in this world, except my soul, that I would not bestow upon you."

[88]

"Let me alone," replied the dwarf; "yet a few months from this time, and I will see you are the master of that farm and of the maiden too."

"And how can you undertake that?" asked the youth.

"You shall know all in time; all you have to do just now is to smoke your pipe, eat, drink, and take no trouble about any thing."

Jégu declared that nothing could be easier than that, and he would conform exactly to the Teuz's orders; then, thanking him, and taking off his hat as he would have done to the curé or the magistrate, he went homewards to the farm.

The following day happened to be Sunday. Barbaik rose earlier than usual, and went to the stables, which were under her sole charge; but to her great surprise she found them already freshly littered, the racks garnished, the cows milked, and the cream churned. Now, as she recollected having said before Jégu, on the preceding night, that she wanted to be ready in good time to go to the feast of St.

Nicholas, she very naturally concluded that it was he who had done all this for her, and she told him she was much obliged. Jégu, however, replied in a peevish tone, that he did not know what she meant; but this only confirmed Barbaik in her belief.

The same good service was rendered to her now every day. Never had the stable been so cleanly, nor the cows so fat. Barbaik found her earthen pans full of milk at morning and at evening, and a pound of fresh-churned butter decked with blackberry-leaves. So in a few weeks' time she got into the habit of never rising till broad daylight, to prepare breakfast and set about her household duties. [89]

But even this labour was soon spared her; for one morning, on getting out of bed, she found the house already swept, the furniture polished, the soup on the fire, and the bread cut into the bowls; so that she had nothing to do but go to the courtyard, and call the labourers from the fields. She still thought it was an attention shown to her by Jégu, and she could not help considering what a very convenient husband he would be for a woman who liked to have her time to herself.

And it was a fact that Barbaik never uttered a wish before him that was not immediately fulfilled. If the wind was cold, or if the sun shone hot, and she was afraid of injuring her complexion by going to the spring, she had only to say low, "I should like to see my buckets filled, and my tub full of washed linen." Then she would go and gossip with a neighbour, and on her return she would find tub and buckets just as she had desired them to be, standing on the stone. If she found the rye-dough too hard to bake, or the oven too long in heating, she had only to say, "I should like to see my six fifteen-pound loaves all ranged upon the board above the kneading-trough," and two hours later the six loaves were there. If she found the market too far off, and the road too bad, she had only to say over-night, "Why am I not already come back from Morlaix, with my milk-can empty, my tub of butter sold out, a pound of black cherries in my wooden platter, and six reals<sup>6</sup> at the bottom of my apron-pocket?" and the next morning, when she rose, she would discover at the foot of her bed the empty milk-can and butter-tub, the pound of cherries in her wooden plate, and six reals in her apron-pocket. [90]

But the good offices that were rendered to her did not stop here. Did she wish to make an appointment with another damsel at some fair, to buy a ribbon in the town, or to find out the hour at which the procession at the church was to begin, Jégu was always at hand; all she had to do was to mention her wish before him, and the thing was done.

When things were thus advanced, the Teuz advised the youth to ask Barbaik now in marriage; and this time she listened to all he had to say. She thought Jégu very plain and unmannerly; but yet, as a husband, he was just what she wanted. Jégu would wake for her, work for her, save for her. Jégu would be the shaft-horse, forced to draw the whole weight of the wagon; and she, the farmer's wife, seated on a heap of clover, and driving him with the whip. [91]

After having well considered all this, she answered the young man, as a well-conducted damsel should, that she would refer the matter to her father.

But she knew beforehand that Jalm Riou would consent; for he had often said that only Jégu would be fit to manage the farm when he should be no more.

So the marriage took place the very next month; and it seemed as if the aged father had but waited until then to go and take his rest in Paradise; for a very few days after the marriage he died, leaving the house and land to the young folks.

It was a great responsibility for Jégu; but the Teuz came to his assistance. He became the ploughboy at the farm, and did more work alone than four hired labourers. He it was who kept the tools and harness in good order, who repaired omissions, who pointed out the proper time for sowing or for mowing. If by chance Jégu had occasion to expedite some work, the Teuz would go and tell his friends, and all the dwarfs would come with hoe, fork, or reaping-hook upon their shoulders; if teams were wanted, he would send the farmer to a town inhabited by some of his tribe, who would be out upon the common; and Jégu had only to say, "Little men, my good friends, lend me a pair of oxen, or a couple of horses, with all that is needed for their work," and the team would appear that very instant. [92]

Now all the Teuz-à-pouliet asked in payment of these services was a child's portion of broth, served up in a milk-measure, every day. So Jégu loved him like his own son. Barbaik, on the contrary, hated him, and not without reason; for the very next day after marriage she saw with astonishment she was no longer assisted as before; and as she was making her complaint to Jégu, who seemed as if he did not understand her, the dwarf, bursting out in laughter, confessed that he had been the author of all these good offices, in order that the damsel might consent to



marry Jégu; but that now he had other things to do, and she must once more undertake the household management.

Deceived thus in her expectations, the daughter of Jalm Riou treasured in her heart a furious rage against the dwarf. Every morning, when she had to rise before the break of day and milk the cows or go to market, and every evening, when she had to sit up till near midnight churning cream, she cursed the Teuz who had encouraged her to look forward to a life of ease and pleasure. [93]

However, one day, being invited to a wedding at Plouezorc'h, and not being able to take the farm-mare, as it was near foaling, she asked the Teuz-à-pouliet for a steed; and he sent her to the dwarf village, telling her to explain exactly what she wanted.

So Barbaik went; and thinking she was doing for the best, she said,

"Teuz, my friends, lend me a black horse, with eyes, mouth, ears, saddle, and bridle."

The horse that she had asked for instantly appeared, and she set out on him towards Plouezorc'h.

But soon she saw that every one was laughing as she went along.

"See, see!" they cried, "the farmer's wife has sold her horse's tail."

Barbaik turned quickly round, and saw indeed that her horse had no tail. She had forgotten to ask for one; and the malicious dwarf had served her to the letter.

Disconcerted, she would have hastened on, but the horse refused to mend his pace; and so she was compelled to endure the jests of passers-by.

The young wife came home at night more furious than ever against the Teuz-à-pouliet, accusing him of having played her this ill turn on purpose, and fully resolved to be revenged upon him at the earliest opportunity. [94]

Well, spring drew near, and as this was the time the dwarfs held festival, the Teuz asked leave of Jégu to extend an invitation to all his friends to come and spend the night on the barn-floor, where he might give them a supper and a dance. Jégu was far too much indebted to the dwarf to think of saying no; and ordered Barbaik to spread over the barn-floor her finest fringed table-cloths, and to serve up a batch of little butter-cakes, all the morning and the evening milk, and as many wheaten pancakes as could be turned out in a good day's work.

Barbaik made no reply, to her husband's great surprise.

She made the pancakes, prepared the milk, cooked the buttered cakes, and at evening-tide she took them all out to the barn; but at the same time she spread down, all round about the extended table-cloths, just where the dwarfs were going to place themselves, the ashes she had drawn smoking from the oven; so that when the Teuz-à-pouliet and his guests came in to seat themselves, they were every one severely burned, and fled away, uttering loud cries. They soon came back, however, carrying jugs of water, and so put out the fire; and then danced round the farm, all singing in an angry tone, [95]

"Barbe Riou, with dire deceit,  
Has roasted our poor little feet:  
Adieu! far hence away we go;  
On this house be grief and woe!"

And, in fact, they left the country that very morning. Jégu, having lost their help, soon fell into distress and died; whilst the beautiful Barbaik became a basket-woman at Morlaix market.

Since then the Teuz have never been seen in these parts. However, there are some who say that all good work-people have to this very day ten dwarfs who toil for them, and not invisibly; and these are—their ten fingers. [96]

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1 Literally 'will-o'-the-wisp.'

2 A number of petticoats is considered a mark of great elegance amongst the Breton peasant-girls around Morlaix.

3 A proverbial expression, denoting some suspicion that people have been acquiring wealth somewhat unfairly. There is an old tradition among the country people, that if you take a black hen to some cross-road, and there use certain incantations, you can summon the devil, who will pay you handsomely for your hen.

4 *Heubeul-Pontréau*, a Breton form of reproach to young rustics of ill address.

<sup>5</sup> All European nations have admitted two races of dwarfs, the one mischievous and impious, the other benevolent to man. The first is represented in Brittany by the *Korigans*, the second by the *Teuz*. The *Teuz* is just the same as the elf or fairy of the Scotch and Irish, aiding the labourers in their toil, and resembles the mountain spirit of Germany.

<sup>6</sup> In Brittany they reckon by reals; the Breton real is not worth one franc eight centimes, as in Spain, but only twenty-five centimes.

[Contents]

## THE SPECTRE LAUNDRESSES.

The Bretons are born in sin, even as other men, but never have they been wanting in care for the souls of their faithful departed. They take tender pity upon those who burn in purgatory, and earnestly strive to redeem them from their fiery trial. Every Sunday, after Mass, they kneel and plead for their suffering souls upon the very earth in which their poor bodies are mouldering away.

It is in the Black Month,<sup>1</sup> as they call November, that they especially attach themselves to this pious duty. When the *Messenger of Winter*<sup>2</sup> arrives, each one bethinks himself of those who are gone to the judgment-seat of God. Masses are said for them at the altar of the Dead; in their behalf are tapers kindled, and vows made to saints in highest veneration; little children are taken to offer their innocent prayers upon the grave-stones; and after Vespers the priest comes out of church to bless the earth to which their dust has been committed.

On this night also is it that our Lord vouchsafes some respite to their sufferings, and permits them to return once more and pay a visit to the hearth-stones of their former homes. Then are the dead as numerous in the homesteads of the living as the yellow leaves that rustle in the deep dry lanes; and therefore it is that all good Christians leave the board spread and the fire blazing, that the unwonted guests may, if they will, refresh themselves.

[97]

But if it is so with all who are truly devoted to the service of the Blessed Mother and her divine Son, there are also children of *the Black Angel* ("l'ange noir"), who forget those that were once nearest to their hearts. Wilherm Postik was one of these. His father had died without desiring to receive the last Sacraments; and, as the proverb has it, *Kadiou is his father's own son*. Wilherm gave himself up, body and soul, to forbidden pleasures, dancing during Mass-time, whenever he could find an opportunity, and drinking with rascally horse-dealers when he should have been in church. Nevertheless, God had not left him without enough of warnings. Within the same year had his mother, his sisters, and his wife been carried off by a contagious disease. Many a time, too, had the good curé exposed to him his evil deeds, showing him that he was a scandal to the whole parish, and urging him to repentance; but all was in vain.

Meanwhile the fine weather went by. The feast of All Souls arrived, and all good Christians, clad in decent mourning, repaired to church to pray for the faithful departed. But for Wilherm, he dressed himself out in his best, and set out for the neighbouring town, where he was sure to find plenty of reprobate sailors and reckless women.

[98]

All the time devoted by others to the solace of the suffering souls he spent there in drinking, gambling, and singing vile songs; nor did he think of returning till close upon midnight, when every body else had gone home wearied with iniquity. For him, he had a frame of iron for sinful pleasures; and he quitted the drinking-house as well disposed for a fresh bout as when he entered it.

Heated with drink, he went along, singing at the top of his voice, though his songs were such as the boldest are apt to give out in an undertone. He passed the wayside crosses without dropping his voice or uncovering his head, and struck out right and left with his walking-stick amongst the tufts of broom, regardless of the holy dead who thronged every path.

At last the road divided, giving him his choice of two ways homeward; the one longer about, but safer, under the blessing of God, the other more direct, but haunted by spirits. Many a one in passing by that way had heard noises and seen sights that could be only told of in a cheerful assembly, and within arm's-length of the holy-water stoup. But Wilherm feared nothing; so he struck at once into the shorter path, at a pace that made his heavy shoes ring against the stones.

[99]

Neither moon nor stars cheered the night, the leaves trooped before the driving wind, the brooks trickled dismally adown the hill-sides, the bushes shivered like a

man afraid, and through the midnight stillness the steps of Wilherm echoed like a giant's tread. Yet nothing daunted him, and on he went.

But as he passed the ruins of the old manor-house, he plainly heard the weather-vane call to him as it creaked,

*"Go back, go back, go back!"*

Still Wilherm went on. He came up to the waterfall, and the water murmured,

*"Cross me not, cross me not, cross me not!"*

Wilherm set his foot upon the well-worn stepping stones, and crossed the stream. He came to an old hollow oak-tree, and the wind that whistled in its branches cried,

*"Stay here, stay here, stay here!"*

But he struck his staff against the dead tree in passing, and hurried onwards.

At last he came into the haunted vale, and midnight struck from the three parish-church towers. Wilherm began to whistle a jovial air; but just as he came to the fourth verse, he heard the sound of tireless wheels, and saw a cart approaching covered with a funeral pall.

[100]

Wilherm knew it for a hearse. It was drawn by six black horses, and driven by Ankou<sup>3</sup> himself, with an iron whip in his hand, and ever crying as he went,

"Turn aside, or I turn thee back!"

Wilherm gave him way without being disconcerted.

"What are you doing here, Squire White?"<sup>4</sup> he questioned boldly.

"I make prize, and by surprise," replied Ankou.

"That is to say, you're thievish and treacherous," continued Wilherm.

"I am he that strikes without distinction and without regret."

"That is to say, a fool and a brute. Then I wonder no more, my fine fellow, that you're a regular inhabitant of the four bishoprics, for to you the whole proverb belongs."<sup>5</sup> But what are you in such haste about to-day?"

[101]

"I am going to fetch Wilherm Postik," replied the phantom as he passed on.

The profligate laughed aloud, and went on his way. As he came up to the little sloe-hedge leading to the washing-ground, he saw two white females hanging linen on the bushes.

"On my life," said he, "here are some damsels not much afraid of the night-dews! What are you about here at this time, my little doves?"

"We wash, we dry, we sew!" replied the two women both at once.

"But what?" asked the young man.

"The winding-sheet of one that yet walks and speaks."

"A corpse! Pardieu! Tell me his name."

"Wilherm Postik."

Louder than before laughed Wilherm, and went down the little rugged path.

But as he went on he heard more and more distinctly the beetle of the spectre laundresses striking on the *douez*<sup>6</sup> stones, and ere long they themselves were to be seen, beating at their death-shrouds, and chanting the sorrowful refrain:

"If no good soul our hands will stay,  
We must toil till judgment-day;  
In stormy wind, or clear moonlight,  
We must wash the death-shroud white."

As soon as they perceived this boon companion, they all rushed forward with loud cries, offering each her winding-sheet, that he might help them to wring out the water.

[102]

"Amongst friends we must not scruple to do a good turn," replied Wilherm gaily;

“but one at a time, my pretty laundresses, a man has but two hands.”

So laying down his walking-stick, he took the end of the shroud offered by one of the ghosts, taking care to wring the same way that she did; for he had heard of old that this was the only way to escape being shivered to atoms.

But whilst they thus wrung the winding-sheet, behold, the other spectres surrounded Wilherm, who recognised amongst them his aunt, his wife, his mother, and his sisters, who cried aloud,

“A thousand curses upon him who leaves his own flesh and blood to suffer torments! A thousand curses!”

And they shook their streaming locks, and whirled aloft their snow-white beetles; while from all the *douez* of the valley, along the hedgerows, and floating over the commons far and wide, there came the sound of ghostly voices echoing the same cry,

“A thousand curses! a thousand curses!”

[103]

Wilherm, beside himself with terror, felt his hair stand up on end, and, forgetting in his confusion the precaution hitherto observed, he began to wring the contrary way. In the same instant the winding-sheet grasped his hands as in a vice, and he fell, brayed by the iron arms of the spectre laundress.

A young girl of Henvik, named Fantik-ar-Fur, passing at daybreak near the *douez*, saw Wilherm stretched upon the blue stones. Thinking that he had lain down there to sleep whilst tipsy, the child drew near to wake him with a sprig of broom; but finding he remained motionless, she took fright and ran to the village to tell the news.

A number of the inhabitants came with the curé, the sexton, and the notary, who was mayor of the place. The body was taken up, placed on a wagon, and drawn home by oxen; but the blessed candles that were lighted continually went out, a token of the fearful fate that had overtaken Wilherm Postik.

So his body was deposited outside the church-yard walls, in the resting-place of dogs and reprobates.

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The belief in spectre laundresses is universal in Brittany.

[104]

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<sup>1</sup> *Miz-du*, Breton name of November.

<sup>2</sup> A name given to All Saints.

<sup>3</sup> *L'Ankou*, literally, “the agony;” a name generally given to the spectre of death.

<sup>4</sup> *M. de Ker-Gwen*. A joke on the paleness of death; *gwen* signifying white.

<sup>5</sup> The allusion is to a proverbial Breton verse, in which the inhabitants of the four dioceses are facetiously characterised as thievish, false, stupid, and brutal.

<sup>6</sup> *Douez* signifies in Breton the moat of a fortified town; but as these moats were formerly full of water, and served the purposes of the washerwomen, the name *douez* has gradually been appropriated to the washing-places.

[Contents]

## ROBIN REDBREAST.

Long, long ago, ere the acorns were sown which have since furnished timber for the oldest vessels of the port of Brest, there lived in the parish of Guirek a poor widow called Ninorc’h Madek. Her father, who was very wealthy and of noble race, had left at his death a manor-house, with a farm, a mill, and a forge, twelve horses and twice as many oxen, twelve cows and ten times as many sheep, to say nothing of corn and flax.

But Ninorc’h was a helpless widow, and her brothers took the whole for themselves. Perrik, the eldest, kept the house, the farm, and the horses; Fanche, the second, took the mill and the cows; whilst the third, whose name was Riwal, had the oxen, the forge, and the sheep. Nothing was left for Ninorc’h but a doorless shed on the open heath, which had served to shelter the sick cattle.

However, as she was getting together her little matter of furniture, in order to

take possession of her new abode, Fanche pretended to take pity upon her, and said,

“Come, I will deal with you like a brother and a Christian. Here is a black cow; she has never come to much good, and, indeed, gives scarce milk enough to feed a new-born babe; but you may take her with you, if you will, and May-flower can look after her upon the common.”

[105]

May-flower<sup>1</sup> was the widow’s daughter, now in her eleventh year, and had been called after the colourless blossom of the thickets from her unusually pale complexion.

So Ninorc’h went away with her pallid little girl, who led the poor lean cow by an old cord, and she sent them out upon the common together.

There May-flower stayed all day, watching her black cow, which with much ado contrived to pick a little grass between the stones. She spent her time in making little crosses with blossoms of the broom,<sup>2</sup> or in repeating aloud her Rosary and her favourite hymns.

One day, as she was singing the “Ave Maris Stella,” as she had heard it at Vespers in the church of Guirek, all at once she noticed a little bird perched upon one of the flower-crosses she had set in the earth. He was warbling sweetly, and turned his head from side to side, looking at her as if he longed to speak. Not a little surprised, she gently drew near and listened, but without being able to distinguish any meaning in his song. In vain he sang louder, flapped his wings, and fluttered about before May-flower. Not a whit the wiser was she for all this; and yet such pleasure did she take in watching and listening to him, that night came on without her being able to think of any thing else. At last the bird flew away; and when she looked up to see what had become of him, she saw the stars twinkling in the sky.

[106]

With all speed she started off to look for her cow, but to her dismay it was nowhere to be found upon the common. In vain she called aloud, in vain she beat the bushes, in vain she went down into each hollow where the rainwater had formed a pool. At last she heard her mother’s voice, calling her, as if some great misfortune had happened. All in a fright, she ran up to her, and there, at the edge of the heath, on the way homeward, she found the widow beside all that remained of the poor cow,—her horns, that is, and her bones, the latter well picked by the wolves, which had sallied forth from the neighbouring woods and made a meal of her.

At this sight May-flower felt her blood run cold. She burst into tears, for she loved the black cow she had tended so long, and falling on her knees exclaimed,

[107]

“Blessed Virgin, why did you not let me see the wolf? I would have scared him away with the sign of the cross; I would have repeated the charm that is taught to shepherd-boys who keep their flocks upon the mountains,—

‘Art thou wolf, St. Hervé shend<sup>3</sup> thee!  
Art thou Satan, God defend me!’”<sup>4</sup>

The widow, who was a very saint for piety and resignation, seeing the sorrow of the little girl, sought to comfort her, saying,

“It is not well to weep for the cow as for a fellow-creature, my poor child; if the wolves and wicked men conspire against us, the Lord God will be on our side. Come, then, help me up with my bundle of heath, and let us go home.”

May-flower did as she said, but sighed at every step, and the big tears trickled down her cheeks.

“My poor cow!” said she to herself, “my poor, good, gentle cow! and just, too, as she was beginning to fatten a little.”

The little girl had no heart for supper, and many times awakened in the night, fancying that she heard the black cow lowing at the door. With very restlessness she rose before the dawn, and ran out upon the common, barefooted and but half-dressed. There, at the selfsame spot, appeared the little bird again, perched as before on her broom-flower cross. Again he sang, and seemed to call her. But, alas, she was as little able as on the preceding evening to understand him, and was turning away in vexation, when she thought she saw a piece of gold glittering on the ground. To try what it really was, she moved it with her foot; but, lo, it was the gold-herb; and no sooner had she touched it than she distinctly understood the language of the little bird,<sup>5</sup> saying in his warbling,

[108]

“May-flower, I wish thee well. May-flower, listen to me.”

"Who are you?" said May-flower, wondering within herself that she could understand the language of an unbaptised creature.

[109]

"I am Robin Redbreast," returned the bird. "It was I that followed the Saviour on His way to Calvary, and broke a thorn from the crown that was tearing His brow.<sup>6</sup> To recompense this act, it was granted to me by God the Father that I should live until the day of judgment, and that every year I might bestow a fortune upon one poor girl. This year I have chosen you."

"Can this be true, Robin Redbreast?" cried May-flower, in a transport of delight. "And shall I have a silver cross for my neck, and be able to wear wooden shoes?"

"A cross of gold shall you have, and silken slippers shall you wear, like a noble damsel," replied Robin Redbreast.

"But what must I do, dear kind Robin?" said the little maid.

"Only follow me."

It may well be supposed that May-flower had no objection to make; so Robin Redbreast flew before, and she ran after him.

On they went; across the heath, through the copses, and over the fields of rye, till at last they came to the open downs over against the Seven Isles. There Robin stopped, and said to the little girl,

"Seest thou aught on the sands down there?"

[110]

"I see," replied May-flower, "a great pair of beechen shoes that the fire has never scorched, and a holly-staff that has not been hacked by the sickle."

"Put on the shoes, and take up the staff."

It was done.

"Now walk upon the sea to the first island, and go round it till thou shalt come to a rock on which grow sea-green rushes."

"What then?"

"Gather some of the rushes, and twist them into a cord."

"Well, and then?"

"Then strike the rock with the holly-staff, and there will come forth from it a cow. Make a halter of the rushen cord, and lead her home to console thy mother for the one just lost."

All that Robin Redbreast had told her, May-flower did. She walked upon the sea; she made the cord of rushes; she struck the rock, and there came out from it a cow, with eyes as soft as a stag-hound's, and a skin sleek as that of the mole that burrows in the meadows. May-flower led her home to her poor mother, whose joy now was almost greater than her former sorrow.

But what were her sensations when she began to milk Mor Vyoc'h!<sup>7</sup> (for so had Robin Redbreast named the creature). Behold, the milk flowed on and on beneath her fingers like water from a spring!

[111]

Ninorc'h had soon filled all the earthen vessels in the house, and then all those of wood, but still the milk flowed on.

"Now, holy Mother save us!" cried the widow, "certainly this beast has drunk of the waters of Languengar."<sup>8</sup>

In fact, the milk of Mor Vyoc'h was inexhaustible; she had already yielded enough to satisfy every babe in Cornouaille.

In a little time nothing was talked of throughout the country but the widow's cow, and people crowded from all parts to see it. The rector of Peros-Guirek came among the rest, to see whether it were not a snare of the evil one; but after he had laid his stole upon Mor Vyoc'h's head, he pronounced her clear of all suspicion.

Before long all the richest farmers were persuading Ninorc'h to sell her cow, each one bidding against the other for so invaluable a beast; her brother Perrik among the rest.

"Come," said he, "I am your brother; as a good Christian you must give me the preference. Let me have Mor Vyoc'h, and I will give you in exchange as many cows

[112]

as it takes tailors to make a man.”<sup>9</sup>

“Is that your Christian dealing?” answered the widow. “Nine cows for Mor Vyoc’h! She is worth all the cows in the country, far and near. With her milk I could supply all the markets in the bishoprics of Tréguier and Cornouaille, from Dinan to Carhaix.”

“Well, sister, only let me have her,” replied Perrik, “and I will give up to you our father’s farm, on which you were born, with all the fields, ploughs, and horses.”

This proposal Ninorc’h accepted, and was forthwith put in possession, turning up a sod in the meadows, taking a draught of water from the well, and kindling a fire on the hearth; besides cutting a tuft of hair from the horses’ tails in token of ownership.<sup>10</sup> She then delivered Mor Vyoc’h to Perrik, who led her away to a house which he had at some distance, towards Menez-Brée.

[113]

A day of tears and sadness was that for May-flower; and as at night she went the round of the stalls to see that all was right, she could not help again and again murmuring, as she filled the mangers,

“Alas, Mor Vyoc’h is gone! I shall never see Mor Vyoc’h again.”

With this lament still on her lips, she suddenly heard a lowing behind her, in which, as by virtue of the gold-herb her ears were now open to the language of all animals, she distinctly made out these words,

“Here I am again, my little mistress,”

May-flower turned round in astonishment, and there indeed was Mor Vyoc’h.

“Oh, can this indeed be you?” cried the little girl. “And what, then, has brought you back?”

“I cannot belong to your uncle Perrik,” said Mor Vyoc’h, “for my nature forbids me to remain with such as are not in a state of grace; so I am come back to be with you again as before.”

[114]

“But then my mother must give back the farm, the fields, and all that she has received for you.”

“Not so; for it was already hers by right, and had been unjustly taken from her by your uncle.”

“But he will come to see if you are here, and will know you again.”

“Go and gather three leaves of the cross-wort,<sup>11</sup> and I will tell you what to do.”

May-flower went, and soon returned with the three leaves.

“Now,” said Mor Vyoc’h, “pass those leaves over me, from my horns to my tail, and say ‘*St. Ronan of Ireland!*’ three times.”

May-flower did so; and as she called on the saint for the third time, lo, the cow became a beautiful horse. The little girl was lost in wonder.

“Now,” said the creature to her, “your uncle Perrik cannot possibly know me again; for I am no longer Mor Vyoc’h, but Marc’h-Mor.”<sup>12</sup>

On hearing what had come to pass, the widow was greatly rejoiced; and early on the morrow proceeded to make trial of her horse with a load of corn for Tréguier. But guess her astonishment when she found that the more sacks were laid on Marc’h-Mor’s back the longer it grew; so that he alone could carry as much wheat as all the horses in the parish.

[115]

The tale of the widow’s wonderful horse was soon noised about the neighbourhood, and among the rest her brother Fanche heard of it. He therefore lost no time in proceeding to the farm; and when he had seen Marc’h-Mor, begged his sister to part with him, which, however, she would by no means consent to do till Fanche had offered her in exchange his cows and his mill, with all the pigs that he was fattening there.

The bargain concluded, Ninorc’h took possession of her new property, as she had done at the farm; and Fanche led away Marc’h-Mor.

But in the evening there he was again; and again May-flower gathered three leaves of cross-wort, stroked him over with them three times from his ears to his tail, repeating each time *St. Ronan of Ireland!* as she had done before to Mor Vyoc’h. And, lo, in a moment the horse changed into a sheep covered with wool as

long as hemp, as red as scarlet, and as fine as dressed flax.

Full of admiration at this new miracle, the widow came to behold it; and no sooner was she within sight than she called to May-flower,

[116]

“Run and fetch a pair of shears; for the poor creature cannot bear this weight of wool.”

But when she began to shear Mor-Vawd, she found the wool grow as fast as she cut it off; so that he alone far out-valued all the flocks of Arhèz.

Riwal, who chanced to come by at that moment, was witness of the wonder; and then and there parted with his forge, his sheep-walks, and all his sheep, to obtain possession of the wonderful sheep.

But see! As he was leading his new purchase home along the sea-shore, the sheep suddenly plunged in the water, swam to the smallest of the seven isles, and passed into a chasm of the rocks, which opened to receive it, and straight-way closed again.

This time May-flower expected him back at the usual hour in vain. Neither that night nor on the morrow did he revisit the farm.

The little girl ran to the common. There she found Robin Redbreast, who thus spoke, before he flew away for ever:

“I have been waiting for you, my little lady. The sheep is gone, and will return no more. Your uncles have been punished after their deserts. For you, you are now a rich heiress, and may wear a cross of gold and silken slippers, as I promised you. My work here is done, and I am about to fly away far hence. Only, do you remember always, that you have been poor, and that it was one of God’s little birds that made you rich.”

[117]

To prove her gratitude, May-flower built a chapel on the heath, on that very spot where Robin Redbreast first addressed her. And the old men, from whom our fathers heard this tale, could remember lighting the altar-candles there when they were little boys.

[118]

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1 *Spern-gwenn* (“l’épine blanche”), to this day a family name in Brittany.

2 All the Breton shepherds make these crosses with twigs of furze, on the thorns of which they stick daisies and broom-blossoms; whole rows of these flowery crosses may often be seen along the ditches.

3 *Shend*, ‘subdue.’

4 This form of exorcism is supposed to originate in a story related of St. Hervé. A wolf having devoured an ass belonging to his uncle, the saint compelled the savage beast to dwell peaceably thenceforward in the same shed with the sheep, and to perform all the duties of the defunct ass. A similar story is told of St. Malo, another Breton saint.

5 The legend of the gold-herb (which must be gathered, according to common credence, barefooted, *en chemise*, without the aid of any iron tool, and whilst one is in a state of grace) comes evidently from the Druids. It is the *selage* of the ancients, spoken of by Pliny (lib. xiv.), and is said by the Bretons to glitter like gold before the eyes of those who at the moment may fulfil the conditions for perceiving it, and who, by touching it with the foot, are instantly enabled to understand the language of all animals, and to converse with them.

6 The tradition of the redbreast, who *broke a thorn from the crown of our Lord*, is current throughout Brittany.

7 *Mor Vyoc’h* signifies Sea-cow.

8 The Breton peasants believe that the fountain of Languengar has the property of promoting the flow of milk in those nurses who drink of it.

9 In Brittany, as in England, it takes nine tailors to make a man.

10 This form of *taking possession* is extremely ancient. In all the legislative systems of “the ancient world” transfer of landed property was effected by symbolical tradition; that is, by the handing over to the new owner of some visible and palpable portion or symbol of the land itself. At Rome, the sale of a field takes place standing on a turf cut from the field itself, which is handed over to the purchaser as a symbol of his new possession. In an old deed of 828 occurs the following: “I make over the underwritten goods and lands to the Church of St. Mary. And I make legal cession by straw and knife, glove and turf, and branch of tree; and so I put myself out, expel, and make myself absent.”—D. Calmet, *Histoire de Lorraine*, Preuves, p. 524. And as Brittany is the very chosen home of old customs, it has happened that even quite lately, at a farm near Léon, all these forms of taking possession were gone through, not as having any legal efficacy, but in compliance with ancient usage.

11 The vervain.

12 *Marc’h-Mor*, literally, Sea-horse.



## COMORRE.

In the old times, it is said that the city of Vannes was far larger and finer than it is in our days, and that instead of a prefect, it was ruled by a king, whose will was law. I do not know what his name was; but from all I have heard, it seems that he was a man who lived in the fear of God, and of whom no one had ever found occasion to speak an evil word.

He had been early left a widower; and he lived happily with his only daughter, said to be the most beautiful creature in the whole world. She was called Tryphyna, and those who knew her have asserted that she came of age unsullied by a single mortal sin. So that the king her father would have willingly sacrificed his horses, castles, and farms, rather than see Tryphyna made unhappy.

However, it came to pass, that one day ambassadors from Cornouaille were announced. They came on the part of Comorre, a powerful prince of those times, who ruled over the land of Black-Wheat as Tryphyna's father ruled that of the White.<sup>1</sup>

[119]

After offering presents of honey, flax, and a dozen of little pigs, to the king, they informed him that their master had visited the last fair at Vannes disguised as a soldier, and there beholding the beauty and modesty of the young princess, he had determined at all hazards to have her in marriage.

This proposal filled both the king and Tryphyna with great grief; for the Count Comorre was a giant, and said to be the wickedest man that had ever been on the earth since the days of Cain.

From his earliest youth he had been used to find his only pleasure in working mischief; and so malicious was he, that his mother herself had been accustomed to run and ring the alarm-bell whenever he left the castle, to warn the country people to take care of themselves. When older, and his own master, his cruelty was greater still. It was said that one morning, on his way out, he tried his gun upon a lad tending a colt at pasture, and killed him. And at other times, when returning unsuccessful from the chase, he would let loose his dogs upon the poor peasants in the fields, and suffer them to be pulled down like beasts of prey. But, most horrible of all, he had married four wives in succession, each of whom had died off suddenly without receiving the last Sacraments; and it was even said that he had made away with them by the knife, fire, water, or poison.

[120]

So the King of Vannes replied to the ambassadors that his daughter was too young and too weak in health to think of marrying. But Comorre's people answered roughly, after their manner, that the Count Comorre would listen to no such excuses, and that they had received orders, if the young princess was not sent back with them, to declare war against the King of Vannes. The king replied, that they must do as they liked about that. Then the most aged among the envoys lighted a handful of straw, which he flung to the winds, declaring that thus should the anger of Comorre pass over the country of White-Wheat; and so they departed.<sup>2</sup>

Tryphyna's father, being a courageous man, did not allow himself to be disheartened by this threat, and called together all the soldiers he could muster to defend his territories.

But in a few days he heard that the Count of Cornouaille was advancing upon Vannes with a powerful army; and it was not long before he came in sight with trumpets and cannons. Then the king put himself at the head of his people, and the battle was on the point of beginning; when St. Veltas<sup>3</sup> came to find Tryphyna, who was praying in her oratory.

[121]

The saint wore the cloak which had served him as a vessel for crossing the sea, and carried the walking-staff which he had fastened to it as a mast to catch the wind. A halo of glory hovered round his brow. He announced to the young princess that the men of Vannes and Cornouaille were on the point of shedding each other's blood, and asked her whether she would not stay the death of so many Christians by consenting to become the wife of Count Comorre.

"Alas, then, God demands from me the death of all my peace and happiness," cried the young girl, weeping. "Why am I not a beggar? I could then at least be wedded to the beggar of my choice. Ah, if it is indeed the will of God that I espouse this giant, whom I dread so much, say for me, holy man, the Office for the Dead; for the count will kill me, as he has his other wives."

But St. Veltas replied,

“Fear nothing, Tryphyna. See here this ring of silver, white as milk; it shall serve you as a warning; for so surely as Comorre is plotting any thing against you, it will become as black as the crow’s wing. Take courage, then, and save the Bretons from death.”

[122]

The young princess, reassured by this present of the ring, consented to St. Veltas’s request.

Then the saint hurried without loss of time towards the opposed armies, that he might announce the good tidings to their chiefs. The King of Vannes, notwithstanding his daughter’s resolution, was very unwilling to consent to the marriage; but Comorre promised so fairly, that at last he accepted him as son-in-law.

The nuptials were celebrated with such festivities as have never been seen since within the two dioceses. The first day six thousand noble guests sat down to table; and on the second they received as many poor, whom the bride and bridegroom, forgetful of their rank, waited on at table, with napkins on their arms.<sup>4</sup> Then there was dancing, at which all the musicians of Lower Brittany were engaged; and wrestling-matches, in which the men of Brévelay contended with those of Cornouaille.

At last, when all was over, every one went home to his own country; and Comorre carried off with him his young bride, as a sparrow-hawk that has pounced upon a poor little yellow-hammer.

[123]

However, during the first few months his affection for Tryphyna softened him more than might have been expected. The castle-dungeons remained empty, and the gibbets held no pasture for foul birds of prey. The count’s people whispered low,

“What ails our lord, then, that he thirsts no more for tears and blood?” But those who knew him better waited and said nothing. Tryphyna herself, notwithstanding the count’s kindness towards her, could never feel easy or happy in her mind. Every day she went down to the castle-chapel, and there, praying on the tombs of Comorre’s four dead wives, she besought God to preserve her from a violent death.

About this time a grand assembly of Breton princes took place at Rennes, and Comorre was obliged to join it. He gave into Tryphyna’s keeping all the castle keys, even those of the cellars; told her to amuse herself as she liked best, and set out with a great retinue.

It was five months before he returned, full of anxiety to see Tryphyna, of whom he had thought often during his absence. And in his haste, unwilling to lose time by announcing his arrival, he rushed up into her room, where she was at that moment engaged in making an infant’s cap, trimmed with silver-lace.

On seeing the cap, Comorre turned pale, and asked for what it was designed. The countess, thinking to rejoice his heart, assured him that they would shortly have a child; but at this news the Prince of Cornouaille drew back in horror, and after looking at Tryphyna with a dreadful countenance, went suddenly out, not speaking a word.

[124]

The princess might have taken this for one of the count’s frequent caprices, had she not perceived, on casting down her eyes, that the silver ring had turned black. She uttered a cry of terror; for she remembered the words of St. Veltas, and knew that she must be in imminent peril. But she knew not wherefore, neither could she tell how to escape it. Poor woman! all day long, and during part of the night, she employed herself in pondering what could be the reason of the count’s displeasure; and at last, her heart growing heavier, she went down into the chapel to pray.

But scarcely had she finished her rosary, and risen to depart, when the hour of midnight struck. At that instant she beheld the four grave-stones of Comorre’s four wives rise slowly up, and they themselves come out swathed in their funeral shrouds.

Tryphyna, more dead than alive, would have escaped; but the phantoms called to her:

“Take care, poor lost one; Comorre waits to kill thee.”

[125]

“Me!” cried the countess; “and how have I offended, that he seeks my death?”

"You have told him you will shortly be a mother; and he knows, thanks to the evil one, that his first child will be his destroyer. Therefore it was that he took our lives also."

"My God! and have I fallen into hands so cruel?" cried Tryphyna, weeping. "If it is so, what hope remains for me? what can I do?"

"Go back to your father in the land of White-Wheat," said the phantoms.

"How can I fly?" returned the countess; "the giant dog of Comorre guards the gate."

"Give to him this poison, which killed me," said the first.

"How can I get down the high wall?" asked the young wife.

"Let yourself down by this cord, which strangled me," replied the second.

"But who will direct me through the darkness?" asked the princess.

"This fire, which consumed me," replied the third.

"How can I take so long a journey?" once more asked Tryphyna.

"Make use of this staff, which crushed my temples," said the last.

Comorre's wife took the staff, the torch, the cord, and the poison. She silenced the dog, she scaled the lofty wall, she penetrated the darkness, and took the road to Vannes, where her father dwelt. [126]

Comorre, not being able to find her the next morning when he rose, sent his page to search for her in every chamber; but the page returned with the tidings that Tryphyna was no longer in the castle.

Then the count went up the donjon-tower, and looked out to the four winds.

To the north he saw a raven that croaked; to the sunrise a swallow on the wing; to the south a wailing sea-mew; and to the west a turtle-dove that sped away.

He instantly exclaimed that Tryphyna was in that direction; and having his horse saddled, set out in pursuit.

His unfortunate wife was still upon the border of the wood which surrounded the count's castle; but she was warned of his approach by seeing the ring grow black. Then she turned aside over the common, and came to the cabin of a poor shepherd, whose sole possession was an old magpie hanging in a cage.

The poor lady lay concealed there the whole day, bemoaning herself and praying; and when night came on, she once more set forth along the paths which skirt the fields of flax and corn.

Comorre, who had kept to the high road, could not find her; and after travelling two days, he returned the same way as far as the common. But there, as ill-luck would have it, he entered the shepherd's hut, and heard the magpie trying to recall the melancholy wailings it had listened to, and murmuring, "Poor Tryphyna! poor Tryphyna!" Then Comorre knew the countess had passed by that way, and calling his hunting-dog, set him on the track, and began to pursue her. [127]

Meanwhile Tryphyna, pressed by terror, had walked on unresting, and was already drawing near to Vannes. But at last she felt herself unable to proceed; and turning into a wood, lay down upon the grass, where she gave birth to a son miraculously lovely, who was afterwards called St. Trever.

As she held him in her arms, and wept over him, half sorrowfully and half in joy, she perceived a falcon ornamented with a collar of gold. He was perched upon a neighbouring tree; and she knew him for her father's bird, the king of the land of White-Wheat. Calling him quickly by his name, the bird came down upon her knees; and giving him the warning-ring she had received from St. Veltas, she said, "Fly, falcon, hasten to my father's court, and carry him this ring. When he sees it, he will know I am in urgent danger, and will order his soldiers to horse. It is for you to lead them hither to save me." [128]

The bird understood, and taking the ring, flew like a flash of lightning in the direction of Vannes.

But almost at the same instant Comorre came in sight with his stag-hound, who had incessantly tracked Tryphyna; and as she had no longer the ring to forewarn her of approaching danger, she remained unconscious of it till she heard the

tyrant's voice cheering on his dog.

Terror froze the marrow in her bones, and she had only just time to wrap the infant in her mantle and hide it in the hollow of a tree, when Comorre appeared upon his horse at the entrance of the pathway.

Seeing Tryphyna, he uttered a cry like that of a wild-beast, and throwing himself upon the unhappy victim, who had sunk upon her knees, he severed her head from her shoulders by one stroke of his hunting-knife.

Believing himself now at once rid of mother and child, he whistled back his dog, and set off on his return to Cornouaille.

Now the falcon arrived at the court of the King of Vannes, who was then dining; and hovering over the table, let fall the silver ring into his master's cup. He had no sooner recognised it, than he exclaimed:

"Woe is me, some misfortune must have befallen my daughter, since the falcon brings me back her ring. Let the horses be made ready, and let St. Veltas be our companion; for I fear we shall but too soon stand in need of his assistance."

[129]

The servants obeyed promptly; and the king set forth with the saint, who had come at his prayer, and a numerous retinue. They put their horses to their full speed, and followed the course of the flying falcon, who led them to the glade where lay the dead Tryphyna and her living child.

The king then threw himself from his horse, and uttered cries that might have made the very oaks to weep; but St. Veltas silenced him.

"Hush!" said he, "and join with me in prayer to God; He can even yet repair all."

With these words, he knelt down with all those who were present, and after addressing a fervent prayer to Heaven, he said to the dead body, "Arise!"

Tryphyna obeyed.

"Take thine head and thy child," added the saint, "and follow us to the castle of Comorre."

It was done as he commanded.

Then the terrified escort took horse once more, and spurred onwards towards Cornouaille. But however rapidly they rode, Tryphyna was ever in advance; holding her son upon her left arm, and her head on her right.

And thus they came before the castle of the murderer. Comorre, who saw them coming, caused the drawbridge to be raised. St. Veltas drew near the moat, and exclaimed, with a loud voice,

[130]

"Count of Cornouaille, I bring thee back thy wife, such as thy wickedness has made her; and thy son, as God has bestowed him on thee. Wilt thou receive them beneath thy roof?"

Comorre was silent. St. Veltas repeated the same words a second, then a third time; but still no voice replied. Taking, therefore, the infant from his mother's arms, he placed him on the ground.

Then was beheld a miracle which proved the Omnipotence of God; for the child walked alone, and boldly, to the edge of the moat, whence gathering a handful of the sand, he flung it towards the castle, crying out,

"God is just!"

At that instant the towers shook with a great tumult, the walls gaped open, and the whole castle sank down in ruins, burying the Count of Cornouaille, and all those who had abetted him in sin.

St. Veltas then replaced the head of Tryphyna on her shoulders, and laying his hands upon her, the holy woman came back to life; to the great content of the King of Vannes, and of all who were there present.

[131]

## Note.

According to the legend of Albert de Morlaix, Comorre was not buried in the castle

ruins, but succeeded in making his escape; but, at the instance of Guerok, the Breton Bishops met in council "to cut off this rotten branch from the body of the Church. They assembled at the mountain called Menez-Brée, near Louargat, between Belle Isle and Guingamp, not daring to meet in any town, through the terror inspired by this tyrant; who, having killed King Johava, and his son Jugduval, did what he pleased throughout the whole of the Low Country" (*Basse Bretagne*).

The Bishops thundered from their place of meeting a deadly excommunication against Comorre; who shortly after, according to the historian Le Bault, suffered the punishment of Arius; or, as others say, "vomited forth at the same instant his blood and his soul."

[132]

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1 The Breton name for Vannes, *Gwen-ed*, signifies literally White Wheat.

2 This form of declaring war, preserved by tradition, is curious, and, as far as we know, peculiar to Brittany. Amongst the ancient Romans they cast upon the enemy's territory a javelin scorched at the fire; in the middle ages the iron gauntlet was thrown, or the finger was gnawed; the savages of North America sent, like the Scythians, bundles of arrows, the number of which indicated that of the combatants; but burning straw flung upon the enemy's land is a peculiar symbol, which we have never noticed elsewhere.

3 The Breton name of St. Gildas.

4 This custom still exists in Brittany.

[Contents]

## THE GROAC'H OF THE ISLE OF LOK.<sup>1</sup>

Every one who knows the *land of the Church* (Lanillis), knows also that it is one of the loveliest parishes in the diocese of Léon. To say nothing of green crops and corn, its orchards are famed from all time for apples sweeter than the honey of Sizun, and plum-trees of which every blossom ripens into fruit. As for the marriageable maidens, they are all models of discretion and housewifery; at least so say their nearest relations, who of course know them best.

In olden times, when miracles were as common in these parts as christenings and burials now, there dwelt in Lanillis a young man called Houarn Pogamm, and a damsel whose name was Bellah Postik.

[133]

They grew up together in love, as in age and stature; but every one that they had to care for them being dead, one after the other, and they left portionless, the two poor orphans were at last obliged to go into service. They ought, indeed, to have been happy, for they served the same master; but lovers are like the sea, that murmurs ever.

"If we had only enough to buy a little cow and a lean pig," said Houarn, "I would take a bit of land of our master; and then the good father should marry us, and we would go and live together."

"Yes," replied Bellah, with a deep sigh; "but the times are so hard. The cows and pigs were dearer than ever at Ploudalmazeau the last fair. Providence must surely have given up caring for the world."

"I am afraid we shall have to wait a long time," said the young man; "for I never get the last glass of the bottle when I drink with the rest of them."

"Very long," replied the maiden; "for I never can hear the cuckoo."

Day after day it was the same story; till at last Houarn was quite out of patience. So one morning he came to Bellah, as she was winnowing some corn in the threshing-floor, and told her how he had made up his mind that he would set out on his travels to seek his fortune.

[134]

Sadly troubled was the poor girl at this resolve, and she said all she could to dissuade him from it; but Houarn, who was a determined young fellow, would not be withheld.

"The birds," said he, "fly hither and thither till they have found a field of corn, and the bees till they meet with flowers that may yield them honey; is it for man to be less reasonable than the winged creatures? I also will go forth on my quest; what I want is but the price of a little cow and a lean pig. If you love me, Bellah, you will no longer oppose a project which is to hasten our marriage."

Bellah could not but acknowledge that there was reason in his words; so with a

sigh and a yearning heart she said,

“Go then, Houarn, with God’s blessing, if it must be so; but first let me share with you my family relics.”

She led him to her cupboard, and took out a little bell, a knife, and a staff.

“There,” said she, “these are immemorial heirlooms of our family. This is the bell of St. Kolédok. Its sound can be heard at any distance, however great, and will give immediate notice to the possessor’s friends should he be in any danger. The knife once belonged to St. Coentin, and its touch dissolves all spells, were they of the arch-fiend himself. Lastly, here is the staff of St. Vouga, which will lead its possessor whithersoever he may desire to go. I will give you the knife to defend you from enchantments, and the little bell to let me know if you are in peril; the staff I will keep, that I may be able to join you, should you need my presence.”

[135]

Houarn accepted with thanks his Bellah’s gifts, wept awhile with her, as belongs to a parting, and set out towards the mountains.

But it was then just as it is now, and in all the villages through which he passed, the traveller was beset by beggars, to whom any one with whole garments was a man of rank and fortune.

“By my faith,” thought he, “this part of the country seems fitter for spending a fortune than for making one: I must go farther.”

He went onwards therefore towards the west, till at last he arrived at Pontaven, a pretty town, built upon a river bordered with poplars.

There, as he sat at the inn-door, he overheard two carriers, who, as they loaded their mules, were talking together of the Groac’h of the Isle of Lok.

Houarn inquired who or what that might be; and was told that it was the name of a fairy who inhabited the lake in the largest of the Glénans,<sup>2</sup> and who was said to be as rich as all the kings of the earth together. Many had been the treasure-seekers that had visited her island, but not one of them had ever returned.

[136]

The thought came suddenly into Houarn’s mind that he too would try the adventure. The muleteers did all they could to dissuade him. They were so loud in their remonstrances, that they collected quite a crowd about him, crying out that it was downright unchristian to let him run into destruction in that way; and the people would even have kept him back by force. Houarn thanked them for the interest they manifested in his welfare, and declared himself ready to give up his design, if only they would make a collection amongst them which would enable him to buy a little cow and a lean pig; but at this proposition the muleteers and all the others drew back, simply repeating that he was an obstinate fellow, and that it was of no use talking to him. So Houarn repaired to the sea-shore, where he took a boat, and was carried to the Isle of Lok.

He had no difficulty in finding the pond, which was in the centre of the island, its banks fringed by sea-plants with rose-coloured flowers. As he walked round, he saw lying at one end of it, shaded by a tuft of broom, a sea-green canoe, which floated on the unruffled waters. It was fashioned like a swan asleep, with its head under its wing.

[137]

Houarn, who had never seen any thing like it before, drew nearer with curiosity, and stepped into the boat that he might examine it the better; but scarcely had he set foot within it when the swan seemed to awake, its head started from amongst the feathers, its wide feet spread themselves to the waters, and it swam rapidly from the bank.

The young man gave a cry of alarm, but the swan only made the more swiftly for the middle of the lake; and just as Houarn had decided on throwing himself from his strange bark, and swimming for the shore, the bird plunged downward head foremost, drawing him under the water along with it.

The unfortunate Léonard, who could not cry out without gulping down the unsavoury water of the pool, was silent by necessity, and soon arrived at the Groac’h’s dwelling.

It was a palace of shells, far surpassing in beauty all that can be imagined. It was entered by a flight of crystal steps, each stair of which, as the foot pressed it, gave forth a concert of sweet sounds, like the song of many birds. All around stretched gardens of immense extent, with forests of marine plants, and plots of green seaweed, spangled with diamonds in the place of flowers.

[138]

The Groac’h was reclining in the entrance-hall upon a couch of gold. Her dress

was of sea-green silk, exquisitely fine, and floating round her like the waves that wrapped her grotto. Her black locks, intertwined with coral, descended to her feet; and the white and red of her brilliant complexion blended as in the polished lining of some Indian shell.

Dazzled with a sight at once so fair and unexpected, Houarn stood still; but with a winning smile the Groac'h rose, and came forward to meet him. So easy and flowing were her movements, that she seemed like a snowy billow heaving along the sea, as she advanced to greet the young Léonard.

"You are welcome," said she, beckoning him with her hand to enter; "there is always room here for all comers, especially for handsome young men."

At this gracious reception Houarn somewhat recovered himself, and entered the hall.

"Who are you? Whence come you? What seek you?" continued the Groac'h.

"My name is Houarn," replied the Léonard; "I come from Lanillis; and I am in quest of the wherewithal to buy a little cow and a lean pig."

[139]

"Well, come in, Houarn," said the fairy; "and dismiss all anxiety from your mind; you shall have every thing to make you happy."

While this was passing she had led him into a second hall, the walls of which were covered with pearls; where she set before him eight different kinds of wine, in eight goblets of chased silver. Houarn made trial of each, and found all so much to his taste, that he repeated his draught of each eight times; while ever as the cup left his lips, the Groac'h seemed still fairer than before.

She meanwhile encouraged him to drink, telling him he need be in no fear of robbing her, for that the lake in the Isle of Lok communicated with the sea, and that all the treasures swallowed up by shipwrecks were conveyed thither by a magic current.

"I do not wonder," cried Houarn, emboldened at once by the wine and the manner of his hostess, "that the people on shore speak so badly of you; in fact, it just comes to this, that you are rich, and they are envious. For my part, I should be very well content with the half of your fortune."

"It shall be yours if you will, Houarn," said the fairy.

"How can that be?" he asked.

[140]

"My husband, the Korandon, is dead," she answered, "so that I am now a widow; if you like me well enough, I will become your wife."

Houarn quite lost his breath for very wonderment. For him to marry that beautiful creature! to dwell in that splendid palace! and to drink to his heart's content of the eight sorts of wine! True, he was engaged to Bellah; but men easily forget such promises,—indeed, for that they are just like women. So he gallantly assured the fairy that one so lovely must be irresistible, and that it would be his pride and joy to become her husband.

Thereupon the Groac'h exclaimed that she would forthwith make ready the wedding-feast. She spread a table, which she covered with all the delicacies that the Léonard had ever heard of, besides a great many unknown to him even by name; and then proceeding to a little fish-pond at the bottom of the garden, she began to call, and at each call up swam a fish, which she successively caught in a steel net. When the net was full, she carried it into the next room, and threw all the fish into a golden frying-pan.

But it seemed to Houarn as though there was a whispering of little voices amidst the hissing of the pan.

"What is that whispering in the frying-pan, Groac'h?" he asked.

[141]

"It is the crackling of the wood," said she, stirring the fire.

An instant after the little voices again began to murmur.

"What is that murmuring, Groac'h?" asked the bridegroom.

"It is the butter in the frying-pan," she answered, giving the fish a toss.

But soon the little voices cried yet louder.

"What is that cry, Groac'h?" said Houarn.

"It is the cricket in the hearth," replied the fairy; and she began to sing, so that the Léonard could no longer hear any thing but her voice.

But he could not help thinking on what he had noticed: and thought brought fear, and fear, of course, repentance.

"Alas!" he cried, "can it then be possible that I have so soon forgotten Bellah for this Groac'h, who is no doubt a child of Satan? With her for my wife, I shall not even dare to say my prayers at night, and shall be as sure to go to hell as an exciseman."

While he thus communed with himself, the fairy brought in the fried fish, and pressed him to eat, while she went to fetch him twelve new sorts of wine.

Houarn sighed, took out his knife, and prepared to begin; but scarcely had the spell-destroying blade touched the golden dish, when all the fish rose up in the form of little men, each one clad in the proper costume of his rank and occupation. [142]

"Houarn, save us, if thou wouldst thyself be saved."

"Holy Virgin! what are these little men singing out from amongst the melted butter?" cried the Léonard, in bewilderment.

"We are Christians like thyself," they answered. "We too came to seek our fortunes in the Isle of Lok; we too consented to marry the Groac'h; and the day after the wedding she did with us as she had done with all our predecessors, of whom the fish-pond in the garden is full."

"What!" cried Houarn, "a creature so young and fair, and yet so wicked?"

"And thou wilt soon be in the same condition, subject thyself to be fried and eaten by some new-comer."

Houarn gave a jump, as though he felt himself already in the golden frying-pan, and ran towards the door, thinking only how he might escape before the Groac'h should return. But she was already there, and had heard all; her net of steel was soon thrown over the Léonard, who found himself instantly transformed into a frog, in which guise the fairy carried him to the fish-pond, and threw him in, to keep her former husbands company. [143]

At this moment the little bell, which Houarn wore round his neck, tinkled of its own accord; and Bellah heard it at Lanillis, where she was busy skimming the last night's milk.

The sound struck upon her heart like a funeral knell; and she cried aloud, "Houarn is in danger!" And without a moment's delay, without asking counsel of any as to what she should do, she ran and put on her Sunday clothes, her shoes and silver cross, and set out from the farm with her magic staff. Arrived where four roads met, she set the stick upright in the ground, murmuring in a low voice,—

"List, thou crab-tree staff of mine!  
By good St. Vouga, hear me!  
O'er earth and water, through air, 'tis thine  
Whither I will to bear me!"

And lo, the stick became a bay nag, dressed, saddled, and bridled, with a rosette behind each ear, and a blue feather in front.

Bellah mounted, and the horse set forward; first at a walking pace, then he trotted, and at last galloped, and that so swiftly, that ditches, trees, houses, and steeples passed before the young girl's eyes like the arms of a spindle. But she complained not, feeling that each step brought her nearer to her dear Houarn; nay, she rather urged on her beast, saying, [144]

"Less swift than the swallow is the horse, less swift the swallow than the wind, the wind than the lightning; but thou, my good steed, if thou lovest me, outstrip them all in speed: for a part of my heart is suffering; the better half of my own life is in danger."

The horse understood her, and flew like a straw driven by the whirlwind till he arrived in the country of Arhés, at the foot of the rock called the Stag's Leap. But there he stood still, for never had horse scaled that precipice. Bellah, perceiving the cause of his stopping, renewed her prayer:

"Once again, thou courser mine,



By good St. Vouga, hear me!  
O'er earth and water, through air, 'tis thine  
Whither I will to bear me!"

She had hardly finished, when a pair of wings sprang from the sides of her horse, which now became a great bird, and in this shape flew away with her to the top of the rock.

Strange indeed was the sight that here met her eyes. Upon a nest made of potter's clay and dry moss squatted a little korandon,<sup>3</sup> all swarthy and wrinkled, who, on beholding Bellah, began to cry aloud,

[145]

"Hurrah! here is the pretty maiden come to save me!"

"Save thee!" said Bellah. "Who art thou, then, my little man?"

"I am Jeannik, the husband of the Groac'h of the Isle of Lok. She it was that sent me here."

"But what art thou doing in this nest?"

"I am sitting on six stone eggs, and I cannot be free till they are hatched."

Bellah could not keep herself from laughing.

"Poor thing!" said she; "and how can I deliver thee?"

"By first saving Houarn, who is in the Groac'h's power."

"Ah, tell me how I may do that!" cried the orphan girl, "and not a moment will I lose in setting about my part in the matter, though I should have to make the circuit of the four dioceses upon my bare knees."

"Well, then, there are two things to be done," said the korandon. "The first, to present thyself before the Groac'h as a young man; and the next, to take from her the steel net which she carries at her girdle, and shut her up in it till the day of judgment."

"And where shall I get a suit of clothes to fit me, korandon?"

"Thou shalt see."

[146]

And with these words the little dwarf pulled out four hairs from his foxy poll, and blew them to the winds, muttering something in an under-tone, and lo, the four hairs became four tailors, of whom the first held in his hand a cabbage, the second a pair of scissors, the third a needle, and the last a smoothing goose. All the four seated themselves cross-legged round the nest, and began to prepare a suit of clothes for Bellah.

Out of one cabbage-leaf they made a beautiful coat, laced at every seam; of another they made a waistcoat; but it took two leaves for the trunk-breeches, such as are worn in the country of Léon; lastly, the heart of the cabbage was shaped into a hat, and the stalk was converted into shoes.

Thus equipped, Bellah would have passed any where for a handsome young gentleman in green velvet lined with white satin.

She thanked the korandon, who added some further instructions; and then her great bird flew away with her straight to the Isle of Lok. There she commanded him to resume the form of a crab-stick; and entering the swan-shaped boat, arrived safely at the Groac'h's palace.

The fairy was quite taken at first sight with the velvet-clad young Léonard.

"Well," quoth she to herself, "you are the best-looking young fellow that has ever come to see me; and I do think I shall love you for three times three days."

[147]

And she began to make much of her guest, calling her her darling, and heart of hearts. She treated her with a collation; and Bellah found upon the table St. Corentin's knife, which had been left there by Houarn. She took it up against the time of need, and followed the Groac'h into the garden. There the fairy showed her the grass-plots flowered with diamonds, the fountains of perfumed waters, and, above all, the fish-pond, wherein swam fishes of a thousand colours.

With these last Bellah pretended to be especially taken, so that she must needs sit down upon the edge of the pond, the better to enjoy the sight of them.

The Groac'h took advantage of her delight to ask her if she would not like to spend

all her days in this lovely place. Bellah replied that she should like it of all things.

"Well, then, so you may, and from this very hour, if you are only ready at once to marry me," proceeded the fairy.

"Very well," replied Bellah; "but you must let me fetch up one of these beautiful fishes with the steel net that hangs at your girdle."

The Groac'h, nothing suspecting, and taking this request for a mere boyish freak, gave her the net, saying with a smile, "Let us see, fair fisherman, what you will catch."

[148]

"Thee, fiend!" cried Bellah, throwing the net over the Groac'h's head. "In the name of the Saviour of men, accursed sorceress, become in body even as thou art in soul!"

The cry uttered by the Groac'h died away in a stifled murmur, for the exorcism had already taken effect; the beautiful water fay was now nothing more than the hideous queen of toadstools.

In an instant Bellah drew the net, and with all speed threw it into a well, upon which she laid a stone sealed with the sign of the cross, that it might remain closed till the tombs shall be opened at the last day.

She then hastened back to the pond; but all the fish were already out of it, coming forth to meet her, like a procession of many-coloured monks, crying in their little hoarse voices, "Behold our lord and master! who has delivered us from the net of steel and the golden frying-pan."

"And who will also restore you to your shape of Christians," said Bellah, drawing forth the knife of St. Corentin. But as she was about to touch the first fish, she perceived close to her a frog, with the magic bell hung about his neck, and sobbing bitterly as he knelt before her. Bellah felt her bosom swell, and she exclaimed, "Is it thou, is it thou, my Houarn, thou lord of my sorrow and my joy?"

[149]

"It is I," answered the youth.

At a touch with the potent blade he recovered his proper form, and Bellah and he fell into each other's arms, the one eye weeping for the past, the other glistening with the present joy.

She then did the like to all the fishes, who were restored each of them to his pristine shape and condition.

The work of disenchantment was hardly at an end, when up came the little korandon from the Stag's-Leap rock.

"Here I am, my pretty maiden," cried he to Bellah: "the spell which held me where you saw me is broken, and I am come to thank you for my deliverance."

He then conducted the lovers to the Groac'h's coffers, which were filled with precious stones, of which he told them to take as many as they pleased.

They both loaded their pockets, their girdles, and their hats; and when they had as much as they could carry, they departed, with all whom she had delivered from the enchantment.

The banns were soon published, and Houarn and Bellah were married. But instead of a little cow and a lean pig, he bought all the land in the parish, and put in as farmers the people he had brought with him from the Isle of Lok.

[150]

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1 The name Groac'h, or Grac'h, means literally *old woman*; and was given to the Druidesses, who had established themselves in an island off the south-west coast of Brittany, called thence the isle of Groac'h; by corruption Groais, or Groix. But the word gradually lost its original meaning of old woman, and came to signify a woman endowed with power over the elements, and dwelling amongst the waves, as did the island Druidesses; in fact, a sort of water-fay, but of a malevolent nature, like all the Breton fairies. Such of our readers as are not acquainted with La Motte Fouqué's beautiful tale of *Undine*, may require to be reminded that the sprites, sylphs, gnomes, and fairies of the popular mythologies are not necessarily, perhaps not even generally, exempt from mortality.

2 A cluster of islets off the southern coast of Brittany, near the headland of Penmarc'h. The name signifies literally *summer-land*. One of them is called the isle of Lok, or Lock, and contains a fish-pool, from which it seems to derive its name.

3 A dwarfish sprite.

## THE FOUR GIFTS.

If I had an income of three hundred crowns, I would go and dwell at Quimper; the finest church in Cornouaille is to be found there, and all the houses have weather-vanes upon their roofs. If I had two hundred crowns a year, I would live at Carhaix, for the sake of its heath-fed sheep and its game. But if I had only one hundred, I would set up housekeeping at Pontaven, for there is the greatest abundance of every thing. At Pontaven they sell butter at the price of milk, chickens for that of eggs, and linen at the same rate as you can buy green flax. So that there are plenty of good farms there, where they dish up salt pork at least three times a week, and where the very shepherds eat as much rye-bread as they desire.

In such a farm lived Barbaik Bourhis, a spirited woman, who had maintained her household like a man, and who had fields and stacks enough to have kept two sons at college.

But Barbaik had only a niece, whose earnings far outweighed her keep, so that every day she laid by as much as she could save.

But savings too easily acquired have always their bad side. If you hoard up wheat, you attract rats into your barns; and if you lay by crowns, you will engender avarice in your heart.

[151]

Old Mother Bourhis had come at last to care for nothing but the increase of her hoards, and think nothing of any one who did not happen to pay heavy sums each month to the tax-gatherers. So she was angry when she saw Dénès, the labourer of Plover, chatting with her niece behind the gable. One morning, after thus surprising them, she cried to Tephany in step-mother tones,

“Are not you ashamed to be always chattering thus with a young man who has nothing, when there are so many others who would gladly buy for you the silver ring?”

“Dénès is a good workman and a thorough Christian,” replied the damsel. “Some day he will be able to rent a farm where he may rear a family.”

“And so you would like to marry him?” interrupted the old woman. “God save us! I would sooner see you drowned in the well than married to that vagabond. No, no, it shall never be said that I brought up my own sister’s child to be the wife of a man who can carry his whole fortune in his tobacco-pouch.”

“What matters fortune when we have good health, and can ask the Blessed Virgin to look down on our intentions?” replied Tephany gently.

[152]

“What matters fortune!” replied the *fermière*, scandalised. “What! have you come to such a length as to despise the wealth that God has given us? May all the saints take pity on us! Since this is the case, you bold-faced thing, I forbid you ever to speak again to Dénès; and if I catch him at this farm again, it will be the worse for you both; and meanwhile go you down to the washing-place, and wash the linen, and spread it out to dry upon the hawthorn; for since you’ve had one ear turned towards the wind from Plover, every thing stands still at home, and your two arms are worth no more than the five fingers of a one-armed man.”

Tephany would have answered, but in vain. Mother Bourhis imperiously pointed out to her the bucket, the soap, and the beetle, and ordered her to set off that very instant.

The girl obeyed, but her heart swelled with grief and resentment.

“Old age is harder than the farm-door steps,” thought she to herself; “yes, one hundred times harder, for the rain by frequent falling wears away the stones; but tears have no power to soften the will of old people. God knows that talking with Dénès was the only pleasure I had. If I am to see him no more, I might as well leave the world at once; and our good angel was always with us. Dénès has done nothing but teach me pretty songs, and talk about what we shall do when we are married, in a farm, he looking after the fields, and I managing the cattle.”

[153]

Thus talking to herself, Tephany had reached the *douez*. Whilst setting down her tub of linen upon one of the white lavatory stones, she became aware of an old woman, a stranger, sitting there, leaning her head upon a little scorched thorn-stick. Notwithstanding her vexation, Tephany saluted her.

“Is my aunt<sup>1</sup> taking the air under the alders?” said she, moving her load farther off.

"One must rest where one can, when one has the roof of heaven for a shelter," answered the old woman, in a trembling voice.

"Are you, then, so desolate?" asked Tephany compassionately; "is there no relation left who can offer you a refuge at his fireside?"

"Every one is long since dead," replied the stranger; "and I have no other family than all kind hearts."

The maiden took the piece of rye-bread rubbed with dripping which Barbaik had given her in a bit of linen with her beetle.

"Take this, poor aunt," said she, offering it to the beggar. "To-day, at least, you shall dine like a Christian on our good God's bread; only remember in your prayers my parents, who are dead."

[154]

The old woman took the bread, then looked at Tephany.

"Those who help others deserve help themselves," said she. "Your eyes are red, because Barbaik has forbidden you to speak to the lad from Plover; but he is a worthy youth, whose intentions are good, and I will give you the means of seeing him once every day."

"You!" cried the girl, astonished that the beggar was so well informed.

"Take this long copper-pin," replied the crone; "and every time you stick it in your dress, Mother Bourhis will be forced to leave the farm, and go to count her cabbages. All the time this pin remains where you stick it, you will be at liberty; and your aunt will not return until the pin is put back into this *étui*."

With these words the beggar rose, nodded a farewell, and disappeared.

Tephany was lost in astonishment. Evidently the old woman was no beggar, but a saint, or a singer of truth.<sup>2</sup>

At any rate, the young girl treasured the pin carefully, well determined to try its power the next day. Towards the time, then, at which Dénès was accustomed to make his appearance, she set it in her collar. Barbaik instantly put on her wooden shoes, and walked off into the garden, where she set herself to count her cabbages; from the garden she went to the orchard, and from the orchard to the field, so that Tephany could talk with Dénès at her ease.

[155]

It was the same the next day, and the next, through many weeks. As soon as the pin made its appearance from the *étui*, the good woman was off amongst her cabbages, always beginning to count once more how many little or big, embossed or curly cabbages<sup>3</sup> she had.

Dénès at first appeared enchanted at this freedom, but by degrees he grew less eager to avail himself of it. He had taught Tephany all his songs; he had told her all his plans; now he was forced to consider what he could talk to her about, and make it up beforehand, like a preacher preparing his sermon. And more than that, he came later, and went earlier away; sometimes even, pretending cartage, weeding, or errands to the town detained him, he came not to the farm at all; and Tephany had to console herself with her pin.

She understood that the love of her betrothed was cooling, and became more sorrowful than before.

[156]

One day, after vainly waiting for the youth, she took her pitcher, and went all solitary to the fountain, her heart swelling with displeasure.

When she reached it, she perceived the same old woman who had given her the magic pin. There she sat, near the spring; and watching Tephany as she advanced, she began with a little chuckling laugh,

"Ah, ah! then the pretty girl is no longer satisfied to chatter with her humble servant any hour of the day."

"Alas, to chat, I must be with him," replied Tephany mournfully; "and custom has made my company less agreeable to him. Oh, aunt, since you have given me the means of seeing him every day, you might give me at the same time wit enough to keep my hold upon him."

"Is that what my daughter wants?" said the old woman. "In that case, here is a feather; let her but put it in her hair, and no one can resist her, for she will be as clever and as cunning as Master John<sup>4</sup> himself."

Tephany, reddening with delight, carried off the feather; and just before Dénès' visit on the following day, she stuck it under her blue *rozarès*.<sup>5</sup> That very instant it appeared to her as if the sun rose in her mind; she found herself acquainted with what students spend ten years in learning, and much that even the very wisest know nothing of; for with the science of a man, she still preserved the malice of a woman. Dénès was of course astonished at her words; she talked in rhyme like the *bazvalanes*<sup>6</sup> of Cornouaille, she knew more songs than the mendicants from Scaër, and could tell all the stories current at the forges and the mills throughout the country.

[157]

The young man came day after day, and Tephany found always something new to tell him. Dénès had never met man or woman with so much wit; but after enjoying it for a time, he began to be scared by it. Tephany had not been able to resist putting in her feather for others than him; her songs, her sayings, were repeated every where, and people said,

"She is a mischievous creature; he who marries her is sure to be led like a bridled horse."

The Plover lad repeated in his own mind the same predictions; and as he had always thought that he would rather hold than wear the bridle, he began to laugh with more constraint at Tephany's jests.

[158]

One day, when he wanted to be off to a dance in a new threshing-floor, the maiden used her utmost efforts to retain him; but Dénès, who did not choose to be led, would not listen to her reasons, and repulsed her entreaties.

"Ah, I see why you are so anxious to go to the new barn," said Tephany, with irritation; "you are going to see Aziliçz of Penenru there."

Aziliçz was the handsomest girl in the whole canton; and, if her good friends told truth, she was the greatest flirt.

"To tell the truth, Aziliçz will be there," said Dénès, who delighted in piquing the jealousy of his dearly-beloved; "and to see her any one would go a long round."

"Go, then, where your heart draws you," said the wounded damsel.

And she returned to the farm without hearing a word more he had to say.

But seating herself, overwhelmed with sadness, on the broad hearth-stone, she gave herself up to earnest thought; and then flinging the wondrous feather from her, she exclaimed,

"Of what use is wit and cleverness for maidens, since men rush towards beauty as the flies to sunshine! Ah, what I want, old aunt, is not to be the wisest, but the fairest on the earth."

[159]

"Be thou also, then, the fairest," uttered an unexpected voice.

Tephany turned round astonished, and saw at the door the old woman with her thorn-stick, who thus spoke:

"Take this necklace, and so long as you shall wear it round your neck, you shall appear amongst all other women as the queen of the meadow amidst wild flowers."

Tephany could not repress a cry of joy. She hastened to put on the necklace, rushed to her little mirror, and there stood dumb with admiration. Never had any girl been at once so fair and so rosy, so lovely to look upon.

Anxious to judge instantly of the effect which her appearance would produce on Dénès, she decked herself out in her finest dress, her worsted stockings, and her buckled shoes, and took her way towards the new barn.

But just as she reached the cross-road, she met a young lord in his coach, who, the instant he caught sight of her, desired the coachman to stop.

"By my life," cried he, in admiration, "I had no idea there was such a beautiful creature as this in the country; and if it were to cost me my life, she must bear my name."

But Tephany replied, "Go on, good sir, go on your way; I am but a poor peasant-girl, accustomed to winnow, milk, and mow."

[160]

"But I will make a noble lady of you," cried the young lord; and taking her hand, he tried to lead her to his coach.

The maiden drew back.

"I will only be the bride of Dénès, the Plover labourer," said she, with resolution.

The lord still insisted; but when he found that she went towards the ditch to fly away across the meadows, he desired his footmen to seize her, and put her by force into the coach, which then set off at full gallop.

In about an hour's time they reached the castle, which was built of carved stone, and was covered with slate, like all noble mansions. The young lord ordered them to go and fetch a priest to perform the marriage ceremony; and as meanwhile Tephany would not hear a word he had to say, and kept trying to run away, he made them shut her up in a great hall closed by three doors well bolted, and desired his servants to guard her well. But by means of her pin Tephany sent them all into the garden to count cabbages; by her feather she discovered a fourth door concealed in the panneling, whereby she escaped; and then fervently committing herself to Providence, she scampered away through the woods like a hare who hears the dogs behind her.

As long as she had any strength left, on she went, until the night began to close around her. Then, perceiving the turret of a convent, she went up to the little grated door, and ringing the bell, begged for a night's shelter; but on seeing her the portress shook her head.

[161]

"Go away, go away," said she; "there is no place here for young girls so beautiful as you, who wander all alone at this hour of night along the roads."

And closing the wicket, she went away without listening to another word.

Forced to go further on, Tephany stopped at a farm-door, where there were several young men and women talking together, and made the same request as at the convent.

The mistress of the house hesitated what answer to make; but all the young men, dazzled by Tephany's beauty, cried out each one that he would take her to his father's house, and every one endeavoured to outbid his neighbour in their offers. One said that he would take her in a wagon and three horses, lest she should be tired; another promised her the best bed; and a third declared that she should sit down at table with the family. At last, from promises they came to quarrelling, and from quarrelling to blows; until the women, frightened, began to abuse Tephany, telling her it was an infamous shame to come with her charms to put dissensions amongst men in that way. The poor girl, quite beside herself, tried to run away; but all the young men set off after her. Just then she all at once remembered her necklace, and taking it from her neck slipped it round that of a sow who was cropping the buttercups. In an instant the charm that drew the youths towards her died away, and they began to pursue the beast instead, which fled away in terror.

[162]

Tephany still went on in spite of her fatigue, and came at last to her aunt's farm, worn out with weariness, but still more with grief. Her wishes had brought her so little satisfaction, that she passed many days without making another. However, Dénès' visits grew more and more uncertain; he had undertaken to clear a warren, and there he toiled from morning until night.

When the young girl regretted seeing so little of him, he had always to reply that his labour was their sole resource; and that if people want to spend their time in talking together, they must needs have legacies or dowries.

Then Tephany began to complain and to desire.

"God pardon me," said she, in a low voice; "but what I ought to ask for is not liberty to see Dénès every day, for he soon gets tired of it; nor wit, for it scares him; nor beauty, for it brings upon me trouble and mistrust; but rather wealth, for then one can be master of oneself and others. Ah, if I dared to make yet one petition more of the old aunt, I would be wiser than I was before."

[163]

"Be satisfied," said the voice of the old beggar, though Tephany perceived her not. "Feel in your right pocket, and you will find a little box; rub your eyes with the ointment it contains, and you will have a treasure in yourself."

The young girl hastily felt in her pocket, found the box, opened it, and began to rub her eyes as she had been desired, when Barbaik Bourhis entered.

She who, in spite of herself, had now for some time past consumed whole days in cabbage-counting, and who saw all the farm-work fallen into arrears, was only waiting an occasion for visiting her wrath upon somebody. Seeing her niece sitting down doing nothing, she clasped her hands and cried,

"That's the way, then, that the work goes on whilst I am in the fields. Ah, I am surprised no longer that we are all going to ruin. Are you not ashamed, you wretch, to plunder food in this way from your kith and kin?"

Tephany would have excused herself; but Barbaik's rage was like milk heating on a turf-fire—let but the first bubble rise, and all mounts upwards and boils over; from reproaches she came to threats, and from threats to a box on the ear. [164]

Tephany, who had borne every thing patiently till then, could no longer restrain her tears; but guess her astonishment when she perceived that every tear was a beautiful and shining fair round pearl.

Mother Bourhis, who made the same discovery, uttered loud cries of admiration, and set herself to pick them up.

Dénès, who came in at that instant, was no less surprised.

"Pearls! real pearls!" he exclaimed, catching them.

"It will make our fortune," said Barbaik, continuing to pick them up. "Ah, what fairy has bestowed this gift upon her? We must take good care lest it gets noised abroad, Dénès; I will give you a share, but only you. Go on, my girl, go on; you also shall be benefited by this opportunity."

She held her apron, and Dénès his hat; the pearls were all he thought of, forgetful they were tears.

Tephany, choking with emotion, would have escaped; but the old woman stopped her, reproaching her with wishing to defraud them, and saying all she could to make her cry the more. The young girl compelled herself with violent effort to control her sorrow, and to wipe her eyes.

"It's all over already," cried Barbaik. "Ah, Blessed Virgin, can one be so weak-minded! If I had such a gift as that, I would no more think of stopping than the great fountain on the Green Road. Hadn't we better beat her a little, and try again?" [165]

"No," interrupted Dénès, "for fear we should exhaust her the first time. I will set forth this moment for the town, and there find out how much each pearl is worth."

Barbaik and he went out together, reckoning the value as nearly as they could, and deciding beforehand how they should divide it, forgetting Tephany completely in the matter.

As for her, she clasped her two hands upon her heart, and raised her eyes towards heaven; but her look was intercepted by the aged beggar, who, leaning on her staff in the duskiest corner of the hearth, was watching her with mocking eye. The maiden trembled; and seizing the pin, the feather, and the box of ointment given her by the crone,

"Take back, take back," she cried, "your fatal gifts. Woe to all those who cannot be content with what they have received from God! He had gifted me according to His own wise appointment, and I madly was dissatisfied with my portion. Give others liberty, wit, beauty, and wealth. For me, I neither am, nor will be, other than the simple girl of former days, loving and serving her neighbours to the utmost of her power." [166]

"Well said, Tephany," cried the old woman. "Thou hast come out from the trial; but let it do thee good. The Almighty has sent me to bestow this lesson on thee; I am thy guardian angel. Now that thou hast learned this truth, thou wilt live more happily; for God has promised peace to hearts of good will."

With these words the beggar changed into an angel glittering with light; and shedding through the farm a scent of violets and of incense, vanished like a flash of lightning.

Tephany forgave Dénès his willingness to make merchandise of her tears. Become now more reasonable, she accepted happiness as we find it on this earth; and she was married to the lad of Plover, who proved through all his life a good husband and a first-rate workman. [167]

1 Young Breton girls thus address old women from a motive of respect.

2 *Chanteuse de vérité* (*Dion ganérez*), literally *qui chante droit*, a name given in Brittany to fairies who foretell the future.

3 These are different kinds of cabbages cultivated in Brittany.

4 A name given by the Bretons to the tricky sprite *Maistr Yan*.

- 5 The ribbon covered with lace worn by Breton peasant-girls in their hair.  
6 Negotiators for a wedding, who improvise disputations in verse, like Virgil's shepherds.

[Contents]

## THE PALACE OF THE PROUD KING.

The children slumber sweetly in their curtained beds; the brown dog snores upon the broad hearth-stone; the cows chew the cud behind their screen of broom; and the fading fire-light quivers on the grandsire's old arm-chair.

This is the time, dear friends, when we should make the sign of the cross, and murmur a prayer in secret for the souls of those that we have loved. Hark! midnight is striking from St. Michael's church,—midnight of Holy Pentecost.

This is the hour when all true Christians lay down their heads upon their quiet pillows, content with that which God has given them, and sleep, lulled by the gentle breathing of their slumbering children.

But as for Perik Skoarn, no little children had he. He was a daring young fellow, but as yet quite solitary. When he saw the gentry from the neighbourhood coming to Mass on Sundays, he envied them their handsome horses with the silver-plated bridles, their velvet mantles, and their embroidered silken hose. He longed to be as rich as they were, that he also might have a seat covered with red leather in the church, and be able to carry the fair farmers' daughters to the fair seated on his horse's crupper.

[168]

This is the reason Perik walked upon Lew-Dréz, at the foot of St. Efflam's down, whilst all good Christians slept upon their beds, watched over by the Holy Virgin. Perik is a man hungering after greatness and luxury. The longings of his heart are countless, like the nests of the sea-swallows in the sandy cliffs.

The waves sighed sadly in the dark horizon; the crabs fed silently upon the bodies of the drowned; the wind that whistled in the rocks of Roch-Ellas mimicked the call-cry of the smugglers of Lew-Dréz; but Skoarn still paced the shore.

He looked upon the mountain, and recalled the words of the old beggar at Yar Cross. That old man knew all that had happened in these parts, when these our ancient oaks hung yet as acorns on their parent trees, and our oldest ravens still slumbered in the egg.

Now the old beggar of Yar had told him, that here, where now stretch the downs of St. Efflam, a famous city formerly extended; its ships covered the wide ocean, and it was governed by a king, whose sceptre was a hazel-wand that fashioned every thing according to his wish.

But the king and all his people were punished for their pride and iniquity; for one day, by God's command, the strand rose upwards like the bubbling of a boiling flood, and so engulfed the guilty city. But every year, upon the night of Pentecost, a passage opens through the mountain with the first stroke of twelve o'clock, and shows an entrance to the monarch's palace.

[169]

The all-powerful hazel-wand may be discovered hanging in the furthest hall of this magnificent abode; but those who seek it must make haste, for as the final stroke of midnight sounds upon the ear, the passage closes once again, to open no more until the following Pentecost.

Skoarn had well remembered all the tale of the old beggar at the Cross of Yar, and for this reason he treads at such unwonted hour the sands of the Lew-Dréz.

At length a sharp stroke came dashing from the belfrey of St. Michael. Skoarn trembled; he looked eagerly, by the pale starlight, at the granite mass which heads the mountain, and beheld it slowly open, like the jaws of an awakening dragon.

Skoarn rushed into the passage, which at first seemed dark, but gradually gleamed with a blue light, like that which hovers nightly over church-yard graves; and thus he found his way into a mighty palace, the marble front of which was sculptured like the church of Folgoat or of Quimper-on-the-Odet.

[170]

The first hall he entered was all full of chests heaped, like the corn-bins after harvest, with the purest silver; but Perik Skoarn wanted more than silver, and he passed it through. The clock sounded the sixth stroke of midnight.



He found a second hall, set round with coffers crammed with gold, as stable-racks are crammed with blossoming grass in the sweet month of June. But Skoarn wanted something better still, and he went on. The seventh stroke sounded.

The third hall to which he came had baskets flowing over with white pearls, like milk in the broad dairy-pans of Cornouaille in the early spring. Skoarn would gladly have had some of these; but he heard the eighth stroke sounding, and he hurried on.

The fourth hall was all glittering with diamond caskets, shedding brighter light than all the furzy piles upon the hillocks of Douron on St. John's eve. Skoarn was dazzled, and hesitated for a moment; then rushed into the last hall as he heard the church-clock for the ninth time.

But there he stood still suddenly with wondering admiration. In front of the hazel-wand, which hung in full sight at the further end, were ranged a hundred maidens most fair to look upon; they held in one hand wreaths of the green oak, and in the other cups of glowing wine. Skoarn had resisted silver, gold, pearls, and diamonds; but he was overpowered by the vision of these beauteous maidens, and he stood still to gaze at them, and at the sparkling cups they presented to him. [171]

The tenth stroke sounded, and he heard it not; the eleventh, and he still stood motionless. At last, just as he was about to hold out his hand to receive the cup from the maiden next to him, the twelfth was heard, as mournful as the great gun of a ship at wreck among the breakers.

Then Perik, terrified, would fain have turned, but time for him was over. The doors all closed, the hundred fair young girls were now so many granite statues, and all was once more folded up in darkness.

This is the way our fathers tell the tale of Skoarn. You see now what will happen to a youth who suffers his heart too readily to open at seduction's voice. May all the young take warning by his fate. It is well to walk sometimes with eyes cast downwards to the earth, for fear we should be led into the paths of evil and sin. [172]

[Contents]

## THE PIPER.

The sea-breeze blew from the shore of the Black Water, and the stars were rising. The young maidens had gone homewards to the little farms, carrying on their fingers the metal rings their friends had bought them at the fair. The youths went across the common, singing their songs. At last their sonorous voices could no more be heard; the light dresses of the damsels were no longer to be seen; it was night.

Nevertheless, here was Lao, with a merry company, at the entrance of the lonely heath,—Lao, the celebrated piper, come expressly from the mountains to lead the dance at the fair of Armor. His face was as red as a March moon, his black locks floated as they would upon the wind, and he held under his arm the pipe whose magic sounds had even set in motion a number of old women in their sabots. When they came to the cross-road of the Warning, where there rises the granite cross all overgrown with moss, the women stopped, and said,

"Let us take the pathway leading towards the sea." [173]

Master Lao pointed out the belfry-tower of Plougean over the hill, and said,

"That is the point we are making for; why not go across the heath?"

The women answered,

"Because there rises a city of Korigans, Lao, in the middle of that heath; and one must be pure from sin to pass it without danger."

But Lao laughed aloud.

"By heaven!" said he, "I have travelled by night-time all these roads, yet I have never seen your little black men counting their money by moonlight, as they tell us at the chimney-corner. Show me the road leading to the Korigan city, and I will go and sing to them the days of the week."<sup>1</sup>

But the women all exclaimed,

“Don’t tempt God, Lao. God has put some things in this world of which it is better to be ignorant, and others which we ought to fear. Leave the Korigans alone to dance about their granite dwellings.”

“To dance!” cried Lao. “Then the Korigans have pipers too?”

“They have the whistling of the wind across the heath, and the singing of the night-bird.”

“Well, then,” said the mountaineer, “I am determined that to-day at least they shall have Christian music. I will go across the common playing some of my best Cornouaille airs.”

[174]

So saying, he put his pipe to his lips, and striking up a cheerful strain, he set off boldly on the little footway that stretched like a white line across the gloomy heath.

The women, terrified, made the sign of the cross, and hurried down the hill.

But Lao walked straight on without fear, and played meanwhile upon his pipes. As he advanced, his heart grew bolder, his breath more powerful, and the music louder. Already had he crossed just half the common, when he saw the Menhir rising like a phantom in the night, and further on, the dwellings of the Korigans.

Then he seemed to hear an ever-rising murmur. At first it was like the trickling of a rill, then like the rushing of a river, and then the roaring of the sea; and different sounds were mingled in this roar,—sometimes like stifled laughs, then furious hissing, the mutterings of low voices, and the rush of steps upon the withered grass.

Lao began to breathe less freely, and his restless eyes glanced right and left over the common. It was as if the tufts of heath were moving, all seemed alive and whirling in the gloom, all took the form of hideous dwarfs, and voices were distinctly heard. Suddenly the moon rose, and Lao cried aloud.

[175]

To left, to right, behind, before, every where, far as the eye could reach, the common was alive with running Korigans. Lao, bewildered, drew back to the Menhir, against which he leant; but the Korigans saw him, and came round with cries like those of grasshoppers.

“It is the famous piper of Cornouaille come hither to play for the Korigans.”

Lao made the sign of the cross; but all the little men surrounded him, and shrieked,

“Thou belongest to us, Lao. Pipe then, thou famous piper, and lead the dance of the Korigans.”

Lao in vain resisted, some magic power mastered him; he felt the pipe approach his lips; he played, he danced, in spite of himself. The Korigans surrounded him with circling bands, and every time he would have paused they cried in chorus,

“Pipe, famous piper, pipe, and lead the dance of the Korigans.”

Lao went on thus the whole night; but as the stars grew paler in the sky, the music of his pipes waxed fainter, his feet had greater difficulty in moving from the ground. At last the dawn of day spread palely in the east, the cocks were heard crowing in the distant farms, and the Korigans disappeared.

[176]

Then the mountain piper sunk down breathless at the foot of the Menhir. The mouth-piece of his pipes fell from his shrivelled lips, his arms dropped upon his knees, his head upon his breast, to rise no more; and voices murmured in the air,

“Sleep, famous piper! thou hast led the dance of the Korigans; thou shalt never lead the dance for Christians more.”

[177]

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<sup>1</sup> See tale at p. 31.

be punctual at their Easter duties, and no one ever thought of counting money after them. It was at the White Inn that travellers would stop to sleep; and horses knew the place so well, that they would draw up of their own accord before the stable-door.

*The headsman of the harvest*<sup>1</sup> had brought in short gloomy days; and one evening, as Floc'h the landlord was standing at the White-Inn door, a traveller, evidently of importance, and mounted on a splendid foreign steed, reined up his horse, and lifting his hand to his hat, said courteously,

"I want a supper and a bed-chamber."

Floc'h drew first his pipe from his mouth, and then his hat from his head, and answered,

"God bless you, sir, a supper you shall have; but as to a room, we cannot give it you; for we have now above, six muleteers on their way home to Redon, who have taken all the beds of the White Inn."

[178]

The traveller then said,

"For God's sake, my good man, contrive for me to sleep somewhere. The very dogs have a kennel, and it is not fitting that Christians be without a bed in such weather as this."

"Sir stranger," said the host remorsefully, "I can only tell you that the inn is full, and we have no place for you but the *red room*."

"Well, give me that," replied the stranger.

But the landlord rubbed his forehead and looked grieved; for he could not let the traveller sleep in the red chamber.

"Since I have been at the White Inn," said he at last, "only two men have ever occupied that room; and on the morrow, black as had been their hair the night before, they rose with it snow-white."

The traveller looked full at the landlord.

"Then your house is haunted by the spirits from another world?" asked he.

"It is," faltered the landlord.

"Then God and the Blessed Virgin be merciful to me. I will sleep there; but make me a fire, and warm my bed; for I am cold."

The landlord did as he was ordered.

When the traveller had finished supper, he bade good night to all at table, and went up to the red chamber. The landlord and his wife trembled, and began to pray.

[179]

The stranger having reached his room began to look about him.

It was a large flame-coloured chamber, with great shining stains upon the walls, that might well have been taken for the marks of fresh-spilt blood. At the further end there stood a four-post bed, surrounded by heavy curtains. The rest of the room was empty; and the mournful whistling of the wind came down the chimney and the corridors, and sounded like the cries of souls beseeching prayers.

The traveller, kneeling down, prayed silently to God, then fearlessly got into bed, and soon slept soundly.

But, lo, at the very moment when the hour of midnight sounded from a distant church-tower, he suddenly awoke, heard the curtain-rings sliding on their iron poles, and beheld them open at his right hand.

He was going to get out of bed; but his feet striking against something cold, he recoiled in terror.

There stood before him a coffin, with four lighted candles at the corners, and covered with a great black pall that glittered as with tears.

The stranger turned to try the other side of his bed; but the coffin instantly changed places, and barred his way out as before.

Five times he made an effort to escape, and every time the bier was there beneath his feet, with the candles and the funeral pall.

[180]

The traveller then knew it was a ghost, who had some boon to ask; and kneeling up in bed, he made the holy sign, and spoke:

“Who art thou, departed one? Speak. A Christian listens to thee.”

A voice answered from the coffin,

“I am a traveller murdered here by those who kept this inn before its present owner. I died unprepared, and now I suffer in Purgatory.”

“What needs there, suffering soul, to give thee rest?”

“I want six Masses said at the church of our Lady of Folgoat, and also a pilgrimage made for my intention by some Christian to our Lady of Rumengol.”

No sooner had these words been uttered than the lights went out, the curtains closed, and all was silence.

The stranger spent the night in prayer.

The next morning he told the landlord every thing, and said,

“My good friend, I am M. de Rohan, of family as noble as the noblest now in Brittany. I will go and make the pilgrimage to Rumengol, and I will see that the six Masses shall be said. Trouble yourself no more; for this suffering soul shall rest in peace.”

[181]

Within the short space of one month the red room had lost its crimson hue, and become white and cheerful as the others. No sound was heard there but the swallows twittering in the chimney, and nothing could be seen but a fair white bed, a crucifix, and a vessel of holy water.

The traveller had kept his word.

[182]

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<sup>1</sup> *Dibenn-eost*, a name given to autumn in Brittany.

[Contents]

## PERONNIK THE IDIOT.<sup>1</sup>

You cannot surely have failed, some time or other, to meet by chance some of those poor idiots, or innocents, whose utmost wisdom scarcely serves to lead them as beggars from door to door in quest of daily bread. One might almost fancy they were straying calves who have lost their way home. They stare all round with open eyes and mouth, as if in search of somewhat; but, alas, that they seek is not plentiful enough in these parts to be found upon the highways—for it is common sense.

Peronnik was one of these poor idiots, to whom the charity of strangers had been in place of father or of mother. He wandered ever onwards unconscious whither; when he was thirsty, he drank from wayside springs; when hungry, he begged stale crusts from the women he saw standing at their doors; and when in need of sleep, he looked out for a heap of straw, and hollowed himself out a nest in it like a lizard.

[183]

As to any knowledge of a trade, Peronnik had, indeed, never learnt one; but for all that he was skilful enough in many matters: he could go on eating as long as you desired him to do so; he could outsleep any one for any length of time; and he could imitate with his tongue the song of larks. There is many a one now in these parts who cannot do so much as this.

At the time of which I am telling you (that is, many a hundred years ago and more), the land of White-Wheat was not altogether what you see it nowadays. Since then many a gentleman has devoured his inheritance, and cut up his forests into wooden shoes. Thus the forest of Paimpont extended over more than twenty parishes; some say it even crossed the river, and went as far as Elven. However that may be, Peronnik came one day to a farm built upon the border of the wood; and as the *Benedicite* bell had long since rung in his stomach, he drew near to ask for food.

The farmer's wife happened at that moment to be kneeling down on the door-sill to scrape the soup-bowl with her flint-stone;<sup>2</sup> but when she heard the idiot's voice asking for food in the name of God, she stopped and held the kettle towards him.

[184]

"Here," she cried, "poor fellow, eat these scrapings, and say an 'Our Father' for our pigs, that nothing on earth will fatten."

Peronnik seated himself on the ground, put the kettle between his knees, and began to scrape it with his nails; but it was little enough he could succeed in finding, for all the spoons in the house had already done their duty upon it. However, he licked his fingers, and made an audible grunt of satisfaction, as if he had never tasted any thing better.

"It is millet-flour," said he, in a low voice,— "millet-flour moistened with the black cow's milk,<sup>3</sup> and by the best cook in the whole Low Country."

The farmer's wife, who was going by, turned round delighted.

"Poor innocent," said she, "there is little enough of it left; but I will add a scrap of rye-bread."

[185]

And she brought the lad the first cutting of a round loaf just out of the oven. Peronnik bit into it like a wolf into a lamb's leg, and declared that it must have been kneaded by the baker to his lordship the Bishop of Vannes.

The flattered peasant replied, that was nothing to the taste of it when spread with fresh-churned butter; and to prove her words, she brought him some in a little covered saucer. After taking this, the idiot declared that this was *living butter*, not to be excelled by butter of the White Week itself;<sup>4</sup> and to give greater force to his words, he poured over his crust all that the saucer contained. But the satisfaction of the farmer's wife prevented her from noticing this; and she added to what she had already given him a lump of dripping left from the Sunday soup.

Peronnik praised every mouthful more and more, and swallowed every thing as if it had been water from a spring; for it was very long since he had made so good a meal.

The farmer's wife went and came, watching him as he ate, and adding from time to time sundry scraps, which he took, making each time the sign of the cross.

[186]

Whilst thus employed in recruiting himself, behold a knight appeared at the house-door, and addressing himself to the woman, asked her which was the road to Kerglas castle.

"Heavens! good gentleman," exclaimed the farmer's wife, "are you going there?"

"Yes," replied the warrior; "and I have come from a land so distant for this purpose, that I have been travelling night and day these three months to get so far on my way."

"And what are you come to seek at Kerglas?" asked the Breton woman.

"I am come in quest of the golden basin and the diamond lance."

"These two are, then, very valuable things?" asked Peronnik.

"They are of more value than all the crowns on earth," replied the stranger; "for not only will the golden basin produce instantaneously all the dainties and the wealth one can desire, but it suffices to drink therefrom to be healed of every malady; and the dead themselves are raised to life by touching it with their lips. As to the diamond lance, it kills and overthrows all that it touches."

"And to whom do this diamond lance and golden basin belong?" asked Peronnik, bewildered.

"To a magician called Rogéar, who lives in the castle of Kerglas," answered the farmer's wife. "He is to be seen any day near the forest pathway, riding along upon his black mare followed by a colt of three months' old; but no one dares to attack him, for he holds the fearful lance in his hand."

[187]

"Yes," replied the stranger; "but the command of God forbids him to make use of it within the castle of Kerglas. So soon as he arrives there, the lance and the basin are deposited at the bottom of a dark cave, which no key will open; therefore, it is in that place I propose to attack the magician."

"Alas, you will never succeed, my good sir," replied the peasant woman. "More than a hundred gentlemen have already attempted it; but not one amongst them has returned."

"I know that, my good woman," answered the knight; "but they had not been instructed as I have by the Hermit of Blavet."

"And what did the Hermit tell you?" asked Peronnik.

"He warned me of all that I shall have to do," replied the stranger. "First of all, I shall have to cross an enchanted wood, wherein every kind of magic will be put in force to terrify and bewilder me from my way. The greater number of my predecessors have lost themselves, and there died of cold, hunger, or fatigue."

[188]

"And if you succeed in crossing it?" said the idiot.

"If I get safely through it," continued the gentleman, "I shall meet a Korigan armed with a fiery sword, which lays all it touches in ashes. This Korigan keeps watch beside an apple-tree, from which it is necessary that I should gather one apple."

"And then?" said Peronnik.

"Then I shall discover the laughing flower, and this is guarded by a lion whose mane is made of vipers. This flower I must also gather; after which I must cross the lake of dragons to fight the black man, who flings an iron bowl that ever hits its mark and returns to its master of its own accord. Then I shall enter on the valley of delights, where every thing that can tempt and stay the feet of a Christian will be arrayed before me, and shall reach a river with one single ford. There I shall meet a lady clad in sable whom I shall take upon my horse's crupper, and she will tell me all that remains to be done."

The farmer's wife did her best to persuade the stranger that it would be impossible for him to go through so many trials; but he replied that women were incapable of judging in so weighty a matter; and after ascertaining correctly the forest entrance, he set off at full gallop, and was soon lost among the trees.

[189]

The farmer's wife heaved a deep sigh, declaring that here was another soul going before our Lord for judgment; then giving some more crusts to Peronnik, she bade him go on his way.

He was about to follow her advice, when the farmer came in from the fields. He had just been turning off the lad who looked after his cows at the wood-side, and was revolving in his mind how his place should be supplied.

The sight of the idiot was to him as a ray of light; he thought he had happened on the very thing he sought, and after putting a few questions to Peronnik, he asked him bluntly if he would stay at the farm to look after the cattle. Peronnik would have preferred having no one but himself to look after, for no one had a greater aptitude than he for doing nothing; but the taste of the lard, the fresh butter, the rye-bread, and the millet-flour hung still sweet upon his lips; so he suffered himself to be tempted, and accepted the farmer's proposal.

The good man forthwith conducted him to the edge of the forest, counted aloud all the cows, not forgetting the heifers, cut him a hazel-switch to drive them with, and bade him bring them safely home at set of sun.

Behold Peronnik now established as a keeper of cattle, watching over them to see they did no mischief, and running from the black to the red, and from the red to the white, to keep them from straying out of the appointed boundary.

[190]

Now whilst he was thus running from side to side, he heard suddenly the sound of horse's hoofs, and saw in one of the forest-paths the giant Rogéar seated on his mare, followed by her three-months' colt. He carried from his neck the golden basin, and in his hand the diamond lance, which glittered like flame. Peronnik, terrified, hid himself behind a bush; the giant passed close by him and went on his way. As soon as he was gone by, the idiot came out of his hiding-place, and looked down in the direction he had taken, but without being able to see which path he had followed.

Well, armed knights came on unceasingly in quest of the castle of Kerglas, and not one was ever seen to return. The giant, on the contrary, took his airing every day as usual. The idiot, who had at length grown bolder, no longer thought of concealing himself when he passed, but looked after him as long as he was in sight with envious eyes; for the desire of possessing the golden basin and the diamond lance grew stronger every day within his heart. But these things, alas, were more easily desired than obtained.

One day, when Peronnik was all alone in the pasture-land as usual, he saw a man with a white beard pausing at the entrance of the forest-path. The idiot took him for some fresh adventurer, and inquired if he did not seek the road to Kerglas.

[191]

"I seek it not, since I already know it," replied the stranger.

"You have been there, and the magician has not killed you?" exclaimed the idiot.

"Because he has nothing to fear from me," replied the white-bearded old man. "I am called the sorcerer Bryak, and am Rogéar's elder brother. When I wish to pay him a visit I come here, and as, in spite of all my power, I cannot cross the enchanted wood without losing my way, I call the black colt to carry me."

With these words, he traced three circles with his finger in the dust, repeated in a low tone such words as demons teach to sorcerers, and then cried,

"Colt, wild, unbroken, and with footstep free,—  
Colt, I am here; come quick, I wait for thee."

The little horse speedily made his appearance. Bryak put him on a halter, shackled his feet, and then mounting on his back, allowed him to return into the forest.

Peronnik said nothing of this adventure to any one; but he now understood that the first step towards visiting Kerglas was to secure the colt that knew the way. Unfortunately he knew neither how to trace the three circles, nor to pronounce the magic words necessary for the colt to hear the summons. Some other method, therefore, must be hit upon for making himself master of it, and, when once it was captured, of gathering the apple, plucking the laughing flower, escaping the black man's bowl, and of crossing the valley of delights.

[192]

Peronnik thought it all over for a long time, and at last he fancied himself able to succeed. Those who are strong go forth clad in their strength to meet danger, and too often perish in it; but the weak compass their ends sideways. Having no hope of braving the giant, the idiot resolved to try craft and cunning. As to difficulties, he suffered them not to scare him: he knew that medlars are hard as flint-stones when first gathered, and that a little straw and much patience softens them at length.

So he made all his preparations against the time when the giant usually appeared in the forest-path. First he made a halter and a horse-shackle of black hemp; a springe for taking woodcocks, moistening the hairs of it in holy water; a cloth-bag full of birdlime and lark's feathers; a rosary, an elder-whistle, and a bit of crust rubbed with rancid lard. This done, he crumbled the bread given him for breakfast along the pathway in which Rogéar, his mare, and three months' colt would shortly pass.

[193]

They all three appeared at the usual hour, and crossed the pasture as on other days; but the colt, which was walking with hanging head, snuffing the ground, smelt out the crumbs of bread, and stopped to eat them, so that it was soon left alone out of the giant's sight. Then Peronnik drew gently near, threw his halter over it, fastened the shackle on two of its feet, jumped upon its back, and left it free to follow its own course, certain that the colt, which knew its way, would carry him to the castle of Kerglas.

And so it came to pass; for the young horse took unhesitatingly one of the wildest paths, and went on as rapidly as the shackle would permit.

Peronnik trembled like a leaf; for all the witchery of the forest was at work to scare him. One moment it seemed as if a bottomless pit yawned suddenly before his steed; the next all the trees appeared on fire, and he found himself surrounded by flames; often whilst in the act of crossing a brook, it became as a torrent, and threatened to carry him away; at other times, whilst following a little footway beneath a gentle slope, he saw huge rocks on the point of rolling down and crushing him to pieces.

In vain he assured himself these were but magical delusions, he felt his very marrow grow cold with dread. At last he resolutely pulled his hat down over his eyes, and let the colt carry him blindly onwards.

[194]

Thus they both came safely to a plain where all enchantment ceased, and Peronnik pushed up his cap and looked about him.

It was a barren spot, and gloomier than a cemetery. Here and there might be seen the skeletons of gentlemen who had come in quest of Kerglas Castle. There they lay, stretched beside their horses, and the gray wolves still gnawing at their bones.

At length the idiot entered a meadow entirely overshadowed by one single apple-tree; and this was so heavily laden with fruit, that the branches hung to the ground. Before this tree the Korigan kept watch, grasping in his hand the fiery sword which would lay all it touched in ashes.

At sight of Peronnik, he uttered a cry like that of a wild bird, and raised his weapon; but, without betraying any emotion, the lad simply touched his hat

politely, and said,

“Don’t disturb yourself, my little prince; I am only passing by on my way to Kerglas, according to an appointment the Lord Rogéar has made with me.”

“With you?” replied the dwarf; “and who, then, may you be?”

“I am our master’s new servant,” said the idiot; “you know, the one he is expecting.”

[195]

“I know nothing of it,” replied the dwarf; “and you look to me uncommonly like a cheat.”

“Excuse me,” returned Peronnik, “such is by no means my profession; I am only a catcher and trainer of birds. But, for God’s sake, don’t keep me now; for his lordship, the magician, is expecting me this very moment; and has even lent me his own colt, as you see, that I may the sooner reach the castle.”

The Korigan saw, in fact, that Peronnik rode the magician’s young horse, and began to consider whether he might not really be speaking truth. Besides, the idiot had so simple an air, that it was not possible to suspect him of inventing such a story. However, he still felt mistrust; and asked what need the magician had of a bird-catcher?

“The greatest need, it seems,” said Peronnik; “for, according to his account, all that ripens, whether seed or fruit, in the garden at Kerglas, is just now eaten up by birds.”

“And what can you do to hinder them?” asked the dwarf.

Peronnik showed the little snare which he had manufactured, and declared that no bird would be able to escape it.

“That is just what I will make sure of,” said the Korigan. “My apple-tree is ravaged just as much by the blackbirds and thrushes. Set your snare; and if you can catch them, I will let you pass.”

[196]

To this Peronnik agreed; he fastened his colt to a bush, and going up to the apple-tree, fixed therein one end of the snare, calling to the Korigan to hold the other whilst he got the skewers ready. He did as the idiot requested; and Peronnik hastily drawing the running noose, the dwarf found himself caught like a bird.

He uttered a cry of rage, and struggled to get free; but the springe, having been well steeped in holy water, bade defiance to all his efforts.

The idiot had time enough to run to the tree, pluck an apple from it, and remount his colt, which continued its onward course.

And so they came out of the plain; and behold, there lay a thicket before them, formed of the very loveliest plants. There were to be seen roses of every hue, Spanish brooms, rose-coloured honeysuckles, and, towering above all, the mysterious laughing flower; but round about the thicket stalked a lion, with a mane of vipers, rolling his eyes, and with his teeth grinding like a couple of new mill-stones.

Peronnik stopped, and bowed over and over again; for he knew that in the presence of the powerful a hat is more serviceable in the hand than on the head. He wished all sorts of prosperities to the lion and his family; and requested to know if he was without mistake upon the road to Kerglas.

[197]

“And what are you going to do at Kerglas?” cried the ferocious beast with a terrible air.

“May it please your worship,” replied the idiot timidly, “I am in the service of a lady who is a great friend of Lord Rogéar, and she has sent him something as a present to make a lark-pasty of.”

“Larks!” repeated the lion, licking his moustache; “it is an age since I have tasted them. How many have you got?”

“This bagful, your lordship,” replied Peronnik, showing the cloth-bag which he had stuffed with feathers and birdlime.

And in order to verify his words, he began to counterfeit the warbling of larks.

This song aggravated the lion’s appetite.

“Let me see,” said he, drawing near; “show me your birds; I should like to know if



they are large enough to be served up at our master's table."

"I desire nothing so much," replied the idiot; "but if I open the bag, I am afraid they will fly away."

"Half open it, just to let me peep in," said the greedy monster.

This desire fulfilled Peronnik's highest hopes; he offered the bag to the lion, who poked in his head to seize the larks, and found himself smothered in feathers and birdlime. The idiot hastily drew the strings of the bag tight round his neck, making the sign of the cross over the knot, to keep it inviolable; then, rushing to the laughing flower, he gathered it, and set off as fast as the colt could go. [198]

But it was not long before he came to the dragons' lake, which he must needs cross by swimming; and scarcely had he plunged in, when they came towards him from every side to devour him.

This time Peronnik troubled not himself to pull off his hat, but he began to throw out to them the beads of his rosary, as one would scatter black wheat to ducks; and at every bead swallowed one of the dragons turned over on its back and expired; so that he at length reached the opposite shore unharmed.

The valley guarded by the black man had now to be crossed. Peronnik soon perceived him, chained by one foot to the rock, and holding in his hand an iron bowl, which ever returned, of its own accord, so soon as it had struck the appointed mark. He had six eyes, ranged round his head, which generally took turns in keeping watch; but at this moment it so chanced that they were every one open. Peronnik, knowing that if seen he should be struck by the iron bowl before he had the opportunity of speaking a word, resolved to creep along the brushwood. And by this means, hiding himself carefully behind the bushes, he soon found himself within a few steps of the black man, who had just sat down, and closed two of his eyes in repose. Peronnik, guessing that he was sleepy, began to chant in a drowsy voice the beginning of the High Mass. The black man at first, taken by surprise, started, and raised his head; but, as the murmur took effect upon him, a third eye closed. Peronnik then went on to intone the *Kyrie eleison*, in the tone of one possessed by the sleepy demon.<sup>5</sup> The black man closed a fourth eye, and half the fifth. Peronnik then began Vespers; but before he had reached the *Magnificat*, the black man slept soundly. [199]

Then the youth, taking the colt by the bridle, led it softly over mossy places; and so, passing close by the slumbering guardian, he came into the valley of delights.

This was the most-to-be-dreaded place of all; for it was no longer a question of avoiding positive danger, but of fleeing from temptation. Peronnik called all the saints of Brittany to his aid.

The valley through which he was now passing bore every appearance of a garden richly filled with fruits, with flowers, and with fountains; but the fountains were of wines and delicious drinks, the flowers sang with voices as sweet as those of cherubim in Paradise, and the fruits came of their own accord and offered themselves to the hand. Then at every turning of the path Peronnik beheld huge tables, spread as for a king, could scent the tempting odour of pastry drawn fresh from the oven, and see the valets apparently expecting him; whilst further off were beautiful maidens coming to dance upon the turf, who called him by his name to come and lead the ball. [200]

In vain the idiot made the sign of the cross, insensibly he slackened the pace of his colt, involuntarily he raised his face to snuff up the delicious odour of the smoking dishes, and to gaze more fixedly upon the lovely maidens; he would possibly have stopped altogether, and there would have been an end of him, if the recollection of the golden basin and the diamond lance had not all at once crossed his mind. Then he instantly began to blow his elder-whistle, that he might hear no more those soft appeals; to eat his bread well rubbed with rancid dripping, to deaden the odour of the dainty meats; and to stare fixedly on his horse's ears, that the lovely dancers might no more attract his eyes.

And so he came to the end of the garden quite safely, and caught sight at last of Kerglas Castle. But the river of which he had been told still lay between it and him, and he knew that this river could only be forded in one place. Happily the colt was familiar with this ford, and prepared to enter at the right spot. [201]

Then Peronnik looked around him in quest of the lady who was to be his guide to the castle; and soon perceived her seated on a rock, clad in black satin, and her countenance as yellow as a Moor's.

The idiot pulled off his hat, and asked if it was her pleasure to cross the river.

"I expected thee for that very purpose," replied the lady; "draw near, that I may seat myself behind thee."

Peronnik approached, took her on his horse's crupper, and began to cross the ford. He had almost reached the middle of it, when the lady said to him,

"Knowest thou who I am, poor innocent?"

"I beg your pardon," replied Peronnik, "but from your dress I clearly see that you are a noble and powerful lady."

"As to noble, I ought to be," replied the lady, "for I can trace back my origin to the first sin; and powerful I certainly am, for all nations give way before me."

[202]

"Then what is your name, may it please you, madam?" asked Peronnik.

"I am called the Plague," replied the yellow woman.

The idiot made a spring as if he would have thrown himself from his horse into the water; but the Plague said to him,

"Rest easy, poor innocent, thou hast nothing to fear from me; on the contrary, I can be of service to thee."

"Is it possible that you will be so benevolent, Madam Plague?" said Peronnik, taking his hat off, this time for good; "by the by, I now remember that it is you who are to teach me how to rid myself of the magician Rogéar."

"The magician must die," said the yellow lady.

"I should like nothing better," replied Peronnik; "but he is immortal."

"Listen, and try to understand," said the Plague. "The apple-tree guarded by the Korigan is a slip from the tree of good and evil, set in the earthly Paradise by God Himself. Its fruit, like that which was eaten by Adam and Eve, renders immortals susceptible of death. Try, then, to induce the magician to taste the apple, and from that moment he need only be touched by me to sink in death."

[203]

"I will try," said Peronnik; "but even if I succeed, how can I obtain the golden basin and the diamond lance, since they lie hidden in a gloomy cave, which cannot be opened by any key yet forged?"

"The laughing flower will open every door," replied the Plague, "and can illuminate the darkest night."

As she spoke these words they reached the further bank of the river, and the idiot went onwards to the castle.

Now there was before the entrance-hall a huge canopy, like that which is carried over his lordship the Bishop of Vannes at the processions of the *Fête Dieu*. Beneath this sat the giant, sheltered from the heat of the sun, his legs crossed, like a proprietor who has gathered in his harvest, and smoking a tobacco-pipe of virgin gold. On perceiving the colt, on which sat Peronnik and the lady clad in black satin, he lifted up his head, and cried in a voice which roared like thunder,

"Why this idiot is mounted on my three-months' colt!"

"The very same, O greatest of all magicians," replied Peronnik.

"And how did you get possession of him?" asked Rogéar.

"I repeated what your brother Bryak taught me," replied the idiot. "On reaching the forest border I said,

[204]

'Colt, wild, unbroken, and with footstep free,—  
Colt, I am here; come quick, I wait for thee.'

and the little horse came at once."

"Then you know my brother?" said the giant.

"As one knows his master," replied the youth.

"And what has he sent you here for?"

"To bring you a present of two curiosities he has just received from the country of the Moors,—this apple of delight, and the female slave whom you see there. If you eat the first, you will always have a heart as much at rest as that of a poor man who has found a purse of a hundred crowns in his wooden shoe; and if you take the

second into your service, you will have nothing left you to desire in the world.”

“Give me then the apple, and make the Moorish woman dismount,” replied Rogéar.

The idiot obeyed; but the instant the giant had set his teeth into the fruit, the yellow lady laid her hand upon him, and he fell to the ground like a bullock in the slaughter-house.

Then Peronnik entered the palace, holding the laughing flower in his hand. He traversed more than fifty halls, one after the other, and came at length before the cavern with the silver door. This opened of its own accord before the flower, which also gave the idiot sufficient light to find the golden basin and the diamond lance.

[205]

But scarcely had he seized them when the earth shook under his feet; a terrible clap of thunder was heard; the palace disappeared; and Peronnik found himself once more in the midst of the forest, holding his two talismans, with which he set forward instantly to the court of the King of Brittany.

He only delayed long enough at Vannes to buy the richest costume he could find there, and the finest horse that was for sale in the diocese of White-Wheat.

Now when he came to Nantes, this town was besieged by the Franks, who had so mercilessly ravaged the surrounding country, that there were scarcely more trees left than would serve a single goat for forage; and more than that, famine was in the city; and those soldiers died of hunger whose wounds had spared their lives. And on the very day of Peronnik’s arrival, a trumpeter proclaimed aloud in every street that the King of Brittany would adopt that man as his heir who could deliver the city, and drive the enemy out of the country.

Hearing this promise, Peronnik said to the trumpeter,

“Proclaim no more, but lead me to the king; for I am able to do all he asks.”

[206]

“Thou!” said the herald, seeing him so young and small; “go on thy way, fine goldfinch;<sup>6</sup> the king has now no time for taking little birds from cottage-roofs.”<sup>7</sup>

By way of reply, Peronnik touched the soldier with his lance; and that very instant he fell dead, to the infinite terror of the crowd who looked on, and would have fled away; but the idiot cried,

“You have just seen what I can do against my enemies; know now what is in my power for my friends.”

And having touched with his golden basin the dead man’s lips, he rose up instantly, restored to life.

The king being informed of this wonder, gave Peronnik command of all the soldiers he had left; and as with his diamond lance the idiot killed thousands of the Franks, and with his golden basin restored to life the Bretons who were slain, a very few days sufficed him for putting an end to the enemy’s army, and taking possession of all their camp contained.

He then proposed to conquer all the neighbouring countries, such as Anjou, Poitou, and Normandy, which cost him but very little trouble; and finally, when all were in obedience to the king, he declared his intention of setting out to deliver the Holy Land, and embarked from Nantes in a magnificent fleet, with the first nobility of the land.

[207]

On reaching Palestine, he performed great deeds of valour, compelled many Saracens to be baptised, and married a fair maiden, by whom he had many sons and daughters, to each of whom he gave wealth and lands. Some even say that, thanks to the golden basin, he and his sons are living still, and reign in this land; but others maintain that Rogéar’s brother, the magician Bryak, has succeeded in regaining possession of the two talismans, and that those who wish for them have only—to seek them out.

[Contents]

## Note on the Tale of “Peronnik the Idiot.”

It seems almost impossible not to recognise in the story of Peronnik the Idiot traces of that tradition which has given birth to one of the epic romances of the Round Table. Disfigured and overlaid with modern details as is the Breton version, the primitive idea of the Quest of the Holy Graal may still be found there pure and entire.

Some explanation must be given of this. So early as the sixth century, the Gallic bards speak of a magic vase which bestows a knowledge of the future, and universal science, on its owner; in later times a popular fable tells of a golden vase possessed by Bran the Blessed, which healed all wounds, and even restored the dead to life. Other tales are told of a basin in which every desired delicacy instantly appeared. In time all these fictions become fused, and the several properties of these different vases are found united in one; the possession of which is of course naturally sought after by all great adventurers.

[208]

There is still extant a Gallic poem, composed in the beginning of the twelfth century, of which the whole burden is this quest. The hero, named Perédur, goes to war with giants, lions, serpents, sea-monsters, sorcerers, and finally becomes conqueror of the basin and the lance, which is here added to the primitive tradition.

Now there can be no doubt that this Gallic legend, which found its way throughout Europe, as is proved by the attempts at imitation which have been made in every language, must have been known in Brittany above all, united as it is to Gaul by a common origin and language. It must have become popular in the very form it wore when taught by the bards to the Armoricans.

But besides the successive alterations which are the speedy result of oral transmission, French imitations by degrees incorporated themselves with all the primitive versions. M. de la Villemarqué has in fact observed, in his learned work on the *Popular Tales of the Ancient Bretons*, that when the Gallic legends were developed by the French poets, they appeared so beautified in their new costume, that the Gauls themselves abandoned the originals in favour of the imitations. Now that which is true of them is equally so of the Armoricans; and it seems to us beyond a doubt that the tradition of Perédur, which they had originally received, must have been seriously modified by the later poem of Christian of Troyes.

In order to elucidate our idea, we will give a hasty analysis of this poem, which is little known, being only extant in manuscript.<sup>8</sup>

[209]

Perceval, the last remaining son of a poor widow, whom the miseries of war had left destitute, is simple, ignorant, and boorish. His mother carefully conceals from his sight every thing that might turn his attention to the idea of war; but one day the lad meets King Arthur's knights, learns the secret so long hidden from him, and, his mind filled with nothing now but tournaments and battles, abandons his maternal roof and sets off for Arthur's court. On the way he sees a pavilion, which, taking in his simplicity for a church, he enters. There he eats two roebuck pasties, and drinks a large flagon of wine; after which he goes once more upon his way, and soon arrives at Cardeuil, ill-clad, ill-armed, and ill-mounted. He finds Arthur buried in profound meditation, a treacherous knight having just carried off his golden cup, defying any warrior to take it from him again. Perceval accepts the challenge, pursues the thief, kills him, recovers the cup, and seizes on the slain knight's armour. He is at length admitted into the order of chivalry.

But the recollection of his mother haunts him every where. What is he in quest of? He himself knows not; he wanders at random and without a purpose wherever his wild courser carries him. Thus one day he reaches a castle, and enters. A sick old man reposes there upon a bed; a servant appears with a lance from which flows one drop of blood, and then a damsel bearing a *graal*, or basin, of pure gold. Perceval longs to know the meaning of what he sees, but dares not ask. The following day, on leaving the castle, he is informed that the sick old man is called the fisher-king, and that he has been wounded in the thigh; Perceval is at the same time reproached for not having questioned him.

He continues onwards, meeting by chance Arthur, whom he follows to court; but the day after his arrival a lady clad in black appears to him, and warmly blames him for being the cause of the fisher-king's sufferings.

[210]

"His wound," said she, "has become incurable, because thou didst not question him."

The knight, wishing to repair his fault, seeks in vain to find once more the king's palace; he is repulsed as by an invisible hand, until the moment when he resolves to go and find a saintly hermit, to whom he makes his confession. The priest shows him that all his errors are owing to his ingratitude towards his mother, and that sin held his tongue in bondage when he ought to have inquired the meaning of the *graal*; he imposes a penance on him, gives him advice, reveals to him a mysterious prayer containing certain terrible words, which he forbids him from making known; and then Perceval, absolved from his sins, fasts, adores the Cross, hears Mass, receives Holy Communion, and returns to a new life.

He now sets forth in quest of the *graal*, and meets with a thousand obstacles. A

woman, whom he has loved, White-Flower, appears, and endeavours to detain him; but he escapes from her. He fastens his horse to the golden ring of a pillar rising on a mountain called the Mount of Misery, arrives at length at the castle for which he sought, and this time fails not to inquire into the history of the lance and the *graal*. He is told that the lance is that with which Longus pierced the side of Christ, and that the *graal* is the basin in which Joseph of Arimathea received His divine blood. This has come down by inheritance to the fisher-king, who is descended from Joseph, and is Perceval's uncle. It procures all good things, both spiritual and temporal, heals all wounds, and even restores life to the dead, besides becoming filled with the most delicious dainties at its owner's desire.

After the lance and the *graal*, they bring out a broken sword; the fisher-king presents it to his nephew, begging him to reunite the fragments; in which he succeeds. The king then tells him that, according to prophecies, the bravest and most pious knight in the whole world was to perform this act; that he himself had attempted to weld the pieces together, but had been chastised for his rashness by receiving a wound in the thigh. "I shall be healed," he added, "on the same day that sees the knight Pertiniax perish,—that treacherous knight who broke this wonderful sword in slaying my brother."

Perceval kills Pertiniax, thanks to the aid of the holy *graal*, cuts off his head, and brings it to the fisher-king, who gets well, and abdicates in favour of his nephew.

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The points of accordance between this poem and the Breton story are not very difficult to trace. In the two recitals we hear of the conquest of a basin and a lance, the possession of which ensures corresponding advantages; the heroes both of the French and Armorican version are subjected to dangers and temptations, and success assures to them alike—a crown. Some points of resemblance may even perhaps be discovered between the idiot Peronnik, going ever onwards he knows not whither, and extracting from the farmer's wife his rye-bread, his fresh-churned butter, and his Sunday dripping; and this Perceval, *simple, ignorant, boorish*, who begins by *eating two roebuck pasties, and drinking a great flagon of wine*.

Certainly the different details, and the trials imposed on Peronnik, are not in general much like the probation to which Perceval was subjected; but, on the other hand, they closely resemble those to which Perédur, the hero of the Gallic tradition, was exposed. It would seem, therefore, that this Armorican story has drunk successively from the two fountains of French and Breton legendary lore. Born of the Gallic tradition, modified by the French version, and finally accommodated to the popular genius of our province, it has become such as we have it at this day.

Peronnik the idiot seems, moreover, to us worthy of being studied by those who seek, above all else in tradition, for traces of the popular genius. Idiotism, amongst all tribes of Celtic race, was never looked on as a degradation, but rather as a peculiar condition wherein individuals could attain to certain perceptions unknown to the vulgar; and the Celts were led to imagine that they had an acquaintance with the invisible world not permitted to other men. Thus the words of the idiot were looked on as prophetic; a hidden meaning was sought for in his acts; he was, in fact, considered, in the energetic language of an old poet, as having *his feet in this world, and his eyes in the other*.

Brittany has preserved in part this ancient reverence for persons of weak mind. It is by no means unusual in the farms of Léon to see some of these unfortunates, clad, whatever may be their age, in a long dress with bone buttons, and holding a white wand in their hands. They are tenderly cared for, and only spoken of under the endearing title of *dear innocents*, unless in their absence, when they are called *diskyant*, that is to say, *without knowledge*. They stay at home with the women and little children; they are never called upon to perform any labour; and when they die, they are wept over by their relations.

I remember meeting with one of these idiots one day, in the neighbourhood of Morlaix; he was seated before a farm-house door, and his sister, a young girl, was feeding him. Her caressing kindness struck me.

"Then you are very fond of this poor *innocent*?" I asked, in Breton.

"It is God who gave him to us," she replied.

Words full of meaning, which hold the key to all this pious tenderness for creatures useless in themselves, but precious *for His sake by whom they were confided to our care*.

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<sup>1</sup> This word *idiot* must not lead to misconception; the idiot of popular tales is the personification of

cunning weakness triumphing over strength. Idiotism, in the traditions of Christian nations, plays the same part as physical ugliness in those of the ancients. The latter take the hunchback Æsop to accomplish extraordinary actions; the former Peronnik, or some other lad of weak mind, in order that the contrast between the hero and the action may be more striking, and the result more unexpected.

We refer the reader to the note which follows this story for the more particular examination which it seems to deserve.

2 On the sea-coast they scrape away the burnt part left in the porridge-kettles with a mussel-shell; in the interior they use for the same purpose a sharp stone, commonly a gun-flint.

3 The milk of the black cow is considered in Brittany to be at once the daintiest and the most wholesome.

4 The Bretons attribute to the butter of the *White Week* and of the Rogation weeks a special delicacy, and even medicinal properties, on account of the excellence of the pastures at this season.

5 The Bretons believe in a special demon for sending one to sleep in church, and call him *ar c'houskezik*, from the verb *kouska*, which signifies to sleep.

6 *Koanta pabaour*, a common form of mockery in Brittany.

7 A proverbial expression, meaning that one has no time to lose.

8 *The Searcher for the Basin*,—Myvyrian, t. i. p. 8. The poem of *Perceval, or the Quest for the Holy Graal*, is to be found in the Royal Library of Paris, Mss. No. 7523, et supp. franc. 450. We give M. de la Villemarqué's analysis, contenting ourselves with abridging his labours.

[Contents]

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<a href="#">40</a> , <a href="#">78</a>	[Not in source]	"
<a href="#">71</a> , <a href="#">121</a> , <a href="#">144</a> , <a href="#">4</a>	[Not in source]	.
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