

The Project Gutenberg eBook of Normandy: The Scenery & Romance of Its Ancient Towns, Part 2, by Gordon Home

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: Normandy: The Scenery & Romance of Its Ancient Towns, Part 2

Author: Gordon Home

Release date: August 12, 2004 [EBook #8594]

Most recently updated: December 26, 2020

Language: English

Credits: HTML version produced by David Widger from the text provided by Ted Garvin, Beth Trapaga and the Distributed Proofreading Team

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK NORMANDY: THE SCENERY & ROMANCE OF ITS ANCIENT TOWNS, PART 2 ***

NORMANDY

THE SCENERY & ROMANCE OF ITS ANCIENT TOWNS

DEPICTED BY

GORDON HOME

Part 2.



A Click on any Image will enlarge it to full size

CONTENTS

- [CHAPTER IV](#) Concerning the Cathedral City of Evreux and the Road to Bernay
- [CHAPTER V](#) Concerning Lisieux and the Romantic Town of Falaise
- [CHAPTER VI](#) From Argentan to Avranches

LIST OF COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS

[MONT ST MICHEL FROM THE CAUSEWAY](#)

[THE CATHEDRAL OF EVREUX SEEN FROM ABOVE](#) On the right, just where the light touches some of the roofs of the houses, the fine old belfry can be seen.

[A TYPICAL FARMYARD SCENE IN NORMANDY](#) The curious little thatched mushroom above the cart is to be found in most of the Norman farms.

[THE BRIDGE AT BEAUMONT-LE-ROGER](#) On the steep hill beyond stands the ruined abbey church.

[IN THE RUE AUX FEVRES, LISIEUX](#) The second tiled gable from the left belongs to the fine sixteenth century house called the Manoir de Francois I.

[THE CHURCH OF ST JACQUES AT LISIEUX](#) One of the quaint umber fronted houses for which the town is famous appears on the left.

[FALAISE CASTLE](#) The favourite stronghold of William the Conqueror.

[THE PORTE DES CORDELIERS AT FALAISE](#) A thirteenth century gateway that overlooks the steep valley of the Ante.

[THE CHATEAU D'O](#) A seventeenth century manor house surrounded by a wide moat.

[THE GREAT VIEW OVER THE FORESTS TO THE SOUTH FROM THE RAMPARTS OF DOMFRONT CASTLE](#) Down below can be seen the river Varennes, and to the left of the railway the little Norman Church of Notre-Dame-sur-l'Eau.

[THE CLOCK GATE, VIRE](#)

[A VIEW OF MONT ST MICHEL AND THE BAY OF CANCALE FROM THE JARDIN DES PLANTES AT AVRANCHES](#) On the left is the low coast-line of Normandy, and on the right appears the islet of Tombelaine.

CHAPTER IV

Concerning the Cathedral City of Evreux and the Road to Bernay



The tolling of the deep-toned bourdon in the cathedral tower reverberates over the old town of Evreux as we pass along the cobbled streets. There is a yellow evening light overhead, and the painted stucco walls of the houses reflect the soft, glowing colour of the west. In the courtyard of the Hotel du Grand Cerf, too, every thing is bathed in this beautiful light and the double line of closely trimmed laurels has not yet been deserted by the golden flood. But Evreux does not really require a fine evening to make it attractive, although there is no town in existence that is not improved under such conditions. With the magnificent cathedral, the belfry, the Norman church of St Taurin and the museum, besides many quaint peeps by the much sub-divided river Iton that flows through the town, there is sufficient to interest one even on the dullest of dull days.

Of all the cathedral interiors in Normandy there are none that possess a finer or more perfectly proportioned nave than Evreux, and if I were asked to point out the two most impressive interiors of the churches in this division of France I should couple the cathedral at Evreux with St Ouen at Rouen.

It was our own Henry I. who having destroyed the previous building set to work to build a new one and it is his nave that we see to-day. The whole cathedral has since that time been made to reflect the changing ideals of the seven centuries that have passed. The west front belongs entirely to the Renaissance period and the north transept is in the flamboyant style of the

fifteenth century so much in evidence in Normandy and so infrequent in England.

The central tower with its tall steeple now encased in scaffolding was built in 1470 by Cardinal Balue, Bishop of Evreux and inventor of the fearful wooden cages in one of which the prisoner Duboury died at Mont St Michel.

In most of the windows there is old and richly coloured glass; those in the chancel have stronger tones, but they all transform the shafts of light into gorgeous rainbow effects which stand out in wonderful contrast to the delicate, creamy white of the stone-work. Pale blue banners are suspended in the chancel, and the groining above is coloured on each side of the bosses for a short distance, so that as one looks up the great sweep of the nave, the banners and the brilliant fifteenth century glass appear as vivid patches of colour beyond the uniform, creamy grey on either side. The Norman towers at the west end of the cathedral are completely hidden in the mask of classical work planted on top of the older stone-work in the sixteenth century, and more recent restoration has altered some of the other features of the exterior. At the present day the process of restoration still goes on, but the faults of our grandfathers fortunately are not repeated.

Leaving the Place Parvis by the Rue de l'Horloge you come to the great open space in front of the Hotel de Ville and the theatre with the museum on the right, in which there are several Roman remains discovered at Vieil-Evreux, among them being a bronze statue of Jupiter Stator. On the opposite side of the Place stands the beautiful town belfry built at the end of the fifteenth century. There was an earlier one before that time, but I do not know whether it had been destroyed during the wars with the English, or whether the people of Evreux merely raised the present graceful tower in place of the older one with a view to beautifying the town. The bell, which was cast in 1406 may have hung in the former structure, and there is some fascination in hearing its notes when one realises how these same sound waves have fallen on the ears of the long procession of players who have performed their parts within its hearing. A branch of the Iton runs past the foot of the tower in canal fashion; it is backed by old houses and crossed by many a bridge, and helps to build up a suitable foreground to the beautiful old belfry, which seems to look across to the brand new Hotel de Ville with an injured expression. From the Boulevard Chambaudouin there is a good view of one side of the Bishop's palace which lies on the south side of the cathedral, and is joined to it by a gallery and the remains of the cloister. The walls are strongly fortified, and in front of them runs a branch of one of the canals of the Iton, that must have originally served as a moat.

Out towards the long straight avenue that runs out of the town in the direction of Caen, there may be seen the Norman church of St Taurin. It is all that is left of the Benedictine abbey that once stood here. Many people who explore this interesting church fail to see the silver-gilt reliquary of the twelfth century that is shown to visitors who make the necessary inquiries. The richness of its enamels and the elaborate ornamentation studded with imitation gems that have replaced the real ones, makes this casket almost unique.

Many scenes from the life of the saint are shown in the windows of the choir of the church. They are really most interesting, and the glass is very beautiful. The south door must have been crowded with the most elaborate ornament, but the delicately carved stone-work has been hacked away and the thin pillars replaced by crude, uncarved chunks of stone. There is Norman arcading outside the north transept as well as just above the floor in the north aisle. St Taurin is a somewhat dilapidated and cob-webby church, but it is certainly one of the interesting features of Evreux.

Instead of keeping on the road to Caen after reaching the end of the great avenue just mentioned, we turn towards the south and soon enter pretty pastoral scenery. The cottages are almost in every instance thatched, with ridges plastered over with a kind of cobb mud. In the cracks in this curious ridging, grass seeds and all sorts of wild flowers are soon deposited, so that upon the roof of nearly every cottage there is a luxuriant growth of grass and flowers. In some cases yellow irises alone ornament the roofs, and they frequently grow on the tops of the walls that are treated in a similar fashion. A few miles out of Evreux you pass a hamlet with a quaint little church built right upon the roadway with no churchyard or wall of any description. A few broken gravestones of quite recent date litter the narrow, dusty space between the north side of the church and the roadway. Inside there is an untidy aspect to everything, but there are some windows containing very fine thirteenth century glass which the genial old cure shows with great delight, for it is said that they were intended for the cathedral at Evreux, but by some chance remained in this obscure hamlet. The cure also points out the damage done to the windows by *socialistes* at a recent date.

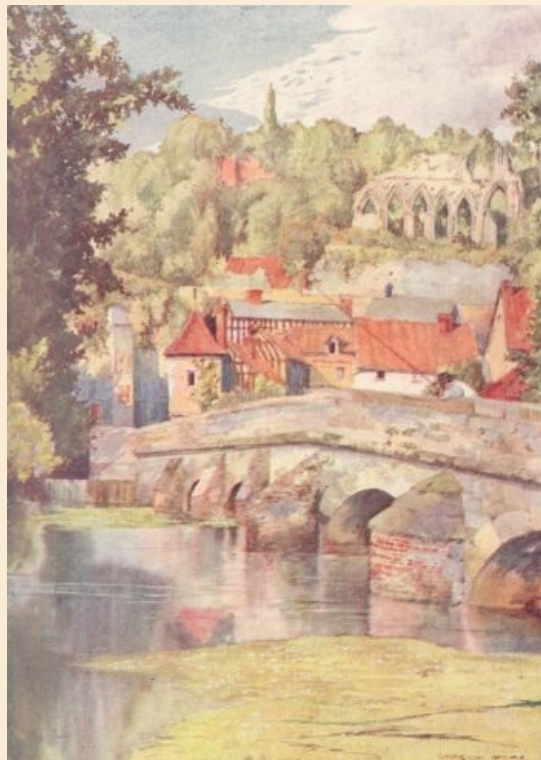
By the roadside towards Conches, there are magpies everywhere, punctuated by yellow hammers and nightingales. The cottages have thatch of a very deep brown colour over the hipped roofs, closely resembling those in the out-of-the-way parts of Sussex. It a beautiful country, and the delightfully situated town of Conches at the edge of its forest is well matched with its surroundings.

In the middle of the day the inhabitants seem to entirely disappear from the sunny street, and everything has a placid and reposeful appearance as though the place revelled in its quaintness. Backed by the dense masses of forest there is a sloping green where an avenue of great chestnuts tower above the long, low roof of the timber-framed cattle shelter. On the highest part of the hill stands the castle, whose round, central tower shows above the trees that grow thickly on the slopes of the hill. Close to the castle is the graceful church, and beyond are the clustered

roofs of the houses. A viaduct runs full tilt against the hill nearly beneath the church, and then the railway pierces the hill on its way towards Bernay. The tall spire of the church of St Foy is comparatively new, for the whole structure was rebuilt in the fifteenth century, but its stained glass is of exceptional interest. Its richness of colour and the interest of the subjects indicate some unusually gifted artist, and one is not surprised to discover that they were designed by Aldegrevers, who was trained by that great master Albrecht Dyrer. Altogether there are twenty-one of these beautiful windows. Seven occupy the eastern end of the apse and give scenes taken from the life of St Foy.

You can reach the castle by passing through the quaint archway of the Hotel de Ville, and then passing through the shady public garden you plunge into the dry moat that surrounds the fortified mound. There is not very much to see but what appears in a distant view of the town, and in many ways the outside groupings of the worn ruin and the church roofs and spire above the houses are better than the scenes in the town itself. The Hotel Croix Blanche is a pleasant little house for dejeuner. Everything is extremely simple and typical of the family methods of the small French inn, where excellent cooking goes along with many primitive usages. The cool salle-a-manger is reached through the general living-room and kitchen, which is largely filled with the table where you may see the proprietor and his family partaking of their own meals. There seems no room to cook anything at all, and yet when you are seated in the next room the daughter of the family, an attractive and neatly dressed girl, gracefully serves the most admirable courses, worthy and perhaps better than what one may expect to obtain in the best hotel in Rouen.

There is a road that passes right through the forest of Conches towards Rugles, but that must be left for another occasion if we are to see anything of the charms of Beaumont-le-Roger, the perfectly situated little town that lies half-way between Conches and Bernay.



The long street of the town containing some very charming peeps as you go towards the church is really a terrace on the limestone hills that rises behind the houses on the right, and falls steeply on the left. Spaces between the houses and narrow turnings give glimpses of the rich green country down below. From the lower level you see the rocky ridge above clothed in a profusion of trees. The most perfect picture in the town is from the river bank just by the bridge. In the foreground is the mirror-like stream that gives its own rendering of the scene that is built up above it. Leaning upon a parapet of the bridge is a man with a rod who is causing tragedies in the life that teems beneath the glassy surface. Beyond the bridge appear some quaint red roofs with one tower-like house with an overhanging upper storey. Higher up comes the precipitous hill divided into terraces by the huge walls that surround the abbey buildings, and still higher,

but much below the highest part of the hill, are the picturesque ruins of the abbey. On the summit of the ridge dominating all are the insignificant remains of the castle built by Roger a la Barbe, whose name survives in that of the town. His family were the founders of the abbey that flourished for several centuries, but finally, about a hundred years ago, the buildings were converted to the uses of a factory! Spinning and weaving might have still been going on but for a big fire that destroyed the whole place. There was, however, a considerably more complete series of buildings left than we can see to-day, but scarcely more than fifty years ago the place was largely demolished for building materials. The view from the river Rille is therefore the best the ruin can boast, for seen from that point the arches rise up against the green background as a stately ruin, and the tangled mass of weeds and debris are invisible. The entrance is most inviting. It is down at the foot of the cliff, and the archway with the steep ascent inside suggests all sorts of delights beyond, as it stands there just by the main street of the town. I was sorry afterwards, that I had accepted that hospitality, for with the exception of a group of merry children playing in an orchard and some big caves hollowed out of the foot of the cliff that rises still higher, I saw nothing but a jungle of nettles. This warning should not, however, suggest that Beaumont-le-Roger is a poor place to visit. Not only is it a charming, I may say a fascinating spot to visit, but it is also a place in which to stay, for the longer you remain there the less do you like the idea of leaving. The church of St Nicholas standing in the main street where it becomes much wider and forms a small Place, is a beautiful old building whose mellow colours on stone-work and tiles glow vividly on a sunny afternoon. There is a great stone wall forming the side of the rocky platform that supports the building and the entrance is by steps that lead up to the west end. The tower belongs to the flamboyant period and high up on its parapet you may see a small statue of Regulus who does duty as a "Jack-smite-the-clock." Just by the porch there leans against a wall a most ponderous grave slab which was made for the tomb of Jehan du Moustier a soldier of the fourteenth century who fought for that Charles of Navarre who was surnamed "The Bad." The classic additions to the western part of the church seem strangely out of sympathy with the gargoyles overhead and the thirteenth century arcades of the nave, but this mixing up of styles is really more incongruous in description than in reality.

When you have decided to leave Beaumont-le-Roger and have passed across the old bridge and out into the well-watered plain, the position of the little town suggests that of the village of Pulborough in Sussex, where a road goes downhill to a bridge and then crosses the rich meadowland where the river Arun winds among the pastures in just the same fashion as the Rille.

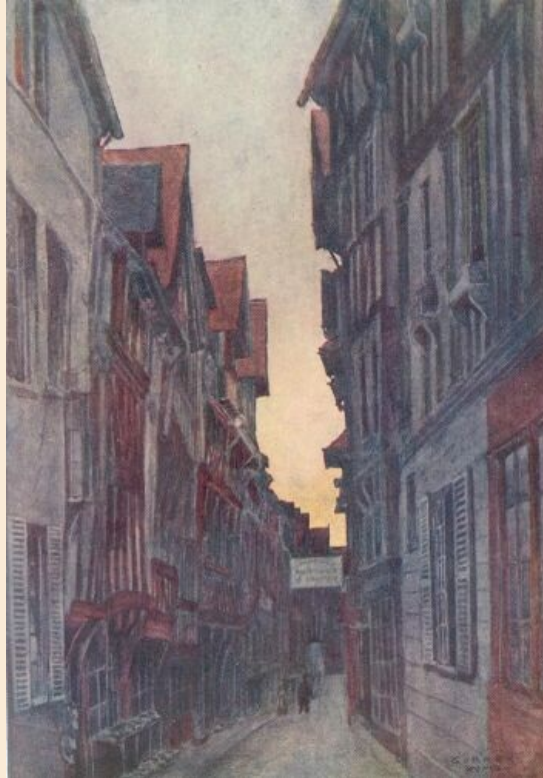
At a bend in the road to Bernay stands the village of Serquigny. It is just at the edge of the forest of Beaumont which we have been skirting, and besides having a church partially belonging to the twelfth century it has traces of a Roman Camp. All the rest of the way to Bernay the road follows the railway and the river Charentonne until the long—and when you are looking out for the hotel—seemingly endless street of Bernay is reached. After the wonderful combination of charms that are flaunted by Beaumont-le-Roger it is possible to grumble at the plainer features of Bernay, but there is really no reason to hurry out of the town for there is much quaint architecture to be seen, and near the Hotel du Lion d'Or there is a house built right over the street resting on solid wooden posts. But more interesting than the domestic architecture are the remains of the abbey founded by Judith of Brittany very early in the eleventh century for it is probably one of the oldest Romanesque remains in Normandy. The church is cut up into various rooms and shops at the choir end, and there has been much indiscriminate ill-treatment of the ancient stone-work. Much of the structure, including the plain round arches and square columns, is of the very earliest Norman period, having been built in the first half of the eleventh century, but in later times classic ornament was added to the work of those shadowy times when the kingdom of Normandy had not long been established. So much alteration in the styles of decoration has taken place in the building that it is possible to be certain of the date of only some portions of the structure. The Hotel de Ville now occupies part of the abbey buildings.

At the eastern side of the town stands St Croix, a fifteenth century church with a most spacious interior. There is much beautiful glass dating from three hundred years ago in the windows of the nave and transepts, but perhaps the feature which will be remembered most when other impressions have vanished, will be the finely carved statues belonging to the fourteenth century which were brought here from the Abbey of Bec. The south transept contains a monument to Guillaume Arvilarensis, an abbot of Bec who died in 1418. Upon the great altar which is believed to have been brought from the Abbey of Bec, there are eight marble columns surrounding a small white marble figure of the Child Jesus.

Another church at Bernay is that of Notre Dame de la Couture. It has much fourteenth century work and behind the high altar there are five chapels, the centre one containing a copy of the "sacred image" of Notre Dame which stands by the column immediately to the right of the entrance. Much more could be said of these three churches with their various styles of architecture extending from the very earliest period down to the classic work of the seventeenth century. But this is not the place for intricate descriptions of architectural detail which are chiefly useful in books which are intended for carrying from place to place.

CHAPTER V

Concerning Lisieux and the Romantic Town of Falaise



Lisieux is so rich in the curious timber-framed houses of the middle and later ages that there are some examples actually visible immediately outside the railway station whereas in most cases one usually finds an aggregation of uninteresting modern buildings. As you go towards the centre of the town the old houses, which have only been dotted about here and there, join hands and form whole streets of the most romantic and almost stage-like picturesqueness. The narrow street illustrated here is the Rue aux Fevres. Its houses are astonishingly fine, and it forms—especially in the evening—a background suitable for any of the stirring scenes that took place in such grand old towns as Lisieux in medieval days. This street is however, only one of several that reek of history. In the Rue des Boucheries and in the Grande Rue there are lovely overhanging gables and curious timber-framing that is now at any angle but what was originally intended. There is really so much individual quaintness in these houses that they deserve infinitely more than the scurry past them which so frequently is all their attractions obtain. The narrowness and fustiness of the Rue aux Fevres certainly hinder you from spending much time in examining the houses but there are two which deserve a few minutes' individual attention. One which has a very wide gable and the upper floors boarded is believed to be of very great antiquity, dating from as early a period as the thirteenth century. It is numbered thirty-three, and must not be confused with the richly ornamented Manoir de Francois I. The timber work of this house, especially of the two lower floors is covered with elaborate carving including curious animals and quaint little figures, and also the salamander of the royal house. For this reason the photographs sold in the shops label the house "Manoir de la Salamandre." The place is now fast going to ruin—a most pitiable sight and I for one, would prefer to see the place restored rather than it should be allowed to become so hopelessly dilapidated and rotten that the question of its preservation should come to be considered lightly.

If the town authorities of Lisieux chose to do so, they could encourage the townsfolk to enrich many of their streets by a judicious flaking off of the plaster which in so many cases tries to hide all the pleasant features of houses that have seen at least three centuries, but this sort of work when in the hands of only partially educated folk is liable to produce a worse state of affairs than

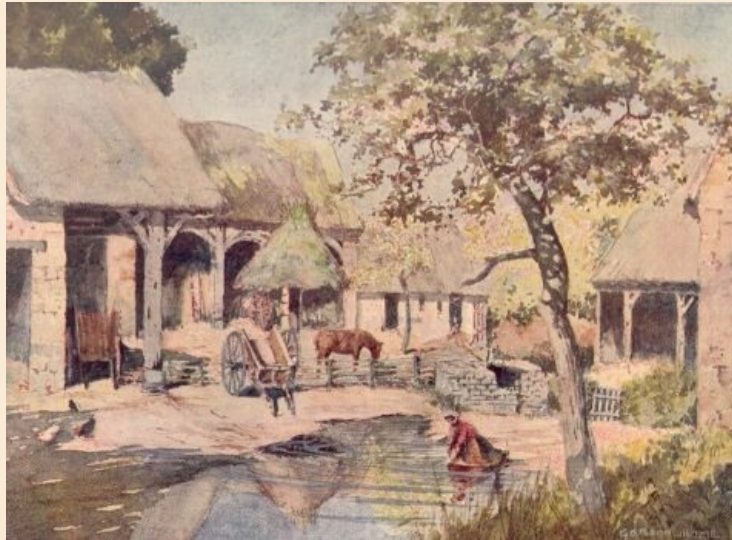
if things had been left untouched. An example of what over-restoration can do, may be seen when we reach the beautiful old inn at Dives.



The two churches of Lisieux are well fitted to their surroundings, and although St Jacques has no graceful tower or fleche, the quaintness of its shingled belfry makes up for the lack of the more stately towers of St Pierre. Where the stone-work has stopped short the buttresses are roofed with the quaintest semi-circular caps, and over the clock there are two more odd-looking pepper boxes perched upon the steep slope that projects from the square belfry. Over all there is a low pyramidal roof, stained with orange lichen and making a great contrast in colour to the weather-beaten stone-work down below. There are small patches of tiled roofing to the buttresses at the western ends of the aisles and these also add colour to this picturesque building. The great double flight of stone steps which lead to the imposing western door have balustrades filled with flamboyant tracery, but although the church is built up in this way, the floor in the interior is not level, for it slopes gently up towards the east. The building was commenced during the reign of Louis XII. and not finished until nearly the end of the reign of Francois I. It is therefore coeval with that richly carved house in the Rue aux Fevres. Along the sides of the church there project a double row of thirsty-looking gargoyles—the upper ones having their shoulders supported by the mass of masonry supporting the flying buttresses. The interior is richer than the exterior, and you may see on some of the pillars remains of sixteenth century paintings. A picture dating from 1681 occupies a position in the chapel of St Ursin in the south aisle; it shows the relic of the saint being brought to Lisieux in 1055.

The wide and sunny Place Thiers is dominated by the great church of St Pierre, which was left practically in its present form in the year 1233. The first church was begun some years before the conquest of England but about a century later it suffered the fate of Bayeux being burnt down in 1136. It was reconstructed soon afterwards and shows to-day the first period of Gothic architecture that became prevalent in Normandy. Only the north tower dates from this period, the other one had to be rebuilt during the reign of Henri III. and the spire only made its appearance in the seventeenth century. The Lady Chapel is of particular interest owing to the statement that it was built by that Bishop of Beauvais who took such a prominent part in the trial of Joan of Arc. The main arches over the big west door are now bare of carving or ornament and the Hotel de Ville is built right up against the north-west corner, but despite this St Pierre has the most imposing and stately appearance, and there are many features such as the curious turrets of the south transept that impress themselves on the memory more than some of the other churches we have seen.

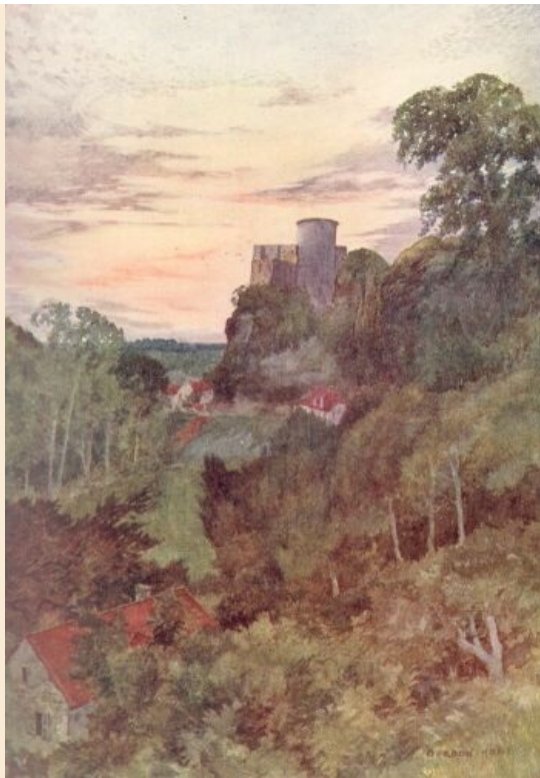
Lisieux is one of those cheerful towns that appear always clean and bright under the dullest skies, so that when the sun shines every view seems freshly painted and blazing with colour. The freshness of the atmosphere, too, is seldom tainted with those peculiar odours that some French towns produce with such enormous prodigality, and Lisieux may therefore claim a further point in its favour.



It is generally a wide, hedgeless stretch of country that lies between Lisieux and Falaise, but for the first ten miles there are big farm-houses with timber-framed barns and many orchards bearing a profusion of blossom near the roadside. A small farm perched above the road and quite out of sight, invites the thirsty passer-by to turn aside up a steep path to partake of cider or coffee. It is a simple, almost bare room where the refreshment is served, but its quaintness and shadowy coolness are most refreshing. The fireplace has an open hearth with a wood fire which can soon be blown into a blaze by the big bellows that hang against the chimney corner. A table by one of the windows is generally occupied in her spare moments by the farmer's pretty daughter who puts aside her knitting to fetch the cider or to blow up the fire for coffee. They are a most genial family and seem to find infinite delight in plying English folk with questions for I imagine that not many find their way to this sequestered corner among waving trees and lovely orchards.

A sudden descent before reaching St Pierre-sur-Dives gives a great view over the level country below where everything is brilliantly green and garden-like. The village first shows its imposing church through the trees of a straight avenue leading towards the village which also possesses a fine Market Hall that must be at least six hundred years old. The church is now undergoing restoration externally, but by dodging the falling cement dust you may go inside, perhaps to be disappointed that there is not more of the Norman work that has been noticed in the southern tower that rises above the entrance. The village, or it should really be called a small town, for its population is over a thousand, has much in it that is attractive and quaint, and it might gain more attention if everyone who passes through its streets were not hurrying forward to Falaise.

The country now becomes a great plain, hedgeless, and at times almost featureless. The sun in the afternoon throws the shadows of the roadside trees at right angles, so that the road becomes divided into accurate squares by the thin lines of shadow. The straight run from St Pierre is broken where the road crosses the Dives. It is a pretty spot with a farm, a manor-house and a washing place for women just below the bridge, and then follows more open road and more interminable perspectives cutting through the open plain until, with considerable satisfaction, the great thoroughfare from Caen is joined and soon afterwards a glimpse of the castle greets us as we enter Falaise.



There is something peculiarly fascinating about Falaise, for it combines many of the features that are sparingly distributed in other towns. Its position on a hill with deep valleys on all sides, its romantic castle, the two beautiful churches and the splendid thirteenth century gateway, form the best remembered attractions, but beyond these there are the hundred and one pretty groupings of the cottages that crowd both banks of the little river Ante down in the valley under the awe-inspiring castle.

Even then, no mention has been made of the ancient fronts that greet one in many of the streets, and the charms of some of the sudden openings between the houses that give views of the steep, wooded hollows that almost touch the main street, have been slighted. A huge cube of solid masonry with a great cylindrical tower alongside perched upon a mass of rock precipitous on two sides is the distant view of the castle, and coming closer, although you can see the buttresses that spring from the rocky foundations, the description still holds good. You should see the fortress in the twilight with a golden suffusion in the sky and strange, purplish shadows on the castle walls. It then has much the appearance of one of those unassailable strongholds where a beautiful princess is lying in captivity waiting for a chivalrous knight who with a band of faithful men will attempt to scale the inaccessible walls. Under some skies, the castle assumes the character of one of Turner's impressions, half real and half imaginary, and under no skies does this most formidable relic of feudal days ever lose its grand and awesome aspect. The entrance is through a gateway, the Porte St. Nicolas, which was built in the thirteenth century. There you are taken in hand by a pleasant concierge who will lead you first of all to the Tour La Reine, where he will point out a great breach in the wall made by Henri IV. when he successfully assaulted the castle after a bombardment with his artillery which he had kept up for a week. This was in 1589, and since then no other fighting has taken place round these grand old walls. The ivy that clings to the ruins and the avenue of limes that leads up to the great keep are full of jackdaws which wheel round the rock in great flights. You have a close view of the great Tour Talbot, and then pass through a small doorway in the northern face of the citadel. Inside, the appearance of the walls reveals the restoration which has taken place within recent years. But this, fortunately, does not detract to any serious extent from the interest of the whole place. Up on the ramparts there are fine views over the surrounding country, and immediately beneath the precipice below nestle the picturesque, brown-red roofs of the lower part of the town. Just at the foot of the castle rock there is still to be seen a tannery which is of rather unusual interest in connection with the story of how Robert le Diable was first struck by the charms of Arlette, the beautiful daughter of a tanner. The Norman duke was supposed to have been looking over the battlements when he saw this girl washing clothes in the river, and we are told that owing to the warmth of the day she had drawn up her dress, so that her feet, which are spoken of as being particularly beautiful were revealed to his admiring gaze. Arlette afterwards became the mother of William the Conqueror, and the room is pointed out in the south-west corner of the keep in which we are asked to believe that the Conqueror of England was born. It is, however, unfortunate for the legend that archaeologists do not allow such an early date for the present castle, and thus we are not even allowed to associate these ramparts with the legend just mentioned. It must have been a

strong building that preceded this present structure, for during the eleventh century William the Norman was often obliged to retreat for safety to his impregnable birthplace. The Tour Talbot has below its lowest floor what seems to be a dungeon, but it is said that prisoners were not kept here, the place being used merely for storing food. The gloomy chamber, however, is generally called an oubliette. Above, there are other floors, the top one having been used by the governor of the castle. In the thickness of the wall there is a deep well which now contains no water. One of the rooms in the keep is pointed out as that in which Prince Arthur was kept in confinement, but although it is known that the unfortunate youth was imprisoned in this castle, the selection of the room seems to be somewhat arbitrary.



In 1428 the news of Joan of Arc's continued successes was brought to the Earl of Salisbury who was then governor of Falaise Castle, and it was from here that he started with an army to endeavour to stop that triumphal progress. In 1450 when the French completely overcame the numerous English garrisons in the towns of Normandy, Falaise with its magnificent position held out for some time. The defenders sallied out from the walls of the town but were forced back again, and notwithstanding their courage, the town capitulated to the Duke of Alencon's army at almost the same time as Avranches and a dozen other strongly defended towns. We can picture to ourselves the men in glinting head-pieces sallying from the splendid old gateway known as the Port des Cordeliers. It has not lost its formidable appearance even to-day, though as you look through the archway the scene is quiet enough, and the steep flight of outside steps leads up to scenes of quiet domestic life. The windows overlook the narrow valley beneath where the humble roofs of the cottages jostle one another for space. There are many people who visit Falaise who never have the curiosity to explore this unusually pleasing part of the town. In the spring when the lilac bushes add their brilliant colour to the russet brown tiles and soft creams of the stonework, there are pictures on every side. Looking in the cottages you may see, generally within a few feet of the door, one of those ingenious weaving machines that are worked with a treadle, and take up scarcely any space at all. If you ask permission, the cottagers have not the slightest objection to allowing you to watch them at their work, and when one sees how rapidly great lengths of striped material grow under the revolving metal framework, you wonder that Falaise is not able to supply the demands of the whole republic for this class of material.

Just by the Hotel de Ville and the church of La Trinite stands the imposing statue of William the Conqueror. He is mounted on the enormous war-horse of the period and the whole effect is strong and spirited. The most notable feature of the exterior of the church of La Trinite is the curious passage-way that goes underneath the Lady Chapel behind the High Altar. The whole of the exterior is covered with rich carving, crocketed finials, innumerable gargoyles and the usual

enriched mouldings of Gothic architecture. The charm of the interior is heightened if one enters in the twilight when vespers are proceeding. There is just sufficient light to show up the tracery of the windows and the massive pointed arches in the choir. A few candles burn by the altar beyond the dark mass of figures forming the congregation. A Gregorian chant fills the building with its solemn tones and the smoke of a swinging censer ascends in the shadowy chancel. Then, as the service proceeds, one candle above the altar seems to suddenly ignite the next, and a line of fire travels all over the great erection surrounding the figure of the Virgin, leaving in its trail a blaze of countless candles that throw out the details of the architecture in strong relief. Soon the collection is made, and as the priest passes round the metal dish, he is followed by the cocked-hatted official whose appearance is so surprising to those who are not familiar with French churches. As the priest passes the dish to each row the official brings his metal-headed staff down upon the pavement with a noisy bang that is calculated to startle the unwary into dropping their money anywhere else than in the plate. In time the bell rings beside the altar, and the priest robed in white and gold elevates the host before the kneeling congregation. Once more the man in the cocked hat becomes prominent as he steps into the open space between the transepts and tolls the big bell in the tower above. Then a smaller and much more cheerful bell is rung, and fearing the arrival of another collecting priest we slip out of the swinging doors into the twilight that has now almost been swallowed up in the gathering darkness.

The consecration of the splendid Norman church of St Gervais took place in the presence of Henry I. but there is nothing particularly English in any part of the exterior. The central tower has four tall and deeply recessed arches (the middle ones contain windows) on each side, giving a rich arcaded appearance. Above, rises a tall pointed roof ornamented with four odd-looking dormers near the apex. Every one remarks on their similarity to dovecots and one almost imagines that they must have been built as a place of shelter on stormy days for the great gilded cock that forms the weather vane. The nave is still Norman on the south side, plain round-headed windows lighting the clerestory, but the aisles were rebuilt in the flamboyant period and present a rich mass of ornament in contrast to the unadorned masonry of the nave. The western end until lately had to endure the indignity of having its wall surfaces largely hidden by shops and houses. These have now disappeared, but the stone-work has not been restored, and you may still see a section of the interior of the house that formerly used the west end of the south aisle as one of its walls. You can see where the staircases went, and you may notice also how wantonly these domestic builders cut away the buttresses and architectural enrichments to suit the convenience of their own needs.

As you go from the market-place along the street that runs from St Gervais to the suburb of Guibray, the shops on the left are exchanged for a low wall over which you see deep, grassy hollows that come right up to the edge of the street. Two fine houses, white-shuttered and having the usual vacant appearance, stand on steep slopes surrounded by great cedars of Lebanon and a copper beech.

The church of Guibray is chiefly Norman—it is very white inside and there is some round-headed arcading in the aisles. The clustered columns of the nave have simple, pointed arches, and there is a carved marble altarpiece showing angels supporting the Virgin who is gazing upwards. The aisles of the chancel are restored Norman, and the stone-work is bright green just above the floor through the dampness that seems to have defied the efforts of the restorers.

CHAPTER VI

From Argentan to Avranches

Between tall poplars whose stems are splotched with grey lichen and whose feet are grown over with brownish-green moss, runs the road from Falaise to Argentan, straight and white, with scarcely more than the slightest bend, for the whole eight miles. It is typical of the roads in this part of the country and beyond the large stone four or five kilometres outside Falaise, marking the boundary between Calvados and Orne, and the railway which one passes soon afterwards, there is nothing to break the undulating monotony of the boundless plain.

We cannot all hope to have this somewhat dull stretch of country relieved by any exciting event, but I can remember one spring afternoon being overtaken by two mounted gendarmes in blue uniforms, galloping for their very lives. I looked down the road into the cloud of dust raised by the horses' hoofs, but the country on all sides lay calm and deserted, and I was left in doubt as to the reason for this astonishing haste. Half an hour afterwards a group of people appeared in the distance, and on approaching closer, they proved to be the two gendarmes leading their blown horses as they walked beside a picturesque group of apparently simple peasants, the three men wearing the typical soft, baggy cap and blue smock of the country folk. The little group had a gloomy aspect, which was explained when I noticed that the peasants were joined together by a

bright steel chain. Evidently something was very much amiss with one of the peaceful villages lying near the road.

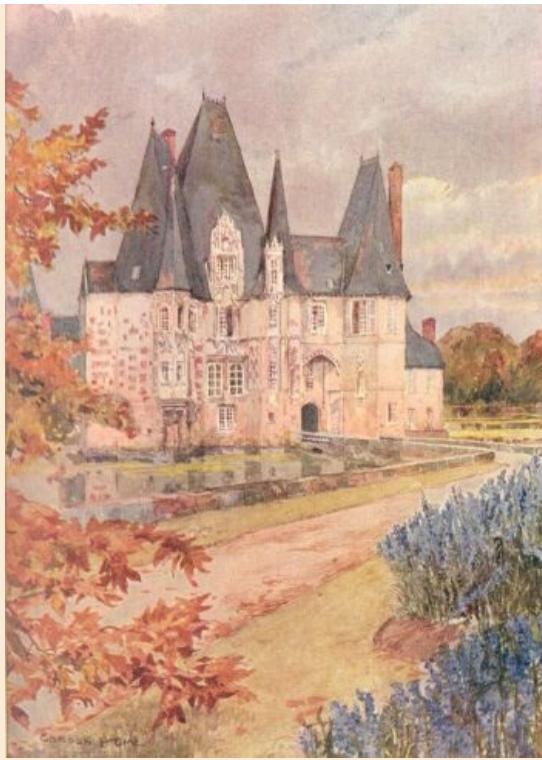
After a time, at the end of the long white perspective, appear the towers of the great church of St Germain that dominate the town where Henry II. was staying when he made that rash exclamation concerning his "turbulent priest." It was from Argentan that those four knights set out for England and Canterbury to carry out the deed, for which Henry lay in ashes for five weeks in this very place. But there is little at the present time at Argentan to remind one that it is in any way associated with the murder of Becket. The castle that now exists is occupied by the Courts of Justice and was partially built in the Renaissance period. Standing close to it, is an exceedingly tall building with a great gable that suggests an ecclesiastical origin, and on looking a little closer one soon discovers blocked up Gothic windows and others from which the tracery has been hacked. This was the chapel of the castle which has been so completely robbed of its sanctity that it is now cut up into small lodgings, and in one of its diminutive shops, picture post-cards of the town are sold.

The ruins of the old castle are not very conspicuous, for in the seventeenth century the great keep was demolished. There is still a fairly noticeable round tower—the Tour Marguerite—which has a pointed roof above its corbels, or perhaps they should be called machicolations. In the Place Henri IV. stands a prominent building that projects over the pavement supported by massive pointed arches, and with this building in the foreground there is one of the best views of St Germain that one can find in the town. Just before coming to the clock that is suspended over the road by the porch of the church, there is a butcher's shop at the street corner that has a piece of oak carving preserved on account of its interest while the rest of the building has been made featureless with even plaster. The carving shows Adam and Eve standing on either side of a formal Tree of Life, and the butcher, who is pleased to find a stranger who notices this little curiosity, tells him with great pride that his house dates from the fifteenth century. The porch of St Germain is richly ornamented, but it takes a second place to the south porch of the church of Notre Dame at Louviers and may perhaps seem scarcely worthy of comment after St Maclou at Rouen. The structure as a whole was commenced in 1424, and the last portion of the work only dates from the middle of the seventeenth century. The vaulting of the nave has a very new and well-kept appearance and the side altars, in contrast to so many of even the large churches, are almost dignified in their somewhat restrained and classic style. The high altar is a stupendous erection of two storeys with Corinthian pillars. Nine long, white, pendant banners are conspicuous on the walls of the chancel. The great altars and the lesser ones that crowd the side chapels are subject to the accumulation of dirt as everything else in buildings sacred or lay, and at certain times of the day, a woman may be seen vigorously flapping the brass candlesticks and countless altar ornaments with a big feather broom. On the north side of the chancel some of the windows have sections of old painted glass, and in one of them there is part of a ship with men in crow's nests backed by clouds, a really vigorous colour scheme.

Keeping to the high ground, there is to the south of this church an open Place, and beyond it there are some large barracks, where, on the other side of a low wall may be seen the elaborately prepared steeple-chase for training soldiers to be able to surmount every conceivable form of obstacle. Awkward iron railings, wide ditches, walls of different composition and varying height are frequently scaled, and it is practice of this sort that has made the French soldier famous for the facility with which he can storm fortifications. The river Orne finds its way through the lower part of the town and here there are to be found some of the most pleasing bits of antique domestic architecture. One of the quaintest of these built in 1616 is the galleried building illustrated here, and from a parallel street not many yards off there is a peep of a house that has been built right over the stream which is scarcely less picturesque.

The church of St Martin is passed on entering Argentan from Falaise. Its east end crowds right up against the pavement and it is somewhat unusual to find the entrances at this portion of the building. The stained glass in the choir of St Martin is its most noticeable feature—the pictures showing various scenes in the life of Christ.

As in all French towns Argentan knows how to decorate on fete days. Coming out of the darkness of the church in the late twilight on one of these occasions, I discovered that the town had suddenly become festooned with a long perspective of arches stretching right away down the leafy avenue that goes out of the town—to the north in one direction, and to St Germain in the other. The arches were entirely composed without a single exception of large crimson-red Chinese lanterns. The effect was astonishingly good, but despite all the decoration, the townsfolk seemed determined to preserve the quiet of the Sabbath, and although there were crowds everywhere, the only noise that broke the stillness was that of the steam round-about that had been erected on a triangular patch of grass. The dark crowds of people illuminated by flaring lights stood in perfect quiet as they watched the great noisy mass of moving animals and boats, occupied almost entirely by children, keep up its perpetual dazzle and roar. The fair—for there were many side-shows—was certainly quieter than any I have witnessed in England.



A long, straight road, poplar-bordered and level, runs southwards from Argentan to Mortree, a village of no importance except for the fact that one must pass through it if one wishes to visit the beautiful Chateau d'O. This sixteenth century mansion like so many to be seen in this part of France, is in a somewhat pathetic state of disrepair, but as far as one may see from the exterior, it would not require any very great sum to completely restore the broken stone-work and other signs of decay. These, while perhaps adding to the picturesqueness of the buildings, do not bring out that aspect of carefully preserved antiquity which is the charm of most of the houses of this period in England. The great expanse of water in the moat is very green and covered by large tracts of weed, but the water is supplied by a spring, and fish thrive in it. The approach to the chateau across the moat leads to an arched entrance through which you enter the large courtyard overlooked on three sides by the richly ornamented buildings, the fourth side being only protected from the moat by a low wall. It would be hard to find a more charming spot than this with its views across the moat to the gardens beyond, backed by great masses of foliage.

Going on past Mortree the main road will bring one after about eight miles to the old town of Alencon, which has been famed ever since the time of Louis XIV. for the lace which is even at the present day worked in the villages of this neighbourhood, more especially at the hamlet of Damigny. The cottagers use pure linen thread which is worth the almost incredible sum of £100 per lb. They work on parchment from patterns which are supplied by the merchants in Alencon. The women go on from early morning until the light fails, and earn something about a shilling per day!

The castle of Alencon, built by Henry I. in the twelfth century, was pulled down with the exception of the keep, by the order of Henry of Navarre, the famous contemporary of Queen Elizabeth. This keep is still in existence, and is now used as a prison. Near it is the Palais de Justice, standing where the other buildings were situated.

The west porch of the church of Notre Dame is richly ornamented with elaborate canopies, here and there with statues. One of these represents St John, and it will be seen that he is standing with his face towards the church. A legend states that this position was taken by the statue when the church was being ransacked by Protestants in the sixteenth century.

Another road from Argentan is the great *route nationale* that runs in a fairly direct line to Granville. As one rides out of the town there is a pretty view on looking back, of St Germain standing on the slight eminence above the Orne. Keeping along by that river the road touches it again at the little town of Ecouche. The old market hall standing on massive pillars, is the most attractive feature of the place. Its old tiled roof and half-timbered upper storey remind one forcibly of some of those fortunate old towns in England that have preserved this feature. The church has lost its original nave, and instead, there is a curious barn-like structure, built evidently with a view to economy, being scarcely more than half the height of the original: the vacant space has been very roughly filled up, and the numerous holes and crevices support a fine growth of weeds, and a strong young tree has also taken root in the ramshackle stone work. From the central tower, gargoyles grin above the elaborately carved buttresses and finials in

remarkable contrast to the jerry-built addition.

Passing through rich country, you leave the valley of the Orne, and on both sides of the road are spread wide and fascinating views over the orchard-clad country that disappears in the distant blue of the horizon. Wonderful patches of shadow, when large clouds are flying over the heavens, fall on this great tract of country and while in dull weather it may seem a little monotonous, in days of sunshine and shade it is full of a haunting beauty that is most remarkable.

About seven miles from Argentan one passes Fromentelle, a quiet hamlet full of thatched cottages and curious weathercocks, and then five miles further on, having descended into the valley of the little river Rouvre, Briouze is entered. Here there is a wide and very extensive market-place with another quaint little structure, smaller than the one at Ecouche, but having a curious bell-turret in the centre of the roof. On Monday, which is market day, Briouze presents a most busy scene, and there are plenty of opportunities of studying the genial looking country farmers, their wives, and the large carts in which they drive from the farms. In the midst of the booths, you may see a bronze statue commemorating the "Sapeurs, pompiers" and others of this little place who fell in 1854.

Leaving the main road which goes on to Flers, we may take the road to Domfront, which passes through three pretty villages and much pleasant country. Bellau, the first village, is full of quaint houses and charming old-world scenes. The church is right in the middle on an open space without an enclosure of any description. Standing with one's back to this building, there is a pretty view down the road leading to the south, a patch of blue distance appearing in the opening between the old gables. To all those who may wish to either paint or photograph this charming scene, I would recommend avoiding the hour in the afternoon when the children come out of school. I was commencing a drawing one sunny afternoon—it must have been about three o'clock—and the place seemed almost deserted. Indeed, I had been looking for a country group of peasants to fill the great white space of sunny road, when in twos and threes, the juvenile population flooded out towards me. For some reason which I could not altogether fathom, the boys arranged themselves in a long, regular line, occupying exactly one half of the view, the remaining space being filled by an equally long line of little girls. All my efforts failed to induce the children to break up the arrangement they had made. They merely altered their formation by advancing three or four paces nearer with almost military precision. They were still standing in their unbroken rows when I left the village.

Passing a curious roadside cross which bears the date 1741 and a long Latin inscription splashed over with lichen, one arrives at La Ferriere aux Etangs, a quaint village with a narrow and steep street containing one conspicuously old, timber-framed house. But it is scarcely necessary to point out individual cottages in this part of Normandy, for wherever one looks, the cottages are covered with thick, purple-grey thatch, and the walls below are of grey wooden framework, filled in with plaster, generally coloured a creamy-white. When there are deep shadows under the eaves and the fruit trees in blossom stand out against the dark thatch, one can easily understand how captivating is the rural charm of this part of Normandy. Gradually the road ascends, but no great views are apparent, although one is right above the beautiful valley of the Varennes, until quite near to Domfront. Then, suddenly there appears an enormous stretch of slightly undulating country to the south and west. As far as one can see, the whole land seems to be covered by one vast forest.



But though part of this is real forest-land, much of it is composed of orchards and hedgerow trees, which are planted so closely together that, at a short distance, they assume the aspect of close-growing woods. The first impression of the great stretch of forest-land does not lose its striking aspect, even when one has explored the whole of the town. The road that brings one into the old town runs along a ridge and after passing one of the remains of the old gateways, it rises slightly to the highest part of the mass of rock upon which Domfront is perched. The streets are narrow and parallel to accommodate themselves to the confined space within the walls. At the western end of the granite ridge, and separated from the town by a narrow defile, stands all that is left of the castle—a massive but somewhat shapeless ruin. At the western end of the ramparts, one looks down a precipitous descent to the river Varennes which has by some unusual agency, cut itself a channel through the rocky ridge if it did not merely occupy an existing gap. At the present time, besides the river, the road and railway pass through the narrow gorge.

The castle has one of those sites that appealed irresistibly to the warlike barons of the eleventh century. In this case it was William I., Duc de Belleme, who decided to raise a great fortress on this rock that he had every reason to believe would prove an impregnable stronghold, but although only built in 1011, it was taken by Duke William thirty-seven years later, being one of the first brilliant feats by which William the Norman showed his strength outside his own Duchy. A century or more later, Henry II., when at Domfront, received the pope's nuncio by whom a reconciliation was in some degree patched up between the king and Becket. Richard I. is known to have been at the castle at various times. In the sixteenth century, a most thrilling siege was conducted during the period when Catherine de Medicis was controlling the throne. A Royalist force, numbering some seven or eight thousand horse and foot, surrounded this formidable rock which was defended by the Calvinist Comte de Montgommery. With him was another Protestant, Ambroise le Balafre, who had made himself a despot at Domfront, but whose career was cut short by one of Montgommery's men with whom he had quarrelled. They buried him in the little church of Notre-Dame-sur-l'Eau—the wonderfully preserved Norman building that one sees beneath one's feet when standing on the ramparts of the castle. The body, however, was not long allowed to remain there, for when the royal army surrounded the castle they brought out the corpse and hung it in a conspicuous place to annoy the besieged. Like Corfe Castle in England, and many other magnificently fortified strongholds, Domfront was capable of defence by a mere handful. In this case the original garrison consisted of one hundred and fifty, and after many desertions the force was reduced to less than fifty. A great breach had been made by the six pieces of artillery placed on the hill on the opposite side of the gorge, and through this the besiegers endeavoured to enter. The attenuated garrison, with magnificent courage, held the breach after a most desperate and bloody fight. But after all this display of courage, it was found impossible to continue the defence, for by the next morning there were barely more than a dozen men left to fight. Finally Montgommery was obliged to surrender unconditionally, and not long afterwards he was executed in Paris. You may see the breach where this terrible fight took place at the present day, and as you watch the curious effects of the blue shadows falling among the forest trees that stretch away towards the south, you may feel that you are looking over almost the same scene that was gazed upon by the notable figures in history who have made their exits and entrances at Domfront.

So little has the church of Notre-Dame-sur-l'Eau altered in its appearance since it was built by the Duc de Belleme that, were he to visit the ruins of his castle, he would marvel no doubt that the men of the nine centuries which have passed, should have consistently respected this sturdy little building. There are traces of aisles having existed, but otherwise the exterior of the church can have seen no change at all in this long period. Inside, however, the crude whitewash, the curious assemblage of enormous seventeenth century gravestones that are leant against the walls, and the terribly jarring almost life-sized crucifix, all give one that feeling of revulsion that is inseparable from an ill-kept place of worship. On the banks of the river outside, women may be seen washing clothes; the sounds of the railway come from the station near by, and overhead, rising above the foliage at its feet, are the broken walls and shattered keep from which we have been gazing.

The walls of the town, punctuated by many a quaint tower, have lost their fearsome aspect owing to the domestic uses to which the towers are palpably devoted. One of them appears in the adjoining illustration, and it is typical of the half-dozen or so that still rise above the pretty gardens that are perched along the steep ascent. But though Domfront is full of almost thrilling suggestions of medievalism and the glamour of an ancient town, yet there is a curious lack of picturesque arrangement, so that if one were to be led away by the totally uninteresting photographs that may be seen in the shops, one would miss one of the most unique spots in Normandy.

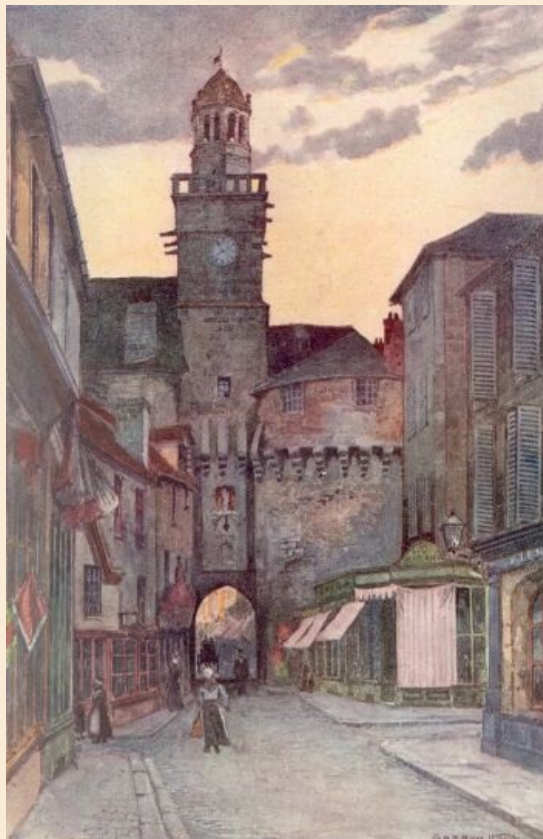
Stretching away towards Flers, there is a tract of green country all ups and downs, but with no distant views except the peep of Domfront that appears a few miles north of the town. Crowning the ridge of the hill is the keep of the castle, resembling a closed fist with the second finger raised, and near it, the bell-cote of the Palais de Justice and the spire of the church break the line of the old houses. Ferns grow by the roadside on every bank, but the cottages and farms are below the average of rustic beauty that one soon demands in this part of France.

Flers is a somewhat busy manufacturing town where cotton and thread mills have robbed the

place of its charm. At first sight one might imagine the church which bears the date 1870 was of considerably greater age, but inside one is almost astounded at the ramshackle galleries, the white-washed roof of rough boards discoloured by damp, and the general squalor of the place relieved only by a ponderous altar-piece of classic design. The castle is still in good preservation but although it dates from early Norman times, it is chiefly of the sixteenth century.

Out in the country again, going westwards, the cottage industry of weaving is apparent in nearly every cottage one sees. The loud click-a-ti-clack—click-a-ti-clack of the looms can be heard on every side as one passes such villages as Landisacq. Everywhere the scenery is exceedingly English, the steep hillsides are often covered with orchards, and the delicate green of the apple-trees in spring-time, half-smothered in pinky-white blossom, gives the country a garden-like aspect. You may see a man harrowing a field on a sudden slope with a cloud of dust blowing up from the dry light soil, and you may hear him make that curious hullaballooing by which the peasants direct their horses, so different from the grunting "way-yup there" of the English ploughman. Coming down a long descent, a great stretch of country to the north that includes the battlefield of Tinchebrai comes into view. It is hard to associate the rich green pastures, smiling orchards, and peaceful cattle, with anything so gruesome as a battle between armies led by brothers. But it was near the little town of Tinchebrai that the two brothers, Henry I., King of England, and Robert Duke of Normandy fought for the possession of Normandy. Henry's army was greatly superior to that of his brother, for he had the valuable help of the Counts of Conches, Breteuil, Thorigny, Mortagne, Montfort, and two or three others as powerful. But despite all this array, the battle for some time was very considerably in Robert's favour, and it was only when Henry, heavily pressed by his brother's brilliant charge, ordered his reserves to envelop the rear, that the great battle went in favour of the English king. Among the prisoners were Robert and his youthful son William, the Counts of Mortain, Estouteville, Ferrieres, and a large number of notable men. Until his death, twenty-seven years later, Henry kept his brother captive in Cardiff Castle, and it has been said that, owing to an effort to escape, Henry was sufficiently lacking in all humane feelings towards his unfortunate brother, to have both his eyes put out. It seems a strange thing that exactly sixty years after the battle of Hastings, a Norman king of England, should conquer the country which had belonged to his father.

The old church of St Remy at Tinchebrai, part of which dates from the twelfth century, has been abandoned for a new building, but the inn—the Hotel Lion d'Or—which bears the date 1614, is still in use. Vire, however, is only ten miles off, and its rich mediaeval architecture urges us forward.



Standing in the midst of the cobbled street, there suddenly appears right ahead a splendid thirteenth century gateway—the Tour de l'Horloge—that makes one of the richest pictures in Normandy. It is not always one can see the curious old tower thrown up by a blaze of gold in the west, but those who are fortunate enough to see such an effect may get a small suggestion of the scene from the illustration given here. The little painted figure of the Virgin and Child stands in a niche just over the arch, and by it appears the prayer "Marie protege la ville!"

One of the charms of Vire is its cleanliness, for I can recall no unpleasant smells having interfered with the pleasure of exploring the old streets. There is a great market on the northern side of the town, open and breezy. It slopes clear away without any intervening buildings to a great expanse of green wooded country, suggestive of some of the views that lie all around one at Avranches. The dark old church of Notre Dame dates mainly from the twelfth century. Houses and small shops are built up against it between the buttresses in a familiar, almost confidential manner, and on the south side, the row of gargoyles have an almost humorous appearance. The drips upon the pavement and shops below were evidently a nuisance, and rain water-spouts, with plain pipes leading diagonally from them, have been attached to each grotesque head, making it seem that the grinning monsters have developed a great and unquenchable thirst. Inside, the church is dark and impressive. There are double rows of pillars in the aisles, and a huge crucifix hangs beneath the tower, thrown up darkly against the chancel, which is much painted and gilded. The remains of the great castle consist of nothing more than part of the tall keep, built eight hundred years ago, and fortunately not entirely destroyed when the rest of the castle came down by the order of Cardinal Richelieu. An exploration of the quaint streets of Vire will reveal two or three ancient gateways, many gabled houses, some of which are timber-framed visually, and most of them are the same beneath their skins of plaster. The houses in one of the streets are connected with the road by a series of wooden bridges across the river, which there forms one of the many pictures to be found in Vire.

Mortain is separated from Vire by fifteen miles of exceedingly hilly country, and those who imagine that all the roads in Normandy are the flat and poplar bordered ones that are so often encountered, should travel along this wonderful switch-back. As far as Sourdeval there seems scarcely a yard of level ground—it is either a sudden ascent or a breakneck rush into a trough-like depression. You pass copices of firs and beautiful woods, although in saying beautiful it is in a limited sense, for one seldom finds the really rich woodlands that are so priceless an ornament to many Surrey and Kentish lanes. The road is shaded by tall trees when it begins to descend into the steep rocky gorge of the Cance with its tumbling waterfalls that are a charming feature of this approach to Mortain. High upon the rocks on the left appears an enormous gilded statue of the Virgin, in the grounds of the Abbaye Blanche. Going downwards among the broken sunlight and shadows on the road, Mortain appears, picturesquely perched on a great rocky steep, and in the opening of the valley a blue haze suggests the great expanse of level country towards the south. The big parish church of the town was built originally in 1082 by that Robert of Mortain, who, it will be remembered, was one of the first of the Normans to receive from the victorious William a grant of land in England. The great tower which stands almost detached on the south-west side is remarkable for its enormously tall slit windows, for they run nearly from the ground to the saddle-back roof. The interior of this church is somewhat unusual, the nave and chancel being structurally one, and the aisles are separated by twenty-four circular grey pillars with Corinthian capitals. The plain surfaces of the walls and vaulting are absolutely clean white, picked out with fine black lines to represent stone-work—a scarcely successful treatment of such an interior! On either side of the High Altar stand two great statues representing St Guillaume and St Evroult.

To those who wish to "do" all the sights of Mortain there is the Chapel of St Michael, which stands high up on the margin of a great rocky hill, but the building having been reconstructed about fifty years ago, the chief attraction to the place is the view, which in tolerably clear weather, includes Mont St Michel towards which we are making our way.

A perfectly straight and fairly level stretch of road brings you to St Hilaire-du-Harcout. On the road one passes two or three large country houses with their solemn and perfectly straight avenues leading directly up to them at right angles from the road. The white jalousies seem always closed, the grass on the lawns seems never cut, and the whole establishments have a pathetically deserted appearance to the passer-by. A feature of this part of the country can scarcely be believed without actually using one's eyes. It is the wooden chimney-stack, covered with oak shingles, that surmounts the roofs of most of the cottages. Where the shingles have fallen off, the cement rubble that fills the space between the oak framing appears, but it is scarcely credible that, even with this partial protection, these chimneys should have survived so many centuries. I have asked the inmates of some of the cottages whether they ever feared a fire in their chimneys, but they seemed to consider the question as totally unnecessary, for some providence seems to have watched over their frail structures.



St Hilaire has a brand new church and nothing picturesque in its long, almost monotonous, street. Instead of turning aside at Pontaubault towards Mont St Michel, we will go due north from that hamlet to the beautifully situated Avranches. This prosperous looking town used, at one time, to have a large English colony, but it has recently dwindled to such small dimensions that the English chaplain has an exceedingly small parish. The streets seem to possess a wonderful cleanliness; all the old houses appear to have made way for modern buildings which, in a way, give Avranches the aspect of a watering-place, but its proximity to the sea is more apparent in a map than when one is actually in the town. On one side of the great place in front of the church of Notre Dame des Champs is the Jardin des Plantes. To pass from the blazing sunshine and loose gravel, to the dense green shade of the trees in this delightful retreat is a pleasure that can be best appreciated on a hot afternoon in summer. The shade, however, and the beds of flowers are not the only attractions of these gardens. Their greatest charm is the wonderful view over the shining sands and the glistening waters of the rivers See and Selune that, at low tide, take their serpentine courses over the delicately tinted waste of sand that occupies St Michael's Bay. Out beyond the little wooded promontory that protects the mouth of the See, lies Mont St Michel, a fretted silhouette of flat pearly grey, and a little to the north is Tombelaine, a less pretentious islet in this fairyland sea. Framed by the stems and foliage of the trees, this view is one of the most fascinating in Normandy. One would be content to stay here all through the sultry hours of a summer day, to listen to the distant hum of conversation among white-capped nursemaids, as they sew busily, giving momentary attention to their charges. But Avranches has an historical spot that no student of history, and indeed no one who cares anything for the picturesque events that crowd the pages of the chronicles of England in the days of the Norman kings, may miss. It is the famous stone upon which Henry II. knelt when he received absolution for the murder of Becket at the hands of the papal legate. To reach this stone is, for a stranger, a matter of some difficulty. From the Place by the Jardin des Plantes, it is necessary to plunge down a steep descent towards the railway station, and then one climbs a series of zigzag paths on a high grassy bank that brings one out upon the Place Huet. In one corner, surrounded by chains and supported by low iron posts, is the historic stone. It is generally thickly coated with dust, but the brass plate affixed to a pillar of the doorway is quite legible. These, and a few fragments of carved stone that lie half-smothered in long grass and weeds at a short distance from the railed-in stone, are all that remain of the cathedral that existed in the time of Henry II.

It must have been an impressive scene on that Sunday in May 1172, when the papal legate, in his wonderful robes, stood by the north transept door, of which only this fragment remains, and granted absolution to the sovereign, who, kneeling in all humbleness and submission, was relieved of the curse of excommunication which had been laid on him after the tragic affair in the sanctuary at Canterbury. In place of the splendid cathedral, whose nave collapsed, causing the demolition of the whole building in 1799, there is a new church with the two great western towers only carried up to half the height intended for them.

From the roadway that runs along the side of the old castle walls in terrace fashion there is another wonderful view of rich green country, through which, at one's feet, winds the river See. Away towards the north-west the road to Granville can be seen passing over the hills in a perfectly straight line. But this part of the country may be left for another chapter.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK NORMANDY: THE SCENERY & ROMANCE OF ITS ANCIENT TOWNS, PART 2 ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE
THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive

Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.