PIERRE NOZIÈRE
BY ANATOLE FRANCE

THE WORKS OF ANATOLE FRANCE
IN AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION
EDITED BY FREDERIC CHAPMAN

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A TRANSLATION BY

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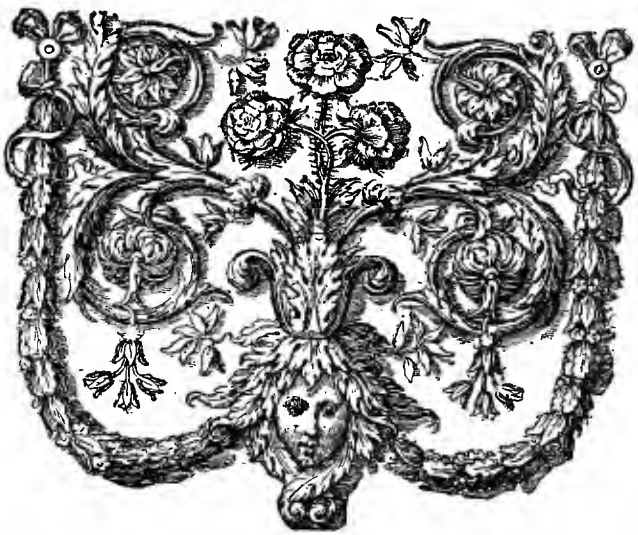

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CHILDHOOD

PIERRE NOZIÈRE

CHAPTER I

THE SCRIPTURES AND THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

DERIVED my earliest impressions of the Universe from my old Picture Bible, a set of seventeenth-century engravings in which the Garden of Eden was depicted with the exuberant freshness of a Dutch landscape. There were Brabantine steeds, and rabbits and little pigs and fowls, and sheep with bushy tails; and Eve was shown airing her Flemish beauty among the beasts of Creation. But her charms were lost on me. I was more interested in the horses.

The seventh plate—I can see it now—represented Noah's Ark with the animals going in two by two. The Ark in that picture was a sort of long galley surmounted by a wooden château with a double pent roof. It bore an exact resemblance to a Noah's Ark that had been given me for a Christmas present, all smelling of resin; and this resemblance

I looked upon as an important proof of the truth of the Scriptures.

Of the Garden of Eden and the Flood I never grew weary. I liked to look at Samson, too, carrying off the gates of Gaza. The city of Gaza was delicious, with its towers and steeples, its rivers and little clumps of woodland dotted all about. Samson was to be seen making off with a gate under each arm. He interested me much. He was my friend, and in this, as in many other respects, I have not changed. I love him still. He was very strong and very simple, without a shadow of guile. He was the first of the Romantics, and by no means the least sincere.

It was, I admit, with but qualified success that I endeavoured to follow the precise sequence of events. I used to get hopelessly lost in the wars of the Philistines and the Amalekites. What chiefly excited my wonder in these nations was their headgear. The variety of it still amazes me. There were helmets and crowns, bonnets and turbans of the most remarkable description. Never, so long as I live, shall I forget the head-dress which Joseph wore in Egypt. Call it a turban if you will—a turban it was, and a big one at that; but it was surmounted by a species of pointed bonnet whence issued an aigrette and a couple of ostrich feathers. It was unquestionably a formidable covering.

But the New Testament had a more intimate charm for me, and I retain a delightful recollection of the kitchen-garden in which Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalen. "And she deemed," so ran the text, "that he was the owner of the garden." Then, too, in the seven works of compassion, Jesus Christ, the outcast, the prisoner, and the wanderer, was shown gazing at a lady who was coming towards Him adorned with a collar of Venetian lace, like Anne of Austria; while, from the terrace of a red-brick château, a cavalier in plumed felt hat, hand on hip, and bravely dight in high funnel-shaped boots, was signing to a little page, bearing a ewer and a goblet, to pour out some wine for the wanderer, whose head was encircled by an aureole. How gracious, how mysterious, and, withal, how familiar the scene appeared; and Jesus in the green arbour at the foot of a Henri IV summer-house, with our own moist and delicate-toned sky overhead—how much less remote He seemed from men, how much more closely bound up with the things of this world!

Every evening, by the light of the lamp, I used to sit and turn the pages of my old Bible, while sleep, the delicious drowsiness of childhood, invincible as the coming of love, would gradually overpower me and bear me away in its warm and shadowy embrace, my head still full of sacred

scenes. And patriarchs and apostles, and ladies in lace-collars, would prolong in my dreams their supernatural existence. For me my Bible was the most absolute of realities, and to it I strove my hardest to adapt the universe.

In my notion of it, the universe did not extend far beyond the Quai Malaquais where, in the words of the kindly Virgin of Alba, I had first begun to breathe the light of day. And how delicious was the joy with which I used to breathe in the light which floods those regions of storied elegance, the Tuileries, the Louvre, and the Palais Mazarin. When I was five years old, those tracts of the universe which lay beyond the Louvre, on the farther bank of the Seine, were still largely unexplored by me. I had a closer acquaintance with the southern bank of the river, because my home was there. I had followed the rue des Petits Augustins to its very end, and there, in truth, I fancied were the confines of the world.

Nowadays the rue des Petits Augustins is known as the rue Bonaparte. In the days when it led to the verge of the world, I had observed that the edge of the abyss was guarded in that direction by a boar of monstrous size and by four stone giants seated, in flowing robes, each with a book in his hand. They dwelt in a pavilion overlooking a great pond in the midst of an open space bordered

with trees and hard by a vast church. Ah, you present-day folk, you know not what I mean; it is all a riddle to you. Alas, the ill-fated boar of the Maison Bailli is now no more! He succumbed long ago, after dragging out a life of misery and scorn. The younger generation never beheld him mercilessly maltreated by a herd of schoolboys, never saw him crouching down mournfully blinking through a half-shut eye in an attitude of dolorous resignation. The van-yard where he was subsequently given a home, the van-yard all painted yellow and adorned with frescoes representing pantechnicons drawn by steeds of dapple-grey, has now given place to a five-storey house. And to-day when I pass by the fountain in the Place Saint-Sulpice, the four stone giants thrill me no more with a sense of mysterious dread. Like the rest of the world, I know their names, their genius, and their history: they are Bossuet, Fénelon, Fléchier, and Massillon.

Westwards, too, I had reached the confines of the universe. The tumbled heights of Chaillot, the Trocadéro hill, then still a wilderness a-bloom with moon-daisies and fragrant with wild thyme; surely that was the world's uttermost extremity, the edge of the abyss, the haunt of the one-legged man who propels himself by leaping, of the man-fish, and of that headless being with his face on his

chest. Round about the bridge which, in this direction, formed the boundary of the universe, the quays were drab and dusty. There was not a fiacre to be seen, nothing save a few solitary, straggling wayfarers, and occasionally, leaning over the parapet of the bridge, a little soldier or two gazing down into the flowing waters and pensively trimming a withy. At the feet of the old Roman knight who occupies the right-hand corner of the Champ de Mars, an old woman used to sit against the parapet selling apple-puffs and cocoa. The cocoa she kept in a glass bottle stoppered with a lemon. Over all floated the dust and the silence. But now new suburbs are linked up by the Pont d'Jéna. The region has lost the desolate appearance it wore when I was a child. The very dust that the wind stirs on the roadway is not as the dust of those days. They are new faces and new customs on which the Roman knight looks down. But he grieves not. He is made of stone.

But what I knew the best, and loved the best of all, were the banks of the Seine. Thither my old nurse Nanette used to take me day by day, and there I found once more the Noah's Ark of my illustrated Bible. For such, I little doubted, was the boat at the Samaritaine with its palm tree, whence issued, in wondrous wise, a thin trickle of sooty smoke. What more likely than that, the

floods being over and gone, the Ark should have been turned into a bath.

Eastwards I had reached the Zoological Gardens and had mounted the Seine as far as the Pont d'Austerlitz. That was the limit of my wanderings. The boldest of explorers sooner or later comes to a point beyond which farther advance is impossible, and, in my case, that point was the Pont d'Austerlitz. My legs were little and Nanette's legs were old, and, despite my curiosity and hers—for we both of us loved long walks—we had always been compelled to come to a stop at a seat under a tree, in sight of the bridge and opposite a woman who sold Nanterre cakes. Nanette was only a little bit taller than I, a most blameless creature, who wore dresses of flowered print and white goffered caps. I believe her notions of the world were just as unsophisticated as those which shaped themselves in my brain as I trotted along at her side. We prattled to each other quite at our ease. True she never listened to what I said to her; but that did not matter, her answers were always appropriate. We were on terms of the closest affection.

And so she would sit there on her seat letting her thoughts peacefully wander on humble, homely themes, while I would pass the time digging away with my spade at the foot of a tree or gazing at

the bridge which, for me, marked the limit of the world.

What lay beyond? Like the learned, I was reduced to conjecture. Nevertheless, there presented itself to my mind an hypothesis of so likely a nature that I looked upon it as a certainty. I thought that beyond the Pont d'Austerlitz must lie the marvellous regions of the Bible. There was a hill on the right bank of the Seine that I knew full well, for I had seen it in my pictures overlooking Bathsheba's bathing-place. On the other side of it, I thought, must lie the Holy Land and the Dead Sea. I deemed that if it were possible to go farther one would see the Almighty in robe of blue, His white beard floating out upon the wind, and Jesus walking on the waters, and, perchance, one who of all was nearest to my heart, to wit, Joseph, who might well be living still, since he was very young when his brothers sold him into bondage.

I was confirmed in these ideas by the reflection that the Zoological Gardens were none other than the Garden of Eden, grown a little older perhaps, but after all not greatly changed. Of this I had fewer doubts than of anything else, for I had proofs to my hand. I had seen the Garden of Eden in my Bible, and my mother had described it to me. "The Garden of Eden," she had told me, "was

a very pleasant place, with beautiful trees and all the animals of creation in it." Now the Zoological Gardens tallied exactly with the Garden of Eden as depicted in my Bible, and as my mother described it to me, save that the animals had been confined behind iron bars, as a result of the progress of civilisation and the loss of innocence. And the Angel who guarded the entrance with flaming sword had given place to a soldier in red breeches.

I flattered myself that this was rather an important discovery of mine. I kept it to myself, I confided it to no one, not even to my father, though I was incessantly plying him with questions as to the origin, cause, and purpose of all things visible and invisible. But, touching my identification of the Garden of Eden with the Zoological Gardens, I held my tongue.

There were several reasons for my silence. To begin with, there are some things which a child of five finds it very difficult to explain. It is the fault of the grown-ups, they are so dreadfully feeble at grasping the things that little children try to tell them. Then, again, I was glad to have the truth all to myself; it gave me a sense of superiority over other people. I also had a feeling that if I said anything about it, I should get laughed at and made fun of, and that, so, all my fine notions would be shattered; which would have grieved

me sorely. Nay—why should I not out with it?—I felt instinctively how frail my notions were. Perhaps, deep down in my heart, in the dim-lit consciousness of my being, I may have regarded them as rash and over-bold, fallacious and reprehensible. All this sounds very involved. But then who can imagine all the complicated thoughts that fill the head of a child of five?

Those walks in the Zoological Gardens are the last recollections I have retained of my nurse Nanette—Nanette who was so old when I was so young, and so little when I was so little. I had not reached the end of my sixth year when she left us, regretfully, and regretted by my parents and by me. She did not quit us to die, but to go I know not whither. And so she went out of my life after the manner of those fairies of the countryside, of whom it is said that, after taking on the semblance of a benevolent grandam in order to hold converse with men, they vanish into thin air.

CHAPTER II

THE SPECTACLE SELLER

IGHT and life were sweet in those days. Every breeze that stirred was laden with thrills of gladness. The seasons, as they fulfilled their appointed revolution, had ever some new and undreamt-of joy to reveal, and the face of the universe was radiant with the smile of young delight. It was all because I was six years old. Even then I was beset with that eager longing which was fated to fill my days with joy and unrest and to lure me on to seek those things which man may never find.

My cosmography—I had a cosmography—was immense. I held the Quai Malaquais, on which my room looked out, to be the centre of the world. The green-papered room where my mother used to set my little bed close to her own; that room, so sweet, so hallowed, and so homely, seemed to me to be the very spot whereon descended the heavenly rays of divine grace, as we see in devotional pictures. Howbeit these four walls, though I knew them so well, were fulfilled of mystery.

By night, as I lay in my cot, weird forms would present themselves to my vision, and, lo! on a sudden, this room, so snug and warm, where the dying embers glowed upon the hearth, would be invaded by a swarm of supernatural beings.

Hosts of horned imps would come and dance their circlets there, and then, slowly, a female form, sombre and as though of marble wrought, would pass by weeping; and not until I was older did I come to know that those same elfin shapes had only danced their frolic measures in my brain, and that the dark-stoled woman who had been wont to move with measured, melancholy tread across the scene had been but the shadow of my own thoughts.

According to my theory—a theory that undeniably possessed the artlessness which forms the distinctive charm of primitive theogonies—the Earth lay spread out in a wide circle round about my house. Day by day I used to see people passing to and fro in the streets, and they appeared to me to be absorbed in some highly complicated and diverting game—the Game of Life. There seemed to be a great number of them—more than a hundred, perhaps.

While I never for a moment doubted that their toils, their deformities, and their sufferings were part and parcel of some sort of spectacular entertainment, I did not believe that their lives were passed in the perfectly serene surroundings, in the condi-

tions of absolute immunity from care, in which my own lot was cast. Truth to tell, I did not look on them as being quite so real as myself. I was not thoroughly convinced that they had any flesh and blood existence at all, and when I gazed down on them from my window and saw what tiny little things they looked as they made their way across the Pont des Saints-Pères, I thought them more like toys than men and women. Thus I was nearly as happy as the baby giant in the story who sits on a mountain and plays with the pine trees and the châlets, the cows and the sheep, the shepherds and the shepherdesses. In brief, I held the world to be a big box of toys, the sort of thing they make at Nuremberg, the lid of which is shut down every night when all the nice little men and all the nice little women have been carefully packed up within.

The morning air was sweet and limpid then, and the green leaves rustled innocently in the gentle breeze. Down along the quay, my brave Quai Malaquais, when Nanette had gone, Madame Mathias, with eyes like coals of fire and a heart as soft as wax, Madame Mathias would guide my childish steps. And all manner of rare old armour and precious Dresden china, bright as flowers, gleamed and glittered in the windows. There the Seine, as it flowed on before my eyes, charmed me with the grace that is native to lakes and rivers, the

loveliness of living waters, the source and fount of life. I used to gaze with wondering, childish eyes upon that miracle of beauty, the river, which by day carries upon its bosom its burden of boats, and at night adorns itself with jewels and flowers of light. My mother used to tell me that rivers wind their way to the ocean, and that the waters of the Seine flow and flow unceasingly; but I repelled this idea, it seemed too mournful for belief. Unscientific perhaps I was; but I was cherishing an illusion that I loved, for amid the ills of life nothing is more sorrowful than the mutability of all that is.

The Louvre and the Tuileries, whose stately outlines were daily before my eyes, awoke great doubts in my mind. I could not bring myself to believe that those edifices were the handiwork of ordinary craftsmen. At the same time my philosophy of Nature would not suffer me to entertain the idea that their walls had risen by enchantment. After mature reflection, I came to the conclusion that these palaces had been built by beautiful ladies and gorgeous cavaliers arrayed in velvet and satin and lace, resplendent with gold and gems, and wearing plumed hats.

It may afford matter for astonishment that a child of six should have entertained notions so inaccurate. But it must be borne in mind that I had scarcely ever been out of Paris, where my

father, Dr. Nozière, was compelled by his professional duties to remain all the year round.

True, I had made one or two little train journeys, but these had not brought about any enlargement in my geographical knowledge. Geography was a sadly neglected science in those days. That in regard to the moral world, too, I should have harboured ideas so remote from reality will also excite remark. But, again, it must please be remembered that I was happy, and happy people do not know a great deal about life. Sorrow is man's great instructress. She it is to whom he owes his knowledge of Art, of Poetry, and of Morality. She it is who inspires him with heroism and with pity. She it is who sets a value upon life by vouchsafing that it may be offered in sacrifice. It is Sorrow, the August, the Benign, that has imparted the quality of infinity to earthly love.

Ere yet sorrow had begun to bestow her lessons upon me I was the witness of a dreadful occurrence, which reduced my notions of the physical and moral world to utter chaos. But I must first explain that a man who sold spectacles used to display his wares on the Quai Malaquais, along by the wall of the beautiful Hôtel de Chimay, whose two great carved doors, surmounted by a Louis XIV pediment, give access, with such an air of stately elegance, to the Court of Honour within.

I was on a perfectly familiar footing with this same vendor of spectacles. Always, when she took me for my daily walk, Madame Mathias would stop at his stall and hold a little conversation with him.

"Well, Monsieur Hamoche, and how are things going?" she would ask with an interested air. And then the talk would begin, and I, all ears and eyes, would examine the spectacles, pince-nez, medals, and mineralogical specimens which made up his stock-in-trade, and which I looked upon as treasures of great value. I was particularly struck with the number of blue-tinted spectacles contained in Monsieur Hamoche's little glass-cases, and to this day I incline to the view that Monsieur Hamoche overestimated the importance of blue spectacles in an ordinary, everyday, optician's business. Be that as it may, his glasses, tinted and untinted, slumbered undisturbed in their boxes. No one ever looked at them, or at his medals and mineralogical specimens, and rust ate into the steel frames of his spectacles.

"Well, and how's business; better?" Madame Mathias would ask.

And Monsieur Hamoche, with folded arms and a far-away look in his eyes, would make no reply.

He was a little man with a perfectly bald and excessively large head, dark fiery eyes, sallow cheeks, and a long blue-black beard.

His dress, like his manner, was peculiar. He wore a long frock-coat of olive-green cloth which had turned yellow on the back and shoulders. The tails of it reached right down to his feet. On his head he carried the tallest tall hat ever seen—a crinkled, shiny thing, a prodigious monument of poverty and pride. No, his business did not prosper. Monsieur Hamoche did not look enough like a spectacle-dealer, nor his spectacles enough like the spectacles that people buy.

Unkind fate it was that had made a spectacle seller of him, and there beneath the shadow of the Hôtel de Chimay he used to stand, looking like Napoleon at St. Helena. He, too, was a vanquished Titan.

From my scanty recollection of them, his conversations turned on strange adventures in distant lands. He would talk of an endless voyage over the Pacific, of bivouacs beneath the red cedar-trees, of opium-smoking Chinamen. He would tell how a Spaniard had knifed him down some alley in Sacramento, and how he had been robbed of all his gold by Malays. His hands were tremulous, and his lips were everlastingly uttering the tragic word *gold.*

Like many another of his fellow-men, Monsieur Hamoche had set out for California in quest of gold. His dreams had run on those rich lodes of ore just hidden beneath the earth in that miraculous

land where one only needs to scratch the surface of the soil in order to disclose treasures beyond the dreams of avarice.

Alas, all he had brought home with him from the Sierra Nevada was fever and hunger and an incurable distaste for work, and poverty.

Madame Mathias used to listen to him with her hands folded over her apron, and, with a toss of her head, she would say :

"God is not always just."

After that we used to pursue our way, she and I, perplexed and pensive, bending our steps in the direction of the Champs Elysées. The Pacific Ocean, California, Spaniards, Chinamen, Malays, hidden treasure, mountains and rivers of gold—all these things clearly had no place in the world as I conceived of it, and the words of the spectacle-seller taught me that the earth did not end, as I had been wont to think, at the Place Saint-Sulpice and the Pont d'Jéna.

Monsieur Hamoche enlarged my mental outlook, and I never beheld his pinched face with its eager, feverish expression without being thrilled by the mystery of the Great Beyond. From him I learned that the earth is wide, wide enough to get lost in, and that it is full of strange and terrible things. When I was near him I felt, too, that life was not merely a pastime, that it was fraught with very

genuine pain. It was this particularly that used to cause me profound amazement. For I came to see plainly enough that Monsieur Hamoche was not happy. "He hasn't enough to keep body and soul together," Madame Mathias used to say.

And my mother, too, would exclaim, "Poor soul, he is in dreadful want."

And so it was all over with my early confidence in the benevolence of Nature; I had lost it, and no one will be surprised to learn that I have never regained it since.

Though he disturbed my peace of mind, Monsieur Hamoche interested me greatly. Occasionally I used to meet him of an evening on our staircase. There was nothing very surprising about that, for he occupied a garret in the same house. When it began to grow dusk, Monsieur Hamoche used to toil painfully up the stairs with a long black box under each arm. In these two boxes he doubtless stored his spectacles and bits of pebble; but they used to look like two little coffins and I felt afraid, as though this unhappy creature were a ghoul or a body-snatcher. And a thief in very truth he was, since he filched away my sense of confidence, my peace of mind; for now I began to have misgivings about everything, seeing that here, beneath our very roof, in the house of blessedness itself, there dwelt one who was unhappy.

His garret looked out on to the court, and my nurse told me that if you wanted to stand upright in it you had to poke your head out through the skylight. Whereat, not being always of a serious turn in those days, I would laugh consumedly as I pictured Monsieur Hamoche in his garret with his hat perpetually on his head. I used to see, in my mind's eye, that same prodigious headgear sticking out above the roof, overtopping the chimney-pots, and it seemed to me that all it lacked was one of those zinc arrows that turn about with the wind.

At six years old the mind is mobile. For some time past the spectacle man, with his hat and his two coffins, had been absent from my thoughts. But one evening about half-past six—it was in the spring, I remember, and we had sat down to dinner, for we dined betimes on the Quai Malaquais in those days—Madame Mathias, who was much looked up to in our house, came to my father and said:

"The spectacle seller is up in his garret very ill; he is in a raging fever."

"I will go and see him," said my father, getting up from the table.

A quarter of an hour later he returned.

"Well," said my mother, "what is the matter?"

"Impossible to say at present," replied my father,

taking up his table-napkin again with the calmness of a man accustomed to every phase of human suffering. "I should be inclined to think it is brain-fever. Of course he won't hear of going to the hospital; but that is where he will have to go. It's the only place in which he can be properly looked after."

"Is he going to die?" I asked; but my father's only reply was a slight shrug of the shoulders.

Next day was fine and sunny. I was by myself in the dining-room. The sunlight came flooding in through the open window, and with it the tireless twittering of the sparrows and the scent of the lilac, cultivated by our concierge, who was an ardent gardener. I was playing with a brand-new Noah's Ark. It had made my fingers all sticky, and about it clung that new-toy smell that I loved so dearly. I was busy arranging the animals in couples on the table, and, lo! the horse and the bear, the elephant and the stag, were marching two by two towards the ark that was to save them from the flood.

Little do people know how toys set children's souls a-dreaming. This peaceful and diminutive procession of all God's creatures inspired me with a gracious and mystical idea of Nature. My heart was brimful of tenderness and love. It was an inexpressible joy to be alive.

Suddenly there came a thud as of something that had fallen from a height in the court. It was a dull, heavy sound, the like of which I had never heard before, and it sent a chill of horror through me.

What mysterious instinct was it that made me shudder with a sickening fear? How was it that, on the instant, I knew the horrible thing that had occurred? There, in the middle of the court, I beheld a ghastly sight, a shapeless, human bundle, a hideous heap all oozing with blood. The whole house was filled with the noise of shrieking women and agonised cries for help. My old nurse came into the dining-room looking like a ghost.

"My God," she cried, "the spectacle-seller has thrown himself out of the window in a fit of delirium!"

From that day onwards I ceased, once and for all, to look upon life as a pastime or upon the world as a box of toys. Little Pierre Nozière's theory of the universe had been shovelled away with old, forgotten, exploded things; it had gone to dwell with the Ptolemaic system and the map of the world as the ancients knew it, in the Limbo of Human Errors.

CHAPTER III

MADAME MATHIAS

ADAME MATHIAS was a sort of half-housekeeper, half-nurse, and, being old and grumpy, was treated with great consideration in our establishment. My father and mother, who had given me over to her charge, never called her anything but Madame Mathias. I was therefore greatly surprised one day to discover that she had a Christian name, a young girl's name, a pretty-pretty name; in fact, that she was called "Virginie." Madame Mathias had had her trials and tribulations, and she was proud of them. Hollow-cheeked, with little sharp, beady eyes and wisps of grey hair straggling out beneath her cap; a little black, dried-up creature with toothless, loose-lipped mouth, grim projecting chin, always silent and mournful—such was Madame Mathias, and she used to get on my father's nerves.

Mamma, who ruled the household with the vigilance of a queen bee, used to confess that she dared not find fault with this dour old soul, who

would say nothing to her, but just gaze at her in silence with the eyes of a hungry wolf. Everyone looked with awe on Madame Mathias. I was the only one in the house who was not afraid of her. But I knew her, I had divined her secret, I knew that she was weak.

At eight years old I had proved myself a better psychologist than my father at forty, though he was of a meditative cast of mind, observant enough as idealists go, and possessed of a few notions on the art of physiognomy, which he had picked up from Lavater. I remember hearing him discourse at length on Napoleon's death-mask, which Dr. Antomarchi had brought back with him from St. Helena. He had a plaster cast of it hanging in his study, and the thing had been the terror of my childhood. I must, however, confess that I had a great advantage over my father. I loved Madame Mathias, and Madame Mathias loved me. I was inspired by sympathy; he had only science to guide him. Besides, he did not really try very hard to discover Madame Mathias' true character. As he derived no pleasure from the sight of her, he had probably never looked at her closely enough to see that a pretty little nose, a nose of cherubic dumpiness, had, with a singular effect of contrast, been planted in the middle of that austere mask beneath which she presented herself to the world.

And in truth it was not a nose to arrest the attention. It passed practically unnoticed amid the scene of ruin and desolation that was displayed by the countenance of Madame Mathias. Nevertheless, it was not unworthy of remark. As I now call up its image from the inmost recesses of my memory, it stirs me with an indefinable sense of tenderness and sorrow, of humility and regret. I was the only one in the world who noticed it, and even I did not begin to appreciate its true significance until it had become a faint and far-off memory, retained by no one but myself. Never have my thoughts lingered on this subject with a livelier interest than they do to-day. Ah, Madame Mathias, what would I not give to see you again now as you used to be in your lifetime here upon earth, to see you knitting stockings, a needle perched up above your ear, your goffered cap, and your huge barnacles bestriding a nose all too feeble to support them! Those barnacles of yours were always slipping down, and you were for ever getting impatient with them for doing so, for you never learned to bear the irremediable with a smile, and, amid the trials of your daily life, you always wore the aspect of a much-wronged soul. Ah, Madame Mathias, Madame Mathias, what would I not give to see you once again in your habit as you lived! or at least to know what fate has been yours these

thirty years that have gone by since you quitted this world—this world in which such little joy was yours, in which you filled so small a place, but which, withal, you loved so dearly. Yes, I knew it well enough, you were in love with Life, and you clung to the things of this world with the desperate tenacity of the unhappy. Could I but have tidings of you now, what deep content, what infinite peace, would be mine! Into that lowly coffin wherein you vanished from our sight that fair spring morning—it was, I remember, one of those mild, spring days you used to love so well—you bore with you countless things that were mine no less than yours; things that touched the heart, a whole world of ideas brought into being by the association of your old age and my childhood. What have you done with them, Madame Mathias? Do you bethink yourself, in the region where you are tarrying now, of the long walks we used to take together, you and I?

Day by day when lunch was over we used to sally forth together, bending our steps toward the deserted avenues, toward the loneliness of the Quai de Javel and the Quai de Billy, and the melancholy Plaine de Grenelle, where the dust drove mournfully before the wind. With my little hand clasped in hers, for this gave me confidence, I used to let my gaze roam over the gaunt immensity of the scene. But between

that old woman, that dreamy little boy, and those forlorn suburban regions there reigned a harmony profound. Those dusty trees, those red-walled taverns, an old pensioner who would pass by now and then cockade in hat, the cake woman who sat with her back against the parapet beside her lemon-stopped bottles of cocoa—such was the world in which Madame Mathias felt at her ease, for Madame Mathias was a true daughter of the people.

It chanced one summer's day, as we were making our way along the Quai d'Orsay, that I begged her to go down to the water's edge, so that we might get a nearer view of the cranes that were at work unloading gravel from some barges, a request to which she gave her immediate assent. She always did what I wished, because she loved me, and love deprived her of all her strength. Down there on the river brink, holding on to my nurse's print dress, I stood gazing with wondering curiosity at the machine which, after the fashion of a patient diving bird, drew forth huge basketfuls from the barge, and then with a mighty semicircular sweep of its long crane proceeded to deposit them on the bank. As the heap of gravel accumulated, men in blue jean trousers, stripped to the waist, their skins tanned a brick-red colour, came up and threw it in shovelfuls against a screen.

I tugged at the print dress with might and main.

"Madame Mathias, what are they doing it for? Tell me, Madame Mathias!"

She made no answer. She had gone down on her knees to pick something up from the ground. At first I thought it was a pin. She found two or three pins every day and stuck them in her bodice. This time, however, it was not a pin. It was a pocket-knife with a copper handle, representing the Colonne Vendôme.

"Let me look; let me look at the knife, Madame Mathias. Give it to me. Why don't you give it to me, Madame Mathias?"

Mute and motionless, she was gazing at the little knife with rapt attention, and a sort of wild look that almost made me feel afraid.

"Madame Mathias, what is the matter? Tell me, Madame Mathias."

In feeble tones, quite unlike her customary voice, she murmured:

"He used to have one exactly like it."

And I:

"Who, Madame Mathias? Who used to have one exactly like it?"

And as I kept tugging away at her dress she turned and looked at me with seared eyes, in which nought save black and red were visible. She seemed surprised.

"Who?" said she; "why, Mathias of course!"

"Mathias? What Mathias?" I demanded.

She drew her hand across her eyes, which looked all red and drawn, put the knife carefully away in her pocket underneath her handkerchief, and said:

"Mathias, my husband."

"You were married to him then?"

"Yes, worse luck for me. I was well off once. I had a mill of my own at Annot, near Chartres. He ran through everything. Meal, donkey, mill and all—everything went. He spent every sou, and then, when I had nothing left, off he went. He was an old soldier—an Imperial Grenadier—who had been wounded at Waterloo. He had picked up his bad ways in the army."

All this greatly astonished me. I pondered for a while and then said:

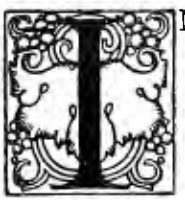
"Your husband wasn't a husband like papa, was he, Madame Mathias?"

Madame Mathias had ceased crying, and there was something of pride in her tones as she replied:

"You don't come across men like Mathias nowadays. He had everything a man could wish for. He was tall, strong, handsome, and gay. Always smart, always a rose in his buttonhole. He was a man you were bound to take to, was Mathias!"

CHAPTER IV

THE SCRIVENER



N the modest establishment which my mother governed with wisdom and prudence Madame Mathias was not, strictly speaking, either housekeeper or nurse, though she busied herself with work in the house and took me out for my daily walks. Her ripe age, her grim features, her sombre and austere disposition, gave her, although a servant, a quasi-independent status. Even when going about the most ordinary duties she wore an expression of tragic gloom befitting one who had been visited by misfortune. The memory of the wrongs she had suffered was dear to her, and she cherished it like a priceless jewel within her bosom. Long habits of taciturnity had compressed her lips tightly together, and she never cared to say much about her past.

To my immature imagination she seemed like the shell of a house that had long since been gutted by fire. All I knew was that she had been born the same year as the king died, as she herself was wont

to tell us; that she was the daughter of a well-to-do farmer; that she had been left an orphan when quite a child; and that at the age of twenty-two she had married a fine dashing fellow, to wit, a certain Captain Mathias. This gentleman had been put on half-pay by the Bourbons, and he used to speak of their action to the Knights of the Lily, whom he politely dubbed the companions of Ulysses. My parents' knowledge went a little farther. They knew that Captain Mathias had run through his wife's money on her farm at Le Rocher de Cancale, and that, leaving the poor thing to starve, he had gone off a-wenching elsewhere. In the early days of the July monarchy an extraordinary chance brought Madame Mathias face to face with him as he was coming out of a tavern in the rue du Rambuteau, where, freshly shaven and trim, his ruddy complexion set off by his white hair, with a rose in his buttonhole, he gave advice daily to tradesmen at loggerheads with their customers.

He used to sit drafting documents with a bottle of *vin blanc* in front of him to remind him of old times, for he had been a rare tippler before he joined the army.

Madame Mathias took him under her wing again and led him home in triumph, but he did not stop there long. One fine day he made off with a dozen *écus* that Madame Mathias had secreted in her

mattress. Since then nothing had been heard of him. It was commonly supposed that he had died in some hospital or other, a *finale* that was regarded with general satisfaction.

"A happy release for you," my father would remark to Madame Mathias; but whenever he said that, her eyes filled with scalding tears, her lips quivered, and she made no answer.

One spring day Madame Mathias, her redoubtable black shawl wrapped tightly about her shoulders, took me out at the customary hour for my walk. But it was not to the Tuileries that we went that day—the Tuileries, our royal and familiar pleasaunce, where, discarding my bat and ball, I took such frequent delight in pressing my ear to the pedestal of the Tiber statue and listening to the mysterious voices within it. Nor yet did she lead me in the direction of those silent, melancholy boulevards, whence, over the dusty trees, you could see the dome beneath which Napoleon slumbers in his red marble tomb. That day she chose a new direction. Through streets thronged with pedestrians and carriages we went—streets with rows of shops on either side, where countless objects were displayed to the view. I gazed in wonderment at their multitudinous shapes, though I knew nothing of their uses. Some of the shops were crowded with tall statues adorned with paint and gilt.

"What are they, Madame Mathias?" I asked.

"Oh, nothing," said she, with the severity of a true *citoyenne* reared amid the traditions of the Paris faubourgs. "Nothing; only Saints."

And so it was that, in my tender, childish years, while my mother was gently instilling into my mind a reverence for sacred images, Madame Mathias was imbuing me with a contempt for superstition.

From the narrow street in which we now found ourselves, a big square, planted with little trees, suddenly dawned on my view; and when my eyes lighted again on that strange pavilion with its priests of carven stone seated with their feet in the pool of a fountain, thoughts of my old nurse Nanette came thronging in upon me. For it was with Nanette that, in those days of vague and misty memory, I had first made acquaintance with that scene; and now when I beheld it all again, my heart overflowed with longing for my lost Nanette. I felt that I must run away calling out "Nanette, Nanette!" but whether it was my faltering will, or some obscure delicacy of feeling, or just weak-mindedness, I made no mention of Nanette to Madame Mathias.

We crossed the square and plunged into a network of streets paved with rough cobbles, over which a big church flung its dark shadow. Above its portals, which were adorned with pyramids and balls all covered with lichen, a statue would here

and there be seen striking an imposing attitude, high in the air. Pigeons in couples flitted about before us as we went.

After circling the big church, we took a street bordered by carved porches and old walls, over which acacias drooped their bloom-laden branches. On the left, in a recess, stood a little shop with a glass front and "Public Scrivener" written up over the doorway. Letters and envelopes were stuck all over the window. From the zinc roof there issued a stove-pipe, with a great cowl at the top of it.

Madame Mathias lifted the wooden latch and, pushing me before her, went into the shop. An old man, leaning over a table, looked up as we entered. Mutton-chop whiskers bordered his pink cheeks. His white hair stood erect above his forehead as though a gust of wind had caught it. His black frock-coat was faded and shiny in places. In his buttonhole he wore a bunch of violets.

"Why, it's the old woman!" said he, without getting up; adding, with a glance of no particular friendliness at myself, "And that's your little bourgeois, eh?"

"Oh," said Madame Mathias, "he's a good little fellow, though he leads me a dance sometimes."

"Humph," grunted the scrivener, "he's a sickly-looking little chap. They won't make much of a soldier of *him*."

Madame Mathias was gazing at the old scrivener with eyes beaming with tenderness. "Well," she said—and there was something strangely soft and limpid in her voice—"well, Hippolyte, and how are you getting on?"

"Oh, right enough in myself," said he, "but trade is slack. Three or four letters at twopence-halfpenny a piece for a whole morning, that's about the size of it."

Then shrugging his shoulders as though to rid himself of his cares, he brought out a bottle and glasses from underneath the table and poured out some white wine.

"Here's to you, old girl!"

"And here's to you, Hippolyte!"

The wine was sharp, and I pulled a wry face when I tasted it.

"Why, he's just like any little missy," exclaimed the old fellow. "When I was his age, I knew a tidy bit already about wine and women. But they don't make men of my sort nowadays. They've broken the mould."

Then leaning his hand heavily on my shoulder, he continued:

"You didn't know, friend, that I had served under 'le petit caporal' and been right through the campaign in France. I was at Craonne and Fère Champenoise; and the morning before Athis,

Napoleon came and asked me for a pinch of snuff. Ah, the Emperor! I almost seem to see him now. Short and stout and sallow, eyes that shot lightning at you, and a queer sort of stillness about him. If only they hadn't betrayed him. But there, all the 'Whites' are knaves, every mother's son of 'em."

He poured himself out another glass of wine. Madame Mathias, throwing off her air of silent admiration, rose and said, "I must be going now on the little boy's account."

With that she produced a couple of francs from her pocket and slipped them into the scrivener's hand. He took them with an air of sublime indifference.

As soon as we got outside I asked who the gentleman was, and Madame Mathias made answer in tones of mingled love and pride, "That was Mathias, dear—that was Mathias."

"But papa and mamma say he's dead."

She shook her head joyfully as she replied, "Oh, he will see me into the grave and many another after me, old and young too."

Then she grew thoughtful.

"Pierre, don't let anyone know you have seen Mathias."

CHAPTER V

THE TWO TAILORS

HE tunic doesn't seem a very suitable thing for schoolboys. It is not a civilian garment, and to insist on their wearing it is to encroach unnecessarily upon their independence. I wore one myself, and my recollections of it are not of the pleasantest.

I must mention that, connected with the school from which I emerged with such a plentiful lack of knowledge, was a skilful tailor whose name was Grégoire. In imparting to his tunics what the blameless tunic must have—to wit, stylish shoulders, chest, and hips, Monsieur Grégoire was without a rival. Monsieur Grégoire fashioned your skirts with singular artistry. The breeches, too, were worthy of the tunic; full about the thigh, and terminating with a little gaiter-like finish over the boot.

If you were rigged out by Monsieur Grégoire and only knew how to wear your *képi*—it was "form" in those days to have the peak turned up—you were the last word in style.

Monsieur Grégoire was an artist. When, on Mondays, during midday recreation, he appeared in the playground with his green baize toilet-bag, containing two or three masterpieces in the way of tunics, flung over his arm, the boys for whom these splendid productions were destined stopped playing base and accompanied Monsieur Grégoire into one of the ground-floor class-rooms to try on their new uniforms. Grave and attentive, Monsieur Grégoire proceeded to make all manner of little marks on the cloth with a piece of white chalk. At the end of a week, in the same green toilet-bag, he would bring back an irreproachable costume.

Unluckily Monsieur Grégoire charged a high price for his tunics; and this he had a right to do, for he was without a peer. If you want luxuries you have to pay for them, and Monsieur Grégoire was a tailor *de luxe*. I can see him now, pale and melancholy, with his beautiful white hair, and his blue eyes that seemed to look at you so wearily behind his gold-rimmed spectacles. He was a most distinguished-looking man, and, without the green baize toilet-bag, you might have taken him for a magistrate. Monsieur Grégoire was the tailor of the smart set. He had to allow long credits, for his customers were rich—that is to say, they were people who ran up long bills! It's only poor people who pay cash. There is nothing meritorious in it.

They do it because they can't get credit. Monsieur Grégoire was aware that nothing paltry or humdrum was expected of him. He felt that he owed it to his customers and to himself to produce at long intervals big things in the way of bills.

Monsieur Grégoire had two price-lists according to the quality of the goods supplied. For example, he made a difference between the fine gold palm-leaves specially embroidered on the collar itself, and the ready-made palm-leaves worked on an oblong piece of cloth and less carefully finished, which had to be stitched on to the collar. Thus there were two scales of charges: the high and the low. But the low scale was ruinous enough. The boys who were turned out by Grégoire constituted a race apart, an aristocratic caste, a sort of "upper-ten" in two grades, according to the sort of collar they had to their tunics. My parents' position never permitted me to entertain the hope of becoming a member of Monsieur Grégoire's clientèle.

My mother was a very thrifty woman; she was also very charitable. Her desire to befriend others often led her to act in a manner that revealed her goodness of heart—and of hearts the world never contained a kinder—but it occasioned me a few not inconsiderable inconveniences. Somehow or other she found out a protégé called Rabiou, a little fellow with an apostolic head set on a stunted gnome-like

body, who lived in the rue des Canettes. Rabiou followed the joint occupation of concierge and tailor, and as it appeared that this same Rabiou was on the verge of starvation and was withal a deserving man, she forthwith began to cast about for a means of helping him. She gave him presents; but Rabiou had many mouths to feed, and besides that, he had pride; and, as I have already remarked, my mother was not rich. The little she could give him was not enough to set him on his legs. She next began to cudgel her brains to devise work for him, and she ordered as many pairs of trousers, waistcoats, frock-coats, and great-coats for my father as her common-sense would allow.

My father stood to gain nothing by the arrangement. The garments of our sartorial concierge became him but indifferently. But that, good simple soul, he never so much as noticed. My mother noticed it though, but she said—and she was right—that my father was a very fine-looking man and that he adorned his clothes if his clothes did not adorn him; adding that a man need never despair about his attire if it be warm enough and stitched with honest thread by a God-fearing man and a father of twelve.

The worst of it was that, though he had supplied my father with many more clothes than he wanted, Rabiou was no better off than before. His wife

had a delicate chest, and his twelve children were all anæmic. A porter's lodge in the rue des Canettes is not calculated to make children look as strong as those English boys who go in for nothing but rowing and athletics. The tailor-concierge having no money to buy physic, my mother took it into her head to order a tunic of him for me. She might as well have told him to make her a dress.

The idea of a tunic gave Rabiou pause. An agonised sweat broke out on his apostolic brow. But he was brave, and he was a mystic. He set his hand to the task. He said his prayers, he spared himself no pains, and he got no sleep. He was deeply moved, grave, and pensive. Imagine it! A tunic, a close-fitting garment, a garment of precision! And I a long, weedy thing, with no figure, most difficult to fit. At last the poor soul got through with the business. He finished the tunic. But what a tunic it was! Shoulders all wrong, all sloppy about the chest, it got sloppier and sloppier as it went down till it ended in a great paunch. But the cut of the thing might have been borne with if it had not been such a terrific colour, a crude, staring blue, and the collar was sewn not with palms, but with lyres. Lyres, ye gods! Rabiou little thought that I was to become a very distinguished poet. He knew not that deep down in my desk I was cherishing a notebook containing verses entitled "Early

Blossoms." I had thought of that name myself and I liked it. But the sartorial concierge knew nothing about all that. The lyres were entirely his own idea. To complete the disaster, the collar, which should have fitted close about the neck, displayed a tendency to sag and gape in the most unseemly fashion.

Like the crane, I had a long neck, and as it rose up from this gaping collar it presented a lamentable and woebegone appearance. I thought there was something wrong about it when I was trying it on, and I mentioned it to the tailor-concierge. But he, good man, by God's grace had made a tunic—which was more than he had ever expected to do—and he refused to tinker with it lest he should make matters worse. And he was right. With considerable misgivings I asked my mother how I looked. Now she, as I have observed, was a saint, and she replied after the manner of Mrs. Primrose, saying:

"A child is handsome enough, if he be good enough."

And she bade me wear my tunic with meekness.

I wore it for the first time on a Sunday, as was befitting since it was new. Heavens! what a reception I got the first time I appeared in it in the playground during recreation.

"Here comes Sugar-Loaf, old Sugar-Loaf!" yelled all the fellows with one accord.

It was a trying moment. At a glance they had taken in the unsightly bulge, the too bright blue, the lyres and the gaping collar. They all started ramming stones down the back of my neck by that ill-fated opening in the collar of my tunic. Handful after handful went down and still the void was not filled.

The little tailoring concierge of the rue des Canettes had never bethought him how many stones could be crammed into the dorsal pouch with which he had provided me.

Surfeited with stones, I began to lay about me with my fists. The others returned my blows and I hit back again. Then they let me alone. Next Sunday the battle was renewed, and so long as I wore that unhappy tunic I was tormented in all manner of ways and condemned perpetually to pass my days with gravel down my neck.

It was odious. To complete my discomfiture, our *surveillant*, the young Abbé Simler, so far from standing by me in the storm, heartlessly left me to my fate. Up till then the Abbé, observing the gentleness of my disposition and the interest—remarkable in one so young—which I displayed in grave and serious matters, had admitted me, in company with certain other meritorious pupils, to discussions of whose charm and value I was fully sensible. I was one of the select few to whom, on

Sundays, when recreation was longer than on ordinary days, the Abbé Simler expatiated with pride on the greatness of the sacerdotal office, and even condescended to give an account of the trying situations with which an officiating priest might be confronted in the celebration of the sacred mysteries.

The Abbé Simler treated these subjects with a lofty seriousness that filled my heart with joy. One Sunday, strolling leisurely up and down the playground, he began a story about a priest who discovered a spider in the chalice after the consecration.

"Imagine," he said, "how upset and pained he must have been! Still he did not lose his presence of mind. He showed himself equal to the terrible emergency. Delicately he took hold of the insect between his thumb and forefinger, and—" At this point in the narrative the bell rang for vespers. The Abbé Simler, who was a great stickler for the rules it was his duty to enforce, stopped short and ordered the boys to fall in. I was keenly anxious to know how the priest had dealt with the sacrilegious spider, but owing to that tunic of mine my curiosity was fated never to be satisfied.

Next Sunday, when he saw me got up in so ludicrous a garb, the Abbé Simler smiled discreetly and kept me at a distance. He was an excellent man; still he was but a man; and he showed no anxiety to share in the ridicule of which I was the

object, or of compromising his cassock by fellowship with my tunic what time I was having stones stuffed down my neck, that being, as I have explained, the incessant occupation of my class-mates. His attitude was not unreasonable. Besides, he was afraid to come too near me on account of the missiles which were hurtling about me from all points of the compass. His apprehensions were justifiable. Peradventure, too, my tunic shocked his sense of the beautiful, for whose development he may have been indebted to the ceremonies of public worship and the pomps of the Church. Be that as it may, one thing is certain: he banished me from those Sunday discussions by which I set such great store. This ostracism he brought about by means of skilful and effectual evasions. He never said an uncivil word to me, for he was a most polite person.

Whenever I approached, he studiously looked another way and spoke in an undertone so that I should not hear what he was saying. And when, with some shyness, I ventured to interpose a question now and again, he affected not to hear, and possibly he really did not hear. It did not take me long to realise that I was not wanted, and thenceforth I ceased to make one of the Abbé Simler's intimate circle.

This reverse caused me some little mortification.

After a time my schoolfellows' pranks roused my ire. The blows I received I learned to repay, and with interest. That is a useful art to acquire. I blush to confess that I have never employed it since. But some of the fellows on whom I bestowed a good drubbing became my ardent sympathisers.

So it is that, owing to the shortcomings of a bungling tailor, I shall remain in perpetual ignorance of the story of the priest and the spider. The conclusion of the whole matter was that while, on the one hand, I had to put up with innumerable annoyances, I made on the other a few good friends, which shows how true it is that in human affairs good and evil are everlastingly intermingled. But in this case the evil outweighed the good. That tunic wore for ever. I did my utmost to make it unpresentable, but all my efforts were vain. My mother was right. Rabiou was an honest man, a God-fearing man, and his cloth was sound.

CHAPTER VI

MONSIEUR DEBAS

PERHAPS it was one of the necessities of modern progress that a station should be built upon the site of the mouldering Cour des Comptes of pleasant memory ; that the trees should be uprooted from our quays ; that underground trains and steam tramways should make their way along this once peaceful riverside.

Here, beside the banks of the glorious river, on these quays of old renown, hotels, I doubt not, will spring up, built and decorated after the hideous American style which the French people are now affecting, that same people who, for century upon century, enriched the builder's art with all that graceful fancy and good sense could inspire. I am informed that the city's interests require it, and that the time has come when bookshops and bookstalls must give place to drinking-bars and cafés.

I repine not, for I know that change is of the essence of life, and that, if they would continue to exist, cities, like men, must needs undergo perpetual

transformation. Though it were foolish to lament over the inevitable, one may at least recall how fair and gracious was the aspect of those old buildings whose time-worn outlines we shall never behold again.

If ever the consciousness of being a son of this city of generous ideals thrilled me with delight, it was when I took my walks along those quays whose very stones, from the Palais Bourbon to Notre-Dame, are eloquent of the story of one of the most glorious adventures of the human spirit, the story of the France that was and of the France that is to-day. There stands the Louvre glittering like a jewel, the Pont Neuf which has borne on its sturdy back, once so terribly crooked, three centuries or more of Paris folk who, going homeward from their daily toil, would loiter to watch the antics of cheap-Jack or mountebank, fling their caps in the air and shout "Long live the King!" as the gilded coach drove by, put their shoulders to a gun-carriage with wild huzzahs for Liberty in the days of the Revolution, or, shoeless though they were, rally to the tricolour when their country was beset by the foe. The whole Genius of France has passed in long procession over those venerable arches, whose carven faces, some wreathed in smiles, some grim and forbidding, seem to symbolise the suffering and the glory, the hopes and the fears, the loves and the

hates of which they have been the silent witnesses through the centuries. There, too, is the Place Dauphine, with its brick houses not a whit changed since the days when Manon dwelt there in her maiden-chamber. There is the Palais de Justice, the spire of the Sainte Chapelle restored to its ancient glory, the Hôtel de Ville and the towers of Notre-Dame. There, more than in any other spot, one is conscious of the toil of bygone generations, of the progress of the ages, of the continuity of the race, and of the sacredness of the work wrought by our forefathers, to whom we owe our freedom and our studious leisure. It is there that I am warmed with the tenderest and most whole-hearted affection for the land of my birth, and there it is borne in upon me with unmistakable clearness that it is the mission of Paris to be a light to lighten the world. From those Paris streets, whose very stones have risen so often in the cause of Justice and Liberty, have sprung those truths which bring consolation and freedom to mankind. And here, among these buildings which have such moving tales to tell, I feel the certainty that Paris will never prove false to her vocation.

If the Seine is the river of glory, we may surely admit that the books ranged upon its quays made for it a fitting coronal.

I have just been reading over again the excellent book in which Monsieur Octave Uzanne treats of

the manners and customs of the book-vendors of the olden times. There we learn that the habit of exposing books for sale on the quay parapets dates back to the seventeenth century at least, and that in the days of the Fronde the ledges of the Pont Neuf were stocked with romances. Messieurs the licensed booksellers, having both shops and painted signs, could not brook these humble competitors, who were accordingly suppressed by edict at the same time as le Mazarin, thus proving that the lowly have their tribulations no less than the great.

Nevertheless, the dispersal of the book-vendors was deplored by the learned, and there is still extant a memorial drawn up in their favour by a certain bibliophile in the year 1697, more than forty years after their expulsion.

"In former times," says this man of learning, "a goodly part of the Pont Neuf was occupied by booksellers who brought thither many good books which they sold full cheaply, whereby they did good service unto bookish men, who for the most part are possessed of little pelf.

"On these stalls you may find those curious little treatises such as are not commonly met with, and others which, albeit well known, folk go not to procure from the bookseller, and which they buy for no other reason save that they be cheap. Then again there be old editions of ancient authors

which may be had for little money, and which the poorer folk do buy for that they lack the wherewithal to purchase themselves new ones."

This petition is from the hand of Etienne Baluze, who was a worthy man and lived among his books without finding therein the dignified repose for which he yearned. These are his concluding words: "Wherefore it seemeth right that, as hath been done hitherto, these bookstalls should be suffered to remain, not only for the sake of the poor vendors themselves who are in sore straits, but also out of regard for our men of letters, for whom much consideration hath ever been shown in France, because, by reason of these inhibitions, they now lack the opportunity to procure good books at a bargain."

In the eighteenth century, to the delight of all book-lovers, the exiles regained possession of their parapets. Nevertheless, according to Monsieur Octave Uzanne, they were disquieted by fresh alarms in 1721. In that year they were prohibited by royal decree from displaying their books for sale, under penalty of confiscation, fine, and imprisonment. Rhymed petitions were drawn up on behalf of the booksellers. "Every morn," so one of them runs, "these poor folk came in quest of a little gain, with all their household; son, apprentice, wife, and daughter, staggering under loads of learned books of every kind, wherewith they dressed their

stalls and bedecked the thoroughfare, to the great advantage of every man of leisure and to the honour of the vendor. Every day, save Sundays and holidays, when no man does business, they stood there to sell to the public the means to enrich their minds with knowledge." [1]

One cannot say that these are the accents of Grief, with her sad-hued weeds about her, giving stately utterance to her sorrow, neither can the plaint be described as eloquent; but it was sound sense and it gained a hearing. In no long time the booksellers were back again in their old haunts on the quays. My childhood was passed on the Quai Voltaire, and I remember them in my young days as a prosperous and contented race. Monsieur de Fontaine de Resbecque has sung of them in a little book the title of which I have forgotten, a

[1] "Ces pauvres gens, chaque matin,
Sur l'espoir d'un petit butin,
Avecque toute leur famille :
Garçons, apprentis, femme et fille,
Chargeant leur col et plein leurs bras,
D'un scientifique fatras
Venaient dresser un étalage
Qui rendait plus beau le passage,
Au grand bien de tout reposant,
Et honneur dudit exposant,
Qui, tous les jours dessus ses hanches
Excepté fêtes et dimanches,
Temps de vacances à tout trafic,
Faisoit débiter au public
Denrée à produire doctrine
Dans la substance cérébrine."

circumstance which I find highly embarrassing. Baron Haussmann, who used to have an inordinate affection for straight lines, nearly had them turned away, because he thought the parapets would look more neat and trim without them. But he was talked out of that; and, thenceforth, the only thing that disturbed their equanimity was an occasional visit from some rascally inspector who would come when least expected to measure their stalls and see that no one was occupying more than his allotted space. They were, it was said, very prone to overstep the boundaries. Nevertheless I held them to be full worthy folk. It was my lot to become pretty closely acquainted with one of their number, a Monsieur Debas. He was a very long way from being one of the most flourishing of his tribe, and I can never think of him now without awakening feelings of affection and regret.

For more than half a century he stood his boxes on the parapet of the Quai Malaquais over against the Hôtel de Chimay. In the evening of his days, worn by the wind and the rain and the sun, he began to take on a resemblance to those stone statues that moulder in church porches. He still held himself erect, but every day he grew frailer and more like to the dust into which all earthly things are fated to crumble and disappear. He had outlived all his acquaintance, all those with

whom his lot had been cast. Like a derelict orchard his stock-in-trade was reverting to a state of nature. The leaves of the trees came down and mingled with the leaves of his books, and the birds of the air let fall upon his wares that which they dropped on Old Tobias' upturned visage, robbing him of his eyesight, as he lay dozing in his garden.

People used to be afraid lest the autumn wind, which sweeps along the quays and whirls about the seeds of the plane-trees and the grains of corn that fall from horses' nose-bags, should come with a sudden gust and whisk him away, books and all, into the Seine. However, it was not in the keen sparkling air in which he had lived that he gave up the ghost. He was found dead one morning in the garret where he went to sleep o' nights.

I knew him when I was a child, and I can safely say that his trade was the least of his concerns. It must not be imagined that Monsieur Debas was then the inert and woebegone being he became when Time had metamorphosed him into the stone simulacrum of a bookseller. On the contrary, he displayed, in his palmy days, a quite amazing suppleness of mind and body, and he abounded in good works.

He had espoused a person of singular meekness and so simple-minded that the children shouted after her in the street, but this never perturbed

her, good, guileless soul. Leaving his good-wife to look after his boxes—which she did after the manner of a country wench minding her geese—Monsieur Debas devoted his energies to the performance of a multitude of tasks so diverse in character that we seldom find them undertaken by one and the same individual. Love of his fellow-men was the mainspring of everything he did. His altruism was the unifying centre of all his multifarious activities. Gifted with a fine tenor voice, he used to sing vespers on Sunday in the chapel of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Being a scribe and an accomplished penman, he wrote letters for servant girls and made placards for pedlars. Skilled in the manipulation of saw and jointing-plane, he constructed glass cases for Madame Petit, who had an open-air millinery stall. Madame Petit's husband had deserted her and left her with four children to bring up. He made kites for little boys and girls out of paper, string, and sticks, and sent them up himself in the high September winds.

Year after year, as winter came round, he would fix up people's stoves for them in their garrets with all the skill of the most expert mechanic. He knew enough doctoring to give first aid to the injured, to epileptics, and to people rescued from drowning. If he saw a drunken man stagger and fall, he would set him on his legs again and roundly admonish

him. He would make a dash at the bridles of runaway horses; he would scour after mad dogs. Nor were the prosperous and well-to-do excluded from the sphere of his beneficence. He would bottle their wine for them, all for no reward, and, should it happen that a lady of the Quai Malaquais was in distress because her parrot or her canary had escaped from its cage, he would scurry along the tiles, shin up the chimney-pots, and recapture the fugitive before a crowd of excited spectators. A catalogue of his labours would read like the Works and Days of Hesiod. Monsieur Debas practised all the arts for love of his fellow-men. But his principal concern was the welfare of his country. In this respect he was like a character out of Plutarch. A man of lofty ideals who took his breakfast and his supper seated upon a bench in the open air, he had set himself a standard of morality worthy of an Athenian. The glory and felicity of his country were his perpetual care. Not once, during all the twenty years of his reign, did the Emperor succeed in pleasing him. Monsieur Debas inveighed against the tyrant with an eloquence whose native force was embellished with shreds and patches of famous speeches, for he was a lettered man, and though he never sold his books, he occasionally read them. Though his tastes were exalted, he sometimes gave a homely turn to his expressions

of indignation. As only the river divided him from the Palace, over which the tricolour was hoisted when the sovereign was in residence, he thought that, being so near a neighbour, he was on a sort of familiar footing with "the lodger at the Tuileries," as he called him.

Occasionally "Badinguet" would pass by Monsieur Debas' stall on foot. Monsieur Octave Uzanne relates how one day, in the early part of his reign, Napoleon III happened to be strolling along the Quai Voltaire, attended by one of his aides-de-camp. It was a dull and chilly day in winter. At that period the bookseller whose stall occupied the space between Monsieur Debas' stand and one of the statues on the Quai des Saints Pères, was an old philosopher of a type not far removed from the Cynics of decadent Greece. Like his neighbour, he held money in contempt. He was gifted with wisdom of a superior order; but it was wisdom of the meditative and silent variety. As the Emperor passed by his stall it chanced that this worthy was burning one of his books in a saucepan to warm his aged hands. He bore a close resemblance to that piece of marble sculpture which stands under one of the chestnut trees in the Tuileries, and portrays an old man spreading out the fingers of one hand over a chafing-dish which he holds close to his breast with the other. Curious to know the name of the books

which the old bookseller was thus using to warm himself, Napoleon ordered his aide-de-camp to go and find out what they were.

The latter obeyed, and returning reported to Cæsar that they were *Les Victoires et Conquêtes.*

Napoleon and Monsieur Debas were very close to one another that day. But they did not speak. Were it not that I have a pious and ingenuous regard for the truth, I should invent some story about the Emperor, his aide-de-camp, and the two booksellers, which would, I am sure, be worthy to rank with the marvellous tales of the Khalif Haroun-al-Raschid and Giafar, his grand vizier, wandering by night through the streets of Bagdad. But, while keeping my narrative within the strictest limits of the truth, I can at least put it on record that people of established merit, though not of exalted public position, used to take pleasure in conversing with Monsieur Debas. To bear me out I should appeal to Amédée Hennequin, Louis de Ronchaud, Edouard Fournier, Xavier Marmier, were they still of this world. Monsieur Debas' most intimate gossips were a couple of priests, excellent men both of them in matters concerning faith and morals, but strikingly divergent in character and appearance. Monsieur Trévoux, a canon of Notre-Dame, was short and stout. His cheeks were tinted with that vermilion hue specially compounded for canons of the Church by

those little genii whom Nicolas Despréaux beheld in poetic vision. All his reading and energies were devoted to resuscitating the memory of obscure little Breton saints, and his soul was filled with unctuous gladness. The other, Monsieur l'Abbé Le Blastier, chaplain to a convent, was tall and imposing. Austere, grave, and eloquent, he used to take long walks to soothe his disappointed Gallican aspirations. As they passed along the quayside, their pockets stuffed full of old books, they were, neither of them, above stopping to have a chat with Monsieur Debas.

It was Monsieur Le Blastier who enshrined the moral grandeur of the bookseller's character in a witty speech. "Monsieur," said he to him one day, "vous n'avez de bas que le nom."

Whenever Monsieur Le Blastier or Monsieur Trévoux asked him if trade was good he would invariably answer: "Middling; but it's a sense of security that people lack. It's all the Government's fault," and with a wave of the arm he pointed to the Tuileries.

It is now a good ten years since that winter's day when Monsieur Debas took his departure in the parish hearse. Perhaps there are only two or three of us left now who can call to mind the little man in the faded blue blouse that used to sell us the Greek and Latin classics, and say with a sigh,

"We have no statesmen nowadays, worse luck for France!"

It may come to pass that the booksellers will be evicted from the Quays, and that they will come back to us no more. It may be that the loss of their familiar stalls will be the price we shall have to pay for progress. As in Etienne Baluze's day, they will be sorely missed by humble collectors and simple-hearted scholars. As for me, I shall always remember with delight the long hours I have spent at their stalls with the friendly skies above me, now iridescent with countless delicate tints, now glorious in hues of purple and gold, now clad in sober grey, but grey of such witching softness that the deeps of the heart were touched by it.

When all is said and done, I know of no sweeter, gentler pleasure than to go a-book-hunting along the Quays of Paris. As you stir up the dust of the penny box you wake from their slumbers countless ghosts of tragic or alluring aspect. From these lonely abodes you may evoke the spirits of the departed as with an enchanter's wand. You may hold converse with the dead, who come in throngs in answer to your summons. For all the praise the ancients bestowed on them, the Elysian Fields could offer nothing to a dead philosopher that a live Parisian cannot enjoy on the Quays here between the Pont Royal and the Pont Notre-Dame. To my

mind Virgil's Groves of Myrtle are not more sweet and soothing than the little plane trees that cast their dappled shade over the reposing fiacres as they stand drawn up in line down the rue de la Monnaie. And those little plane trees are soon to be uprooted. Small they are and frail, but beauty and grace are theirs. Without them the fine Hôtel de la Monnaie, with its Louis XVI architecture, so eloquent of wisdom and sweet reason, would lose something of its attractiveness. The fairest examples of the stone-carver's craft seem cold and hard when no leaves rustle close at hand. Moreover, trees should ever be planted in palace courts, lest man should grow unmindful of the Earth his Mother.

There were certain crabbed old bibliophiles whom I used to meet in the course of my leisurely rambles, who would always be telling me long stories about the ill-luck that was theirs. "You never pick up anything in the penny box nowadays," they used to grumble, and thereupon they would fall to belauding the good old days when not a morning passed but Monsieur de la Rochebilière happened upon an *editio princeps* of some classic masterpiece between the Pont Neuf and the Pont Royal. For my part, I have never lighted upon an original edition of Molière or Racine on the Quays; but I have gathered there something of even greater worth than Tartufe before the plates or an Athalie in quarto: I have found

wisdom there. All those piles of paper begrimed with printer's ink have taught me the vanity of triumphs that fade, of glory which blossoms but to die. Never do I turn over the contents of the penny box but a calm and gentle melancholy steals into my heart, and I say: "What avails it to add yet a few more pages to this mass of ink-stained paper? Surely it were better to write no more."

CHAPTER VII

THE ROYAL GUARDSMAN

WAS brought up on the Quai Voltaire, amid the dust of books and curios, in the fellowship of bibliophiles and antiquaries of every kind. When I was quite a little boy, collectors of pottery, armour, prints, and coins were among my familiar acquaintance. Some I knew whose one and only hobby was wrought-iron work, others who had no eyes for anything but wood-carving. Bibliophiles I have known, ay, and bibliomaniacs, yet never, so far as I could see, did any of them deserve the scorn of the vulgar. Not one of this quaint fraternity, I assure you, but was distinguished by refined taste, a cultured mind, and gentle ways. And the friendly feelings I entertain for the good folk who have a craze for stuffing their cupboards full of anything and everything dates from the days of my childhood.

When I was yet the weediest, the most bashful, the gawkiest, and the dreamiest of schoolboys, I loved, whenever a holiday came round, to spend it in the establishment of Leclerc the younger. Now

Leclerc the younger was an old man, a stumpy, bristly little person, with a limp like Vulcan's. With his green baize apron round him, he plied his file from morning till night on weapons of war, clenched in a vice that was fixed to the edge of his bench. He was everlastingly burnishing up old swords, which, after he had done with them, went to fulfil their destiny in the sword-room of some country mansion. His shop was crammed with halberds, morions, sallets, gorgets, breastplates, greaves, and spurs, and I remember seeing there a fifteenth-century shield, all adorned with knightly devices, which never to have beheld is to have missed the fragrance of a right wondrous flower of chivalry. There were blades from Toledo, and Saracen weapons wrought with infinite grace; oval helmets, whence fell a shower of steel mail delicate as gossamer, and shields damascened with gold. In my tender years, all these things gave me a lively admiration for those exquisite and terrible emirs who did battle against the Christian barons at Ascalon and Gaza. And if I still take such keen delight in the tragedy of Zaïre, it is doubtless because my imagination loves to dream of those arms as adorning the person of the gracious and ill-fated Orosmane. As a matter of fact, Leclerc's shields and helmets did not date back to the Crusades; but had I been told that my old friend's shop contained Villehardouin's coat of

mail and the scimitar of Saladin himself, I should have been quite ready to believe it. This comes of being an inveterate day-dreamer; yet I owe it to the armourer to record that he never added fuel to the fire. He polished diligently and said little, and, with the exception of two or three headsman's swords, whereof he thought highly, I never heard him cry up his wares. Leclerc the younger was a man of probity, an ex-guardsman, and highly esteemed by his customers, of whom none was on a friendlier footing with him or a more regular caller than Monsieur de Gerboise, an old Royalist, who used to relate how he had been "out" with the Chouans in '32, in the Duchesse de Berri's company. The old fellow's hobby was collecting swords belonging to famous historical personages, and he used to hang them up on the walls of the sword-room of his château at Mauffeuges aux Rosiers. He was a tall, stately old man, and had formerly served in Charles X's bodyguard. He was full of court gossip and family histories, of which he delivered himself in a voice of thunder, and in a dialect which was really provincial, but which I took to be the mode of speech of the *ancien régime*. Monsieur de Gerboise was a "fine old country gentleman," with the manners and appearance of a peasant. His ruddy countenance was surmounted by a mass of white hair. He was a tall, stoutly-built man, still proud of his calves, which

back in 1827 had been reputed the finest in the kingdom. Swearing copiously by God and all the saints of Anjou, choleric and shrewd, a staunch Churchman, and a lover of broad jests, he used to entertain me hugely with his bluff talk and ceaseless flow of anecdote.

He evinced considerable respect for Leclerc junior, who, blunt-spoken and industrious, had much more of the craftsman than the shopkeeper in his composition. Having reached the age when a man has generally parted with all the companions of his early years, the old Chouan of '32 used to take pleasure in coming to see the old Royalist veteran of the Revolution, and in talking to him of the days when they had both been boys together.

And while he talked I, hidden away in a corner, made myself as small as possible, so as not to be seen, and there I sat and listened.

Over and over again I heard him recount the story of the Revolution of 1830, and the royal journey from Cherbourg. He invariably wound up by exclaiming, "That Marshal Maison, what a scoundrel the fellow was!"

Thereupon Leclerc never failed to add: "For three days, Monsieur le Marquis, we had nothing to eat but the potatoes we picked up in the fields, and a yokel gave me such a prod with a pitchfork that I have been lame ever since."

That was all the reward he got for serving his king. Nevertheless, he had always remained a staunch loyalist, and in a drawer of his cabinet he religiously treasured up a piece of the white flag which the men of his regiment had divided among themselves in the courtyard of the Château de Rambouillet.

One day, I remember, Monsieur de Gerboise, in his usual abrupt and impetuous manner, said: "Leclerc, where were you garrisoned in the summer of 1828?"

The armourer, who was bending down over his work, raised his head as he replied, "At Courbevoie, Monsieur le Marquis."

"I thought so. I knew little de la Morse, your colonel. By the by, his sons have now got billets at Badinguet's court," and with a contemptuous sweep of the arm he pointed to where, dimly discernible through the shop window, one of the wings of the palace rose up majestically from the opposite bank of the river.

"Well, *mon bon* Leclerc," he went on, "in July 1828 I was one of the Garde du Corps at the Château de Saint-Cloud—Number 2 Company, green bandolier. Damme, man, we weren't all got up in Carnival style like Monsieur Bonaparte's Hundred Guards. That's just the sort of thing you'd expect an upstart to do; go and rig out his Guards like

a lot of birds-of-Paradise. We used to wear silver helmets, with black chenilles and white plumes, my boy, and coats of royal blue, scarlet collars, epaulettes, shoulder-knots, silver braiding, and white cashmere breeches," and giving himself a thumping smack on the calf of his leg, he added, "and top-boots. When a man is but twenty years old, and a lieutenant in the Guards, with an assignation every night and a duel every week! Heigho! I didn't have such a bad time of it I can tell you. Those were good old times, Leclerc!"

"Yes, Monsieur le Marquis," replied the armourer, quietly going on with his polishing, "they were good enough times in a way; all the same, the other men in my mess made things pretty hot for me after they found out that I had a grammar-book in my kit. You see I wanted to study my mother-tongue when I was soldiering, and I had gone and bought a grammar out of my pay. But the fellows played up old Harry with me, and tossed me in my blankets. For six months they all went about singing:

"'As-tu vu la grand'mère,
As-tu vu la grand'mère—
A Leclerc?'"

"And they weren't far wrong either," replied Monsieur de Gerboise gravely. "There was no

occasion, my friend, for a man in your station to go learning grammar. It is just as if I, in my position, had wanted to go in for learning Hebrew. My lieutenant-colonel, the Comte d'Andive, would have made rare fun of me, and egad, sir, he would have been quite right! Well, as I was telling you, Leclerc, I was on duty at Saint-Cloud, in blue tunic and white breeches, being summer time; in winter our breeches were royal blue, like our tunics."

"The same with us," remarked the armourer; "we used to wear white drill breeches in the summer."

"Yes," said the Marquis, "and it wasn't the loveliest part about you either; but, all the same, you were a good set of fellows, and I don't want to hurt your feelings. Well, then, while you were having a high old time in your blankets at Courbevoie, I was stationed with my company at Saint-Cloud. One night I was posted just under the king's window, and there I saw a sight that I shall never forget.

"All was quiet; the flag was floating above the Château, and the captain of our company, who had the brevet rank of lieutenant-general, was snugly tucked up in bed with the keys under his bolster. The shrill chirping of the crickets pierced the deep silence of the night, and the moon that had risen above the tree-tops was flooding with its silver

beams all the pathways of the deserted park. With my musket across my arm, I was leaning against the terrace steps, letting my thoughts run now on duty, now on pleasure, when all of a sudden I saw the king's bedroom window open and Charles X himself appear on the balcony. He was wearing a beribboned nightcap and a flowered dressing-gown. The moon's pale light was bathing his high-bred and amiable features. His lips, as usual, were slightly apart, and he wore an expression of melancholy that I had never seen on his face before. He gazed long and intently, first at the moon, already high in the heavens, and then at something which he was holding in the hollow of his hand, and which appeared to me like a locket. Then he pressed this locket tenderly to his lips, and stretching forth his right arm towards the moon he seemed to be appealing to the heavens, and the tears were coursing down his cheeks. I was so moved at the sight that the barrel of my musket began to rattle violently against my bandolier. The king stood thus, kissing and gazing at the locket, for several minutes. At length he went back into his room, and I heard him close his window. If you had been in my place, Leclerc, wouldn't you have been moved at the sight of the old king, in his nightcap, kissing a portrait, or a lock of hair, or some other feminine keepsake (I couldn't make out

what was in the locket), and calling the moon to bear witness to the steadfastness of his love and his sorrow? Ill-fated king, the day had come when there was none left but the moon to remember aught of his early amours!

"It is my idea, Leclerc, that Charles X was dreaming that night of Madame de Polastron, who had been his mistress when he was the brilliant Comte d'Artois, and who went to him when he was with Condé's army, languishing in the wretchedness of exile. She made her way through all the troops to his tent to offer him her diamonds, her trinkets, and all the gold she had been able to gather together in her haste, thus laying at his feet her fortune and her honour. What do you think about it, Leclerc?"

The armourer looked up with a start. Clearly he had not been thinking about it at all.

"Yes," continued Monsieur de Gerboise eagerly, "I like to think that at Saint-Cloud that night, five-and-thirty years after Madame de Polastron's death, Charles X was mourning the loss of his best friend. And well he might, egad!

"Leclerc," he added, "we are both of us fools to go on clinging to life like this."

"Why so, Monsieur le Marquis?" asked the armourer.

"Because, my friend, it's no good staying on in

the world when one's love-making days are over. Besides, we shall never have our kings with us again."

Since then I have had reason to regard Charles X as one of the most fickle and weak-minded of men, and I have made a careful study of him without discovering a single trait to his credit. I record this story of the old king in his nightcap apostrophising the moon as the most attractive episode in his career.

CHAPTER VIII

MONSIEUR PLANCHONNET

HAD this piece of good fortune in my favour: it was springtime, and I was on the threshold of my seventeenth year. My father had sent me to spend my Easter holidays with my aunt at Corbeil. My aunt lived in a little house on the banks of the Seine, and passed her days in an atmosphere of sanctity and simples. She welcomed me with a kiss, which indicated to a nicety the precise degree of affection she deemed due to one of the family, congratulated me on having passed my examination, remarked that I took after my father, told me not to smoke in bed, and gave me *carte blanche* to do as I liked till dinner-time.

I went upstairs to the bedroom which Euphémie, the old servant, had made ready for me, and unpacked my trunk, wherein, carefully disposed between my shirts, lay the manuscript of my earliest "work." It was an historical novel entitled *Clémence Isaure*, in which I had unburdened my soul of all my ideas on Love and Art. I thought not a little of it. After

titivating myself up a little I went out for a stroll round the town. As I wandered down the elm-bordered boulevard, in whose somewhat melancholy peacefulness I found a certain charm, I noticed, over the door of a low house all covered with wistaria, a white signboard, whereon was inscribed in black letters the following legend: "*The Independent*, a daily newspaper, dealing with Politics, Commerce, Agriculture, and Literature." This inscription reawakened my dreams of glory. For some months past I had been tormented with a desire to see my *Clémence Isaure* in print. I was ambitious, but I was modest. I thought that this quiet house, half-hidden by trees, would offer a suitable home for my first work, and from that moment the idea of taking my manuscript to *The Independent* began to assume definite shape in my mind.

My life at Corbeil was one of agreeable monotony. At dinner my aunt used to give me a full account of her quarrel with Doctor Germond, an event which, though it had occurred ten years before, still loomed large in her recollection. Not till the coffee was brought in did she proceed to tell her stories about the Abbé Laclanche, who, worthy man, suffered greatly from advancing age and obesity, and used to fall asleep in the confessional while my aunt was telling him her sins. And then the excellent dame would send me off to bed.

One day I was alone in the drawing-room, and for want of something better to do I was turning over some papers that were lying on the mahogany whatnot. They happened to be some numbers of *The Independent*, which my aunt used to take in. It was a little sheet, printed in battered type on excessively thin paper, and there was a modest look about it that afforded me encouragement.

I glanced through two or three numbers; the only contribution of a purely literary character that I discovered was called *Fabiola's Little Sister*. It was signed with a feminine name. I noted with satisfaction that it belonged to the same *genre* as my *Clémence Isaure*, but that it was feebler in style. That clinched the matter. I determined to take my manuscript to the editor. His name was printed underneath the title of the paper; it was Planchonnet.

I rolled up my *Clémence Isaure* in a parcel, and, without divulging my intentions to my aunt, presented myself in a state of considerable perturbation at the wistaria-covered house. I was ushered straightway into Monsieur Planchonnet's office. He had divested himself of his coat and his waistcoat, and he was writing. He was a giant, and a giant of the hairiest description I ever encountered. He was as swarthy as a nigger, and every time he moved there was a sound as of rustling horse-hair, and he had a sort of wild-beast scent about him.

He did not take his eyes off his paper as I went in, and, sweating, puffing, and blowing, his chest bared to the air, he went on writing till he had finished his article. Then he put down his pen and signed to me to speak.

I stammered out my name, my aunt's name, and the object of my visit, and tremblingly proffered him my manuscript.

"I'll read it," he said. "Call again on Saturday."

I went out in a state of hideous perturbation, hoping the end of the world and the universal conflagration would take place ere that Saturday arrived, so terrifying did the prospect of a fresh encounter with the editor-in-chief appear to me. The end of the world did not come; but Saturday did, and again I saw Monsieur Planchonnet.

"Well," said he, "I've run through that little thing of yours; it's very nice. I'll put it in. By the way, what are you doing to-morrow evening. Come and have a bit of dinner with us at home. I live in the Place Saint Guenault facing the square. We shall be all alone; quite a homely little party."

I signified my grateful acceptance.

At six o'clock next evening I found Monsieur Planchonnet in his drawing-room, with two or three children on his knees and some more on his shoulders; he had even got some in his pockets. They were calling him "papa," and pulling his beard. He had

on a new frock-coat and a white shirt, and he smelt of lavender-water.

A woman came into the room. She was pale and delicate-looking, but though her figure had been pulled abroad, her pale gold hair and watchet eyes gave her a not unprepossessing appearance.

"Madame Planchonnet," said he.

The children (of whom I now perceived there were but half a dozen) were big and rough, and highly coloured; fine specimens enough of a sort. Their bare arms and legs formed a kind of festoon of florid flesh about their colossal sire; and, one and all, they fell to staring at me like so many little wild things.

Madame Planchonnet apologised for their rudeness:

"We never stop long in one place, and they don't have time to get to know anyone. They are like little savages; they don't know anything. How can they be expected to learn when we go into fresh lodgings every six months. Henri, the eldest, is over eleven. He doesn't know a word of his catechism yet, and how in the world we shall get him to make his first communion, I really do *not* know. Your arm, Monsieur."

The dinner was abundant. A young country girl, acting under the vigilant control of Madame Planchonnet, kept bringing in dish after dish. Pies,

joints, pâtés, stews, and enormous birds, which my host, with a napkin tucked under his chin, a three-pronged fork in one hand and a carving-knife with a stag-horn handle in the other, ordered to be placed in front of him, displaying all his white teeth and rolling, terrifying eyes in the midst of his hairy countenance. Sticking out his elbows, he carved his birds with the easy composure of a master, giving liberal helpings to his children, his wife, and his guest, delivering himself the while of a string of harmless observations, punctuated with hideous guffaws.

But it was when pouring out the wine that he manifested, in all their luxuriant magnificence, the characteristics of the good-humoured ogre. Reaching down with his huge arms, without deflecting his body from the vertical, he would pull up one of the many bottles that stood ranged along at his feet, and poured out bumpers for his wife, who refused them in vain, for his children who had already fallen asleep with one cheek in their plates, and for me, hapless one, who gulped down without giving myself time to taste it, red wine, pink wine, white wine, amber wine, and golden wine, whose *cru* he proclaimed in jovial tones, on the word of the grocer of whom he had bought them. We thus emptied a number of bottles of divers brands; how many I haven't a notion. After that I began to

express to my hostess sentiments at once exalted and tender. All that was heroic and amorous in my heart came thronging to my lips. I raised the conversation to the region of the sublime, but I experienced a very real difficulty in maintaining it at that high level, because, though Monsieur Planchonnet nodded approval of my most transcendent flights, he did not follow them up, but kept firing off observations concerning the gathering and preparation of edible fungi, or some other culinary topic. He carried a complete cookery-book in his head, and a tolerable gastronomical survey of France. Now and then he would tell stories to show how clever his children were.

I hit it off better with Madame Planchonnet, who declared several times that she was an ardent idealist. She confided in me that she had once read a piece of poetry which had completely carried her away. But she had forgotten the author's name, the piece in question being contained in a volume made up of extracts from the works of several poets.

I recited all the elegies I knew, but the verses were for the most part drowned by the caterwauling of the children, who were mauling each other horribly under the table.

With the dessert came the consciousness that I loved Madame Planchonnet. So generous was my

passion that, far from smothering it in my heart, I poured it forth in lingering looks and voluble speeches. I unfolded my views on Life and Death, I laid bare my whole soul to Madame Planchonnet, who, suffering her lashes to droop over her beautiful blue eyes, and inclining toward me her worn and weary face, kept saying in subdued tones, "Yes, indeed, Monsieur," and did her best to smile.

I still had a great deal to tell her, when she went away to put the children to bed. They had all fallen sound asleep in their chairs, with their legs up in the air. I was thus left to my own thoughts, with Planchonnet in front of me everlastingly pouring out liqueurs. I deemed he had a brutish air. His stodgy immobility got on my nerves. I, on the other hand, was inspired by the most exalted feelings. I prayed in my inmost heart that he might have a nobler soul, and I one still more noble, in order that Madame Planchonnet might have two men worthy of her for her lovers. Therefore I resolved to sound the heart of Planchonnet.

"Monsieur," said I, "yours is a splendid calling."

"Oh," said he, lighting his pipe, "you call it splendid do you, turning out copy for provincial newspapers, and clerical copy into the bargain. I work for the cloth. But beggars mustn't be choosers," and he proceeded to puff away tranquilly at his meerschaum, which was carved to represent

the figure of a woman lying stretched out in an attitude of naked voluptuousness.

"Monsieur Planchonnet," I inquired, "do you know my aunt?"

"I don't know anyone at Corbeil," he answered. "Six months ago I was at Gap— A little drop of anisette, won't you?"

An immense desire to love filled my bosom. I began to feel a great affection for Planchonnet. I was familiar, interested, and confidential; especially confidential. I told him my life-story. I let him into the secret of my dreams and aspirations.

He put down his pipe; I still went on with my harangue. At length, seeing that he was dropping off into a doze, I got up, wished him good-night, and expressed a wish to pay my respects to Madame Planchonnet. That, he gave me to understand, I could not do, because she had gone to bed. I said how sorry I was, and looked about for my hat, which I had much ado to find. Planchonnet, lamp in hand, came with me to the top of the staircase, and imparted, concerning the manner of holding on to the balusters and negotiating the stairs, advice that is not commonly bestowed on departing guests. But the staircase was apparently a difficult one, for I bungled it at the very first step. As I descended, Planchonnet, leaning over the balusters, asked me if I thought I should find my aunt's house all right.

I considered the question offensive. I told him I should find it quite easily, wherein I spoke rashly, for I wandered about half the night looking for it. In the course of my search I noted how stupidly one may sometimes go and plant both feet in the gutter at once. All the time I was vainly cudgelling my brains to think what brilliant achievement I could perform to win the admiration of Madame Planchonnet. Her pretty blue eyes kept coming into my mind, and I was genuinely distressed that her figure was not so attractive as her eyes.

When I awoke next day the sun was high in the heavens. My tongue was parched, my skin burning hot. But what worried me most was that I could not remember what I had said to Madame Planchonnet, and I had good grounds for thinking it was a lot of nonsense.

My aunt made no secret of the fact that she looked on my late homecoming as showing a distinct lack of respect for the rules of her house. When I proudly announced to her that I had got my *Clémence Isaure* accepted by *The Independent* she grew crimson with anger, and sent me off at once to recover the manuscript before it was printed, the very idea of the thing terrifying her beyond expression.

And so I went with diminished head and asked Planchonnet to give me back my work, which he

did with the same easy unconcern with which he had accepted it.

"What have you got on to-night?" he asked. "Come and have dinner at my place. We'll finish up the remains."

I refused out of consideration for my aunt. A few days later I went to call on Madame Planchonnet. I found her sitting with a bunch of wild flowers in front of her, darning the seat of her eldest boy's knickerbockers. The conversation was marked by the utmost reserve. It was raining, and we spoke of the rain.

"It is very dreary," I observed.

"Is it not?" she replied.

"Are you fond of flowers, Madame?"

"I simply love them."

And she looked up at me with her pretty, beaming eyes and careworn face.

I left Corbeil the following week, and I have never seen Madame Planchonnet since.

CHAPTER IX

THE TWO CRONIES

T was towards the end of the Second Empire. Jean Meusnier and Jacques Dubroquet shared a studio at the far end of a court, close to the cemetery at Montparnasse. The whole of the ground-floor was occupied by stone-masons, who filled the court with white tombstones, crosses, and funeral urns.

Dust from the marble and plaster lay like a soiled winding-sheet upon the ground. The studio had been erected over the workshops of the monumental masons after the manner of a large glazed cage. Within it was a cast-iron heating stove, a couple of easels, and two cane chairs with no bottoms to them. The marble dust which found its way in through the chinks of the door and the windows was the only thing that veiled the gaunt nakedness of the walls and stone floors.

Jacques Dubroquet was a painter of historical subjects, Jean Meusnier a landscapist. The landscapist resembled a tree. He had the tree's tough

bark, its puissant sap, its peace and its silence. His thick hair stood up above his furrowed brow like the shoots of a pollard willow.

He spoke little, for he knew few words. But he painted much. Up betimes of a morning, he would refresh himself with a glass of white wine, and then be off round the outskirts of the city, making studies which he would come back and work up into pictures rude and elemental in conception, but full of stubborn strength in execution.

Endowed with all the shrewdness and the suspicious cunning of the born peasant, with a countenance as stolid as his tongue was silent, he concerned himself little about his comrade. His whole world was centred in one person, and that was Euphémie of the *crémerie* in the Boulevard Montparnasse, a fat, good-natured creature of fifty, at whose establishment he used to take his meals, and for whom he entertained a homely and not disinterested affection.

Jacques Dubroquet, the historical painter, was some years older, and of a totally different disposition. He was an "intellectual," a thinker. He wished to be like Rubens, and to this end he cultivated long hair, a pointed beard, and wore a soft felt hat, a velvet doublet, and a capacious mantle. He was by nature a man of kindly, genial

disposition and lavish habits; his ideas had nothing cramped or petty about them, and fearing that the name Jacques Dubroquet would not convey an adequate impression of his greatness, he changed it to Jacobus Dubroquens, which was much more consonant with his genius. By his years Dubroquens was associated with the later Romanticists and the Republicans of the sentimental school. He had served his apprenticeship towards the end of Louis Philippe's reign, in Riesener's studio.

He was an omnivorous devourer of print, and an assiduous habitué of the worthy Madame Cardinal's reading-room, where medical students used to rub up their anatomy while lunching off a roll, with a human hand or a human leg beside them on the table. He would consume every book he could lay hands on, and then go and argue about them with his friends in front of the Velleda statue in the *pépinière* at the Luxembourg.

And he had a fine flow of language. The Revolution of 1848 interrupted his artistic studies. He felt his humanitarian enthusiasm expand; in the clubs which he frequented he realised the nature of the mission he was destined to fulfil; the New Art was conceived within him.

Thenceforth Jacobus Dubroquens was visited by a wealth of ideas; but usually a canvas of sixty square feet was necessary for their due expression.

A painting sixty feet square or nothing. Such was the alternative that ordinarily confronted him. No one, therefore, will be surprised to learn that when I first became acquainted with him—when, that is to say, his hair was already turning grey—he had not completed a solitary picture.

He had too many ideas. Besides, the Empire handicapped him. He was waiting for its downfall. In the *crémerie* of the Boulevard Montparnasse he had won renown by reason of a copy of Rubens' "Siren," which he had made in the Louvre in 1847. There were bits of it that were in a fair way to being successful, but the tones were grey and chill, whence it resulted that the copy bore no resemblance to the original. When this was pointed out to him, Jacobus Dubroquens would reply with a smile:

"Good Lord! the reason's plain enough. Rubens only jumps as high as that"—putting his hand on a level with his knee—"but I jump as high as that," and he stretched his arm above his head.

If we leave out "The Siren," he had not produced a single picture. This circumstance, though not a little remarkable in the life of a painter, did not disturb him in the slightest.

"My pictures," he used to say, tapping his forehead—"my pictures are here."

And, sure enough, beneath his Rubens hat he

carried two or three ideas for what he called "Apotheoses," in which Anaxagoras, Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus Christ, Giordano Bruno, and Barbès invariably played a part. They were certainly rather out of the common, these ideas of his.

Many and many a time in those days, already dim and distant, when I was but a youngster, did I cut the Law Schools and Monsieur Demangeat's lectures and betake myself to the dusty studio of these two cronies, to listen with delight to the æsthetic theorisings of Jacobus Dubroquens.

With his rich, deep voice—the voice of the practised club orator—he drowned the rasping of the stone-masons' saws, the chirping of the sparrows, and the yells of the children squalling and squabbling in the courtyard. With what fire and eloquence he used to describe the pictures he was going to paint—"The Progress of the Race," "The Soul of All Religions," "The March of the People," and "The Brotherhood of Man." And with what lofty confidence he proclaimed it his mission to gather up and symbolise, by means of the painter's art, the teachings of all the philosophies.

Meanwhile, Jean Meusnier, seated at his easel, would be working away on a little canvas, wrapt in a sort of vegetable silence, toiling with slow, bucolic stubbornness at a picture of some gaunt, grim tree.

Then suddenly, looking up at the window, through which a flood of crude light streamed down, he would growl out:

"Hang it all, what a nuisance it is, this—this, what d'ye call it?"

Whereat we would fall to cudgelling our brains in a vain endeavour to supply the missing word, till at last Jean Meusnier, making a supreme effort of memory, would exclaim:

"Why, the sunlight, that's it, eh? Coming in a bit too strong—what?"

Sometimes we all three dined at the *crémerie* in a certain little room that was adorned with one of Jean Meusnier's pictures. It was a grim, savage piece of work. He had painted it with hidden glee. It depicted ghastly, weird-looking trees. He knew neither beauty nor ugliness, save such as he saw in the vegetable kingdom, and, savage that he was, he had beguiled himself by painting caricatures of oaks and elms.

As for humanity, all his experience of it was summed up in Euphémie, whom he regarded as a decidedly delectable person. While dinner was preparing he would hang round her in the glare of the kitchen fire, what time Jacobus Dubroquens, marshalling the salt-cellar and the mustard-pot in front of him, would be haranguing me on the subject of the Gallic Triad.

How triumphantly he would have set forth the Triad in a picture could he but have had a canvas of twenty square yards—and the Republic! In the meantime he designed fashions for dolls, illustrated the three stages of Edward's patent corn-cure, and painted Marie's rose-bush on strips of elder pith.

He was a right worthy man, and suffered none to divine the hidden melancholy of his life. With any chance acquaintance he would hold forth on Art and Philosophy in tones of serene content.

But we fare whither Fate impels us, and the loyalest of us abandons, one after another, his old companions on Life's road. During my final year in the Law Schools I lost sight of these two cronies. As time went on, Jean Meusnier became a celebrity, and not a day passed but some newspaper panegyric recalled him to my mind. I saw the great man's name everywhere—at the Salon, at the Mirlitons, at the Volney, at Georges Petit's, at the houses of collectors and women of fashion. In every stationer's shop window I beheld the furrowed face that I knew so well, and that resembled the face of some old rustic god. But of poor Jacobus Dubroquens, never a word! I began to take it for granted that he was no longer of this world, and that Death in its mercy had gently removed him from this earth of ours, which he had never beheld save in a dream or through a mist.

But one splendid day, in the autumn of 18—, as I was boarding a down-the-river boat at the Tuileries, my eyes lighted upon an old man seated in the bows. He was enveloped in an ancient, patched cloak, and the broad brim of a felt hat of romantic shape fell droopingly over his ears. With an air of serene complacency he was resting a still shapely hand upon a drawing-board, and his whole attitude suggested genius in meditation.

Despite the burden of his threescore years and ten, I recognised the worthy Jacobus Dubroquens. From the wrinkles in his cheeks, you would have taken him to be older than his years, but the radiance of unconquerable youth still shone in his blue eyes.

He returned my salutation without knowing, or displaying any desire to know, who I was, for in the various *crémeries* that he haunted he had acquired the habit of striking up anonymous frindships with anyone who might chance to address him.

"You know that picture of mine," said he—"my big picture? They want me to cut it down and alter it."

"And who want you to do that, Maître Jacobus?"

"Why, the shop-people, the Government, the ministers, the town-council, or whatever you call them. How am I to know who they are?

How should I know anything of such a pack of counter-jumpers. I don't bother my head about superfluous creatures of that kind. I look with contempt on everything that does not find its ultimate expression in the Absolute. Yes, they want to ruin my great idea. But never fear, I shall not give way."

And so the Empire had fallen, the Republic had been in existence for twenty-five years, and still Jacobus Dubroquens had not been able to paint his great picture.

Nevertheless, he was perfectly content. He got his living by designing pipes for one of Gambier's rivals, and drawing decorations for sardine boxes. To look at his face you hardly knew whether to take him for an aged madman or a sage, and I confess I should not care to have to decide which he was.

As he bade me good-bye, he pointed with a majestic sweep of the arm to the rose-flushed sky, the silver flood, and the river banks half hidden in a haze of primrose light.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "there's a grand setting for my 'Apothéose de la Femme Libre,' accentuating the tone values, of course.

"This time I shall adopt the manner of Veronese; but I shall put more power into it. Veronese only jumps so high, but I—" and once more I saw him repeat the old, familiar gesture.

"Come and look me up at my studio," he shouted from the gangway of the landing-stage, "rue —— No. 6, on the right-hand side. Give a good pull at the bell!"

I did not go until two months afterwards. Outside the house to which Jacobus had directed me I encountered Jean Meusnier, gnarled and sturdy as an oak tree, and wearing a frock-coat of the latest cut, the rosette of a Commander of the Legion of Honour in his button-hole. You might have taken him for an antique satyr turned man-about-town.

"What! You?" he exclaimed, as he shook me by the hand. "What a time since I saw you! Poor old Dubroquet! Hæmorrhage of the lungs—clean done for!" And he began to lead the way up a narrow wooden staircase that trembled beneath his weight.

"*Sacré bahut, va!*" he kept puffing and grunting as he ascended.

On the top landing a woman in a camisole, the concierge, stood shaking her head dolefully, and said in a whisper:

"He won't get through the day. Come in, *mes bons messieurs*."

There, in a garret, on a miserable truckle-bed, Jacobus lay dying, "The Siren" of 1847 hung up on the wall in front of him.

He motioned to us to draw near, and in a husky voice, weak yet distinct, he said:

"It's all over. I am going, and with me I am taking the 'Philosophy of Painting.' They are all here, my pictures, in my head. Perhaps, after all, it's just as well that no one has seen them. The other fellows would have been so envious."

The death-struggle was not so very severe. It lasted about five hours, and ended towards midnight.

Jean Meusnier closed his old friend's eyes, and stood lost in thought, looking back over his past life. As he lingered, meditating on the mystery of things, it seemed, on a sudden, as though he had felt the wind of mighty, viewless wings, for he dashed his hand to his brow and murmured in tones of grief and bewilderment:

"*Sacré bahut!*"

CHAPTER X

ONÉSIME DUPONT

NÉSIME DUPONT was already an old man when I first knew him. His acquaintance took me back to the days of Armand Carrel and the editors of *The Globe*, whose teaching and mode of living he retained. His name, once famous, is now forgotten. He was one of the Revolutionaries of '48—one of the Reds; and he was fond of music and flowers. I saw him occasionally at my father's. He used to dress entirely in black, and with consummate elegance. His habits betrayed an unremitting and scrupulous regard for his person. Notwithstanding his fourscore years he still bore himself with the air of an accomplished swordsman. The only fear he had ever known, the fear of soiling himself, still possessed him so strongly that he scarcely ever took off his white gloves, and only a privileged few were admitted to the honour of a handshake. He entertained the most incredible scruples in matters of conscience and hygiene. Never have I known a man at once so polished and so chilling. The

gleam of his eyes, which illumined a long sallow face, and the lines about his mouth would have been repellent had it not been for a hint of something great-hearted, heroic, and Quixotic in the whole old-world appearance of the man. Onésime Dupont was not poor—indeed, he was reputed to be wealthy, because he occasionally varied the strict economy with which his life was ordered, to indulge in outbreaks of strange and singular extravagance.

He had conspired against the July monarchy, he had been a Representative of the People in '48, an outlaw in '52, and a Deputy in '71. He was an ardent supporter of the Republic, and devoted all his energies towards bringing about the Freedom of the World and the Brotherhood of Man. His doctrines were common to the Republicans of his day, but he exhibited this peculiarity, that, while for the human race as a whole he entertained the most generous affection, he regarded the separate entities who composed it with the gloomiest aversion. The very men for whom, collectively, he would have sacrificed his property, his freedom, and his life, inspired him as individuals with such feelings of disgust that he shunned their contact as he would a pestilence. Nor was this the sole contradiction of one who, while never weary of proclaiming liberty of conscience, and condemning the use of violence, would enforce his doctrines sword

in hand, and fight for an abstraction. Even when quite an old man he was still the most fiery duellist of his party.

His hauteur, his coldness, and his unalterable code of honour made of him a sort of Republican aristocrat. He was the son of a china dealer who kept a shop in the Faubourg Poissonnière. He himself had been intended for the business, but his entry into the porcelain trade was marked by a somewhat remarkable incident. I should like to repeat it to you as I myself heard it related by some old folks now long since dead.

Dupont the elder, an honest man, and shrewd withal, was, about the year 1835, beginning to be conscious of the burden of age. Having amassed what, for those days, was a considerable sum of money in the china business, he made up his mind to retire into the country with his wife Heloise, *née* Riboul, who had at last come into the property of her father, formerly a mason and a purchaser of national property.

And so it came to pass that one day in this same year, 1835, the old fellow called his son into the little cage which for thirty years had done duty as his office, and served as a coign of vantage from which to keep an eye on the shopmen while posting up his ledgers. And there he held forth to him as follows:

"I am no longer young, and I should like to spend my declining years among my flowers and fruit-trees. I have always had a wish to go in for pear grafting. Life is short, but one lives on in one's children. To this extent our Creator has granted us immortality upon earth. You are now twenty years old. When I was that age I was going about selling plates and dishes at public fairs. I drove my cart through every department in France, and more than once I had to sleep under the tilt in rain and snow. Life was rough for me, but it will be smooth for you, and I am glad of it, for your life is the continuation of my own. I have married your sister to a barrister. The time has now come for your virtuous mother and myself to enjoy the repose to which we are entitled. I have raised myself in the social scale by hard work; I picked up my education from the pamphlets and papers that were scattered throughout France in the troublous days when the country was settling its constitution. But you have been to college. You know Law and Latin. They are adornments of the intellect. Still the great thing is to win respect, and to make money. I have built up a sound business. It is your task to maintain and extend it. China is a first-rate commodity. It supplies every want in life. Take my place, Onésime. You are not yet equal to filling it by your-

self, but I will help you, to begin with. The customers must get to know your face. Start to-day, and book the orders as they come in. The price-list in this pigeon-hole here will give you a lot of help. Time and my counsel will do the rest. You are neither a fool nor a scapegrace. I'm not going to quarrel with your waistcoats à la Marat or your extravagances in dress. I was a young fellow myself once. Sit down, my son, at this table."

And the worthy Dupont pointed to an old bureau, very much out of date, but kept by him for reasons of economy, for he was not given to luxury. It was an old inlaid writing-desk which he had picked up at an auction some thirty years before, and which had been used by Monsieur de Choiseul during his term of office.

Onésime Dupont obeyed in silence, and took the place assigned to him. His father went out for a walk, with full confidence in his son. He deemed that good blood was bound to turn out well, and he felt pleased that he had managed to transform a dandy into a china-merchant.

Onésime, left to his own devices, studied the price-lists. He was prepared to do his duty and attend to any business that might come along. His investigations had been occupying him for about half an hour when in came Monsieur Joseph Peignot, who

kept a china-shop at Dijon. He was a jovial man, and the Maison Dupont's best customer.

"What, you here, Monsieur Onésime?" he exclaimed. "How is it you're not on the Boulevard doing the heavy in that swell blue coat of yours with the gilt buttons? Those good-looking girls down at the Bains Chinois must be feeling pretty glum without you. But you're quite right. There's a time for play and a time for work. Well, I wanted to see your father."

"I am taking his place."

"I'm glad to hear it; one friend the more for me. It's ten years now since I first began to do business with your father. I hope I shall do as many and more with you. You are like him, but you take after your mother still more; and it's no small compliment I'm paying you when I say that; Madame Dupont is a very handsome woman. And how's the governor? I'm looking forward to having a bit of dinner with him one evening this week at Le Rocher de Cancale. We have made an annual thing of it now for the past ten years. I hope he is not ill."

"He is in good health, I thank you, Monsieur. What do you desire?"

"Well, you see it's about time to lay in a stock of the new season's goods. I've come to give you my annual order. I arrived this morning by the

diligence, and I'm putting up, as usual, at the Hôtel de la Victoire, rue du Coq-Héron."

So saying, Joseph Peignot produced a paper from his pocket and ran through the articles he required. There were dinner-services by the dozen, plates by the hundred, basins, bowls, and so on, and so forth —a thumping order.

"I will endeavour to satisfy your requirements, Monsieur," said Onésime.

With his eyes fixed on the list, he carefully indicated the prices of the various articles as the shopkeeper called them over. "Two dozen services à la Charte, in white and gold, a dozen ditto in Lamartine, five dozen toilet sets," &c. &c.

"You see," said Monsieur Joseph Peignot, "I'm not afraid to buy. You've got to stock plenty if you want to sell plenty. There's nothing chicken-hearted about me, and I'm not afraid of trade risks. You haven't got a better customer than me," he added with a hearty laugh.

Then all at once he put on a doleful air, and speaking in plaintive tones he went on: "But of course you'll take a bit off. You keep up your prices too much. Times are bad. There's money in France right enough, but people won't part with it; there's a want of confidence. Come now, you'll knock off my little bit of discount."

"I regret that it is impossible for me to comply

with your request, Monsieur," replied Onésime, with frigid politeness.

"What, not give me my five per cent. over and above the usual discount? You must be joking!"

"No, Monsieur, I am not joking."

"Why, your old dad wouldn't make any bones about it. He'd take off whatever I asked him. He never says no to his old friend Peignot. He's a real good sort is Papa Dupont."

"We need go no further, Monsieur," said Onésime, rising. "After what you have just said I can only communicate with you through two of my friends."

"What's that?" asked the man from Dijon, who, good simple soul, was beginning to feel bewildered.

"I say, Monsieur, that I shall do myself the honour of sending you my seconds, who will make it their duty to hold themselves at the disposal of your own."

"But I don't know what you're talking about."

"If that is so, it is doubtless because I have failed to explain myself with sufficient clearness; pray excuse me. I am sending you my seconds because you have insulted my father."

"Insulted your father? Me? A friend of ten years' standing, a fellow-tradesman whom I hold in honour and esteem! You're not in your right mind, young man."

"You have insulted him, Monsieur, by asserting that he could allow you a reduction on the price of his goods. That implies that his profits are excessive, and therefore iniquitous, since, according to your statement, he can reduce them on demand. It means that you accuse him of being willing to cheat you out of the difference if you do not ask for a reduction, of acting unhandsomely, to your detriment. You have therefore insulted him. I venture to think that I have made myself sufficiently clear this time."

As he listened to this speech the man from Dijon stared open-mouthed. His utter inability to understand any of these arguments simply dumbfounded him, and what scared him most of all was the serene, unruffled calm with which they were advanced. Onésime Dupont had, in fact, addressed him in those measured, musical tones which in after years he employed, in the clubs and at the National Assembly, to enunciate the most terrifying propositions.

"Young man," said the Dijon merchant, turning pale, "one or other of us is mad. That must certainly and inevitably be the case. But I firmly believe, and, if need were, I would swear to it, that it is you. What I am now experiencing is so extraordinary that I never believed such a thing could have happened, to me or indeed to anyone

else." And he went out crushed and bewildered, feeling as though he were going to be ill. Ill he was, and he took to his bed at the Hôtel de la Victoire, in the rue du Coq-Héron.

Meanwhile, Onésime wrote to two subalterns at the barracks at the Château d'Eau, telling them that he had a favour to ask of them. They were a couple of dandified sergeants, who regularly acted as seconds to the editors of *Le National* and the members of the *Espérance* Club.

But next day Dupont senior resumed his place at his desk. He finished out his tale of years behind his grille, but he never cultivated his garden or grafted pear-trees, as he had hoped to do.

Onésime, relieved of his commercial duties, devoted all his energies to public affairs. He founded the secret society known as *Truelle et Niveau*, which, by its ceaseless attacks, caused the July Government much uneasiness, and on three occasions nearly brought about its downfall.

BOOK II

NOTES WRITTEN BY PIERRE NOZIÈRE IN THE MARGIN OF HIS BIG "PLUTARCH"

NOTES WRITTEN BY PIERRE NOZIÈRE IN THE MARGIN OF HIS BIG "PLUTARCH"

WAS recently turning over the pages of *Le Mérite des Femmes*. It was a pretty copy, bound in cerise morocco with gilt edges, and it had been discovered, after my grandmother's death, in the secrétaire where that excellent woman kept her most cherished belongings.

The gilt has been worn off the pages where the purple passages occur, and flowers have been pressed and dried between the leaves. Doubtless my grandmother shed tears over this poem when she was a girl. She saw in it what I cannot see. For her it was a fount of living water; it breathed the perfumed air of Paradise. It would be unreasonable to criticise her judgment. The gracious creature knew what she was reading. She was young, and freshness and bloom were upon the book.

Although he wrote with an eye to posterity (he said so himself, and his portrait conveys as much), Gabriel Legouvé had no doubt composed his poem

for my grandmother—who in 1801 was a pretty child dressed in a white muslin frock—rather than for you and me, who were then unborn. This it is which disposes me to regard *Le Mérite des Femmes* as an excellent poem that has deteriorated with time. Otherwise I could not account for my grandmother pressing flowers in it. True, I do not exactly know what was in her mind when she read *Le Mérite des Femmes*. Possibly her thoughts did not run on what she was reading. Peradventure, she had more to tell that little book of hers than the little book had to tell her. But poets are used to such confidences. We should never love them so much were they not made to listen to us even more than to speak to us. They are confidants, when they are not go-betweens. What is really charming about *Le Mérite des Femmes* are the flowers my grandmother put in it.

* * *

Reason, proud reason, is capricious and cruel. The sacred simplicity of instinct never betrays. In instinct dwells the sole truth, the only certitude, that man may ever call his own in this life of illusion, where three-fourths of the ills we suffer proceed from our own thoughts.

My old friend Condillac says that the most intellectual people are precisely the most prone to fall into error.

There is no necessary alliance between morality and knowledge. People who imagine they are going to make men better by adding to their knowledge are but indifferent observers of human nature. They do not perceive that knowledge destroys prejudices, and prejudices form the basis of morality. Scientifically to demonstrate even the most widely accepted of moral truths is a precarious and delicate undertaking.

* * *

They were pedants who pretended to lay down rules for writing—as if there were any other rules than usage, taste, and passion; our virtues and our vices, all our fortes and all our failings.

I look upon it as a public misfortune that there are such things as French grammars. To teach schoolboys their native tongue out of a book is a monstrous thing when one comes to think of it. To study the living, throbbing language as you would study a dead one—what a ridiculous mistake!

Our language is our mother, and gives us suck. We must drink at the true fount. Grammars are but feeding-bottles, and Virgil has said that hand-fed babies are unworthy to sit at the table of a god or to share the couch of a goddess.

* * *

I have just heard of the death of my old friend Champdevaux. He was a fat, tubby little person,

who used to go about the world displaying his unconquerable contentment. He had a big, broad countenance; but his features were so small you could hardly discern them, and almost the only thing you could see on his face was the huge smile which overspread it. His visage was like a ripe fruit. He was born under a happy star, and Life had done little to impair his natural inclination to cheerfulness. With the universe he had no fault to find, and on the world—of which he formed so notable a part—he bestowed his unqualified admiration. Not that he was immune from trouble, for, after all, he was a man—and a good man into the bargain. But in his case grief partook of the nature of surprise, and surprise is transient. Champdevaux—good, simple soul—would only grieve just long enough to give his little beaming eyes a good rub with his knuckles, and then it was all over. He had married a highly respectable young person even smaller than himself—a dumpy, chubby-faced little creature, who might have passed for his sister. He loved her. She died. He was surprised. This time his surprise lasted. He cried like a child. Tears on so cherubic a face were pitiable to behold. A good priest, who was a friend of the family, attempted to console him.

"God gave her to you," said he; "and God has taken her away."

"I should never have thought it of Him," answered Champdevaux.

Three months later, I was passing through Tours, where he lived, and I went to see him. It was springtime, and I found him with a great straw hat on his head watering the flower-beds in his garden, looking as if he, too, had sprouted there. He put down his watering-pot, and, shaking me by the hand, turned his kindly, placid face towards me without saying a word. He seemed to be mutely imploring me not to think about dismal things.

Then, lifting up his little arms to heaven, he said:

"You see, old fellow, I am bound to go on blooming; it's my nature!"

It is my sincere opinion that Champdevaux—the simple-souled Champdevaux—was closer to the heart of Nature than those stiffnecked folk who offend her with their long regrets and proud rebelliousness.

Next year the happy creature found, almost at his garden gate, another wife, who bore the most marvellous resemblance to the one he had lost. The only difference was that she was smaller and chubbier still. He married her and lived with her in perfect happiness until his death, which took place four years after the wedding. He was pruning his trees when he had a paralytic stroke. It was his last surprise.

If we could represent men's characters by diagrams, and look at them as we look on figures in geometry, we should feel no more animosity towards an over-narrow mind than a mathematician entertains towards an angle that is five or six degrees short of being a right angle.

* * *

I think there is nothing in the world to compare with the alacrity with which woman is able to forget what was once all in all to her. By this astounding power to forget, no less than by her faculty for loving, woman is one of the real forces of nature.

* * *

I had lunch this morning with N——, who was formerly Minister of Public Instruction and the Fine Arts. His house is a favourite resort of a brilliant throng of painters and sculptors, and all sorts of literary, scientific, political, and social big-wigs. There I met Jarras the artist, Lataille the sculptor, N—— the famous comedian, B—— the Deputy, and two or three members of the Institute. They all differed widely from one another as regards intellectual outlook and habits of life; but all alike possessed the complacency of manner habitual with celebrities. They were most of them dieting, and the table was covered with bottles of mineral waters. They all complained of something wrong with their stomach,

their liver, or their kidneys; and they were all deeply interested in the condition of some other individual, whose symptoms they were eagerly comparing with their own. They touched on every subject—the stage, literature, politics, art, finance, scandal, the latest news. These men had acquired with years a certain gentleness and urbanity of manner. Time had polished them—on the surface. A cultured familiarity with the world of ideas, and the indifference felt by each of them towards schools of thought other than his own, had given them all the outward charm of good-natured tolerance. But it was soon apparent that, on every question of importance, such as religion, politics, society, art, they were fundamentally divided. It was clear that, if there were any sort of moral union between them, it was based merely upon caution or indifference, and that any matters on which they chanced to find themselves in agreement were such ordinary, everyday questions as, from indolence, carelessness, or faint-heartedness, they had never seriously investigated. I further observed that, however abstract the theme or Utopian the theory under discussion, they soon laid aside their habitual calm and showed their ferocity, if they considered that their peace of mind or their interests were being never so remotely invaded. For example, Jarras, who had an aristocratic *clientèle*,

would grow pale with horror or red with rage at the mere mention of Socialism or Collectivism. In all else he was the most easy-going creature in the world.

Sitting next me I had the *doyen* of the party, Antonin Furnès, the Orientalist, an elderly member of the Académie des Inscriptions, who had achieved fame as a scientist and a gallant. After surveying me for a few moments with an expression of satirical gravity, he whispered in my ear:

"Do as I do; follow my example. See, I always begin my egg at the bigger end!"

"Why?"

"In order to achieve goodness. I have travelled a great deal in my time. I have lived among all kinds of people, and I have observed that goodness consists in conforming to custom; and so I have come to the conclusion that, by conforming to custom in the minutest details, one may be a thoroughly good man. That is why I advise you, Monsieur Nozière, to begin your egg at the big end."

"I am grateful to you for such sound advice," I replied; "you see me quite ready to follow it. Indeed, I think with you that civility and a due observance of rules will pull one through, both in this world and the next—if there be a next. But pray excuse me, I am somewhat absent-minded."

"In that case," said the old Orientalist, "do not frequent the society of the great, and do your best to be independent of everyone."

As the repast proceeded, the conversation grew more and more animated and difficult to follow, and I gathered nothing of any great import. But when luncheon was over Monsieur Antonin Furnès related to me, as he sat sipping his coffee, an interesting story, which I set down here word for word as he narrated it.

"Thirty years ago," he began, "when I was in Paris, I received a visit from an Arabian, whose acquaintance I had made the previous year at Muscat, whither I had been despatched by the Government on special service. He was strikingly handsome, and a man of considerable literary attainments. But though his intellect was alert enough, it was completely impervious to everything foreign to the genius of his race. Of all the Eastern races the Armenians are the only people capable of entering into European ideas. The Turks have not the power; still less the Arabs. This particular Arab, who had given me a magnificent reception at his house at Muscat, was the most urbane, the most discreet, and the most elaborately ceremonious individual you could possibly meet. As I have said, he was a man of letters. His favourite study was history. I think he was the most cultured man

in Muscat. His philosophy was on a level with that of our own Froissart. The comparison with Froissart readily suggests itself to me, because the present-day Arab, with his schoolboyish notions of chivalry, bears no slight resemblance to our fourteenth-century *grands seigneurs*. My visitor, who was called Djeber-ben-Hamsa, explained with the utmost courtesy what he hoped I should do for him. He had, it seemed, come to Europe to study our Western manners and customs, and was beginning with France, a country which interested him more than any other as having given an incomparably brilliant manifestation of her power and justice in the East. He intended, he said, in due course to visit England and Germany. It was life in the higher ranks of society that he desired to see, and he came to ask me whether I would procure him the *entrée* to some of the best-known salons in Paris. This I readily undertook to do. In those days there were some delightful people in the capital, and the memory of their acquaintance still remains the great charm of my life. You cannot imagine to what perfection the art of conversation had been brought in those far-off days. True, Djeber-ben-Hamsa was totally unable to appreciate the joy of listening to Monsieur Guizot or Monsieur de Remusat, Madame —— or Madame ——. English he understood very well, for it is a language

with which the Arabs of the Oman have become tolerably familiar since the English established themselves at Aden. But of French he scarcely knew a dozen words. For this reason I made a point of taking him principally to balls and concerts. Dances were very much in vogue at that period, and many marvellously beautiful women were to be met with at such gatherings. I took him to the most brilliant of the season's balls—to Madame X's, Madame Y's, and Madame Z's. His handsome features, the gravity of his demeanour, the grace and elegance with which he would raise his hand to his brow and his lips as a token of homage, the elaborate imagery with which he gave expression in his own tongue to his profound gratitude—imagery which I reproduced as best I could in French to the mistress of the house—in a word, the whole distinguished and exotic demeanour of the man excited both curiosity and interest, and made him the object of a sort of respectful regard. I procured him an invitation to the ball at the Tuileries, where he was presented to the Emperor and Empress. Nothing, however, disturbed his lofty equanimity. He never evinced the smallest degree of surprise. After being thus fêted for six weeks, he quitted us in order to visit the rest of Europe.

"I had practically forgotten all about him when,

some five or six years later, I received an account of his journey embodied in a volume which he had done me the honour to send me from Muscat. The book, which was in Arabic, had only just been issued from the press of Messrs. Wilson & Son, printers, at Aden. I was turning the pages more or less carelessly, not expecting to find anything of importance, when my eye lighted on a chapter headed, 'Of Balls and Dances.' I read it through, and came across a somewhat curious passage, of which I give a literal translation:

"'It is customary,' said Djeber-ben-Hamsa, 'among the Western peoples, and particularly among the Franks, to give what are termed Balls. The custom is as follows: After making their wives and daughters as attractive as possible by baring their arms and shoulders, scenting their hair and their clothes, sprinkling a fine powder on their flesh, loading them with flowers and gems, and teaching them to smile when they have no inclination to do so, they accompany them into large, heated rooms lit with candles as numerous as the stars, and furnished with thick carpets, capacious divans, and soft, yielding cushions. There they drink fermented liquors, talk merrily with one another, and take part with the women in swift dances, at which I have, on several occasions, been present. Then, when the time arrives, they glut their carnal appe-

tites with great frenzy, either extinguishing the lights beforehand or arranging the curtains in a manner favourable to their designs. Thus, each man tastes the delights of the woman whom he chooses or who is allotted to him. I affirm that these things are so; not, indeed, that I have beheld them with my own eyes, for my guide always caused me to leave the salons before the orgy commenced, but because it would be absurd and contrary to all possibility that preparations such as I have described should have any other issue.'

"This conclusion of Djeber-ben-Hamsa's appeared to me somewhat remarkable, and I spoke of it to the wife of one of my colleagues at the Institute—the beautiful Madame ——. As she did not appear to take much interest in the matter, I pressed her to let me hear her comment, and thought to embarrass her by saying: 'Well, now, Madame, tell me why, as my Arabian friend says, you perfume your naked shoulders? Why do you load yourself with gold and precious stones? And why do you join in the dance?' Glancing at me with a look of compassion, she replied: 'Why? Because I have two girls to find husbands for!'"

* * *

If man depends upon Nature, Nature is no less dependent upon Man. Man is shaped by Nature, but he re-shapes Nature in his turn. He is ever

moulding anew the ancient mother of the race, and giving to her an aspect which, ere he came, she possessed not.

ARISTE, POLYPHILE, AND DRYAS

POLYPHILE

How can you assert, Ariste, that the intellect is essential to man? It is by no means so. The intellect in the higher range of its present-day development—that is to say, the faculty of discerning certain fixed relationships among the multifarious phenomena presented to man's view—is a possession of rare and uncertain tenure among the animals of our species. It is not by the intellect that man exists; the intellect does not regulate the functions of organic life; it satisfies neither hunger nor love; the blood circulates without its intervention. It is something extraneous to Nature, and indifferent—when it is not hostile—to morality. It has had no part in determining the deeper instincts of man, or in engendering those broad, indigenous modes of feeling which differentiate race from race; nor is it responsible for the growth of manners and customs. It was not the intellect that set up divine religion and august laws. They grew in the solemn, majestic past, broad-based upon the social

exercise of the functions of elementary life. I say this with no intent to decry the majesty of institutions, whether human or divine: you quite understand that. The touching splendour of the various creeds is made up of the formless remnants of primitive pharmacopœias. Theologies owe their origin to the venerable, uncomprehending wonder, the sacred awe, felt by our primitive ancestors as they looked out wistfully upon the Universe. Laws are but codes for the orderly administration of our instincts. They are really in subjection to the habits they claim to control. This it is that enables society to endure them. They were once called customs. When the dawning star of intellect first began to glimmer in the mind of man, he had already reared the fabric of his faith; his manners and customs were already in being. These things he loved; those he hated. He had his own imperious ideas of good and evil. The intellect is a thing of yesterday. It dates from the times of the Greeks, or the Egyptians, or, if you will, from the Acadians or the Atlantes. It came after morality, after —how shall I put it?—after the flutes and the perfume of the rose. It is but a charming and new-fangled adornment in the old Adam of which we are compounded. Here and there it has shed a few rays pleasing enough in their way—I do not deny it. It invests with agreeable radiance an

Empedocles, let us say, or a Galileo, whose lives, nevertheless, would have been happier had they shown less ability to discern a few fixed relationships in the infinite diversity of phenomena. The intellect, I allow, is not without a certain grace, a certain charm of its own. It is pleasing in some people. Being rare and confined to a negligible minority, it does no harm. But there must be no mistake in the matter: the intellect is inimical to the genius of the race. If, by some calamity—which, however, we need not apprehend—the light of intellect penetrated the whole mass of human kind, it would act like a solution of ammonia poured on to an ant-heap. Life would come to a sudden stop. Men only continue to exist because they understand but little—and that imperfectly. Ignorance and error are as necessary to life as bread and water, and in human societies the intellect, if it is to continue harmless, must be exceedingly rare. And such is, indeed, the case. Not that everything in the world is ordered for the express purpose of maintaining the species, but because life is only preserved in favourable conditions. It cannot be gainsaid that, taken as a whole, the human race is possessed of an instinctive hatred of the intellect. It is engendered by the vague and deep-seated conviction that such hostility is in its best interests.

ARISTE

The intellect, as you define it, is evidently of the speculative order; it may be described in other words as an aptitude for the philosophy of science. And there is good reason for believing that this faculty is not as new as you suppose, but that, on the contrary, it is as old as humanity itself. And the man who first grilled a bear's steak on a stone hearth in his cave was not merely a cook, he was a chemist, and the philosophy of the sciences was not totally unknown to him. But the truth is that from the soundest of premisses men draw the most erroneous conclusions. It is not the intellect that is fatal to humanity, but the errors of the intellect. The faculty of looking upon the Universe in a certain definite manner is part and parcel of the organs of which the human animal is composed, and man is a scientist from his birth. I flatter myself that I keep in Nature's good ways by pursuing my studies in agricultural chemistry and archæology. That said, I will grant you, Polyphile, that the aptitude of our kind to go astray is remarkable, and that the capacity to err is the one which man exercises with the greatest energy.

DRYAS

That is because we are only just entering on the era of Positivism.

POLYPHILE

At the very least you will agree with me that creeds and laws, moral and social, are not derived from a rationalistic interpretation of natural phenomena; that an untrammelled understanding of these phenomena weakens the necessary prejudices, and that the faculty of intellectual insight is a baneful monstrosity.

DRYAS

There is little truth in that.

POLYPHILE

There is so much truth in it that theologians who conceive of God as a Being endowed with sovereign intelligence are unable to admit that He is moral. The idea of a moral God is ridiculous.

DRYAS

Hitherto morality has been based on theological ideas. We have had fetishist morality, polytheistic morality, and monotheistic morality. The last variety died hard. Now the time has come to build up our moral system on a scientific basis.

POLYPHILE

I am not going to quarrel with you for setting up science in opposition to religion. But if

we look closely into the matter, Dryas, what, in point of fact, are the various religious creeds? Come now, what are they all but very ancient systems of astrology and arithmetic, police regulations of the dim and distant past, a confused medley of cookery receipts and sanitary precepts, primitive agricultural maxims, and rudimentary rules of good behaviour. Positivist ideas and rationalistic practices grow strange and mysterious with age, and are transformed into the dogmas of faith and the ritual of worship. The science of our day, too, will bring forth superstitions. There is no escape from it. The intellect is held in detestation by the human race. Religions are coming into being under our very eyes. At this moment Spiritualism is elaborating its dogmatic and moral system. It has its ritual, its councils, its fathers, and its millions of adherents. Now, the Spiritualists found their beliefs on the science of chemistry as created by Lavoisier. They claim to be in possession of the latest ideas regarding the constitution of matter. They believe they possess a good, an excellent system of natural philosophy. "We," they cry; "we are the really enlightened people." As Ariste was saying, men draw the most erroneous conclusions from the soundest of premisses.

ARISTE

I see, Polyphile, that your quarrel with the intellect is but a lover's quarrel. You heap reproaches upon the intellect because she is not Queen of the World. Her empire is certainly not absolute; but she is a beneficent dame who is not without credit in certain reputable houses, and the benefits of her gentle sway are felt even in this city situated on the banks of a broad river in the midst of a fertile valley.

BOOK III

PIERRE NOZIÈRE'S TRAVELS IN FRANCE

PIERRE NOZIÈRE'S TRAVELS IN FRANCE

CHAPTER I

PIERREFONDS

ERE in Valois, where my way now lies, sweetness and calm are upon the land. Gladly would I kiss the very soil, for, in a deep and special sense, it is the home, the cradle of our nation. Generation after generation has come and gone and left its abiding mark upon it, so that, virginal and radiant as it is with the loveliness of youth, it is yet the ancient reliquary of our race. Of a surety no one province of France is more truly French than the rest, and those that composed the realm of the early monkish kings of the third dynasty and those that entered last into the hallowed bond, are welded, all alike, in one indissoluble union. Nevertheless, an old archæologist, and a Parisian to boot, may perhaps be forgiven if he looks upon the Ile de France and the regions that encompass it—upon the very

heart of that cherished France, the common heritage of us all—with special reverence and affection. Here it was that our beloved tongue, the sweet *langue d'œil*, the language of Amyot and La Fontaine, the speech of the Franks, took form and grew to perfection. This is my home, my very home of homes!

Here I am at Pierrefonds, in a room hired from a family of peasants; a room containing a walnut linen-press and a four-poster hung with curtains of white muslin edged with ball-fringe. On the narrow mantelpiece is a bridal wreath covered with a glass shade, and coloured prints in black frames, that date back to the July government, hang upon the white-washed walls. One represents Napoleon extending his forgiveness to the Duc de Saint-Simon, and bears the following inscription:

"The Duc de Saint-Simon, an émigré, having been arrested fully armed and condemned to death, was about to undergo the supreme penalty, when his daughter came to implore Napoleon to spare his life. 'I will spare your father's life,' said the Emperor, 'and his sole punishment shall be the remorse that must needs be his for having borne arms against his country.'"

Pictures of a bride and bridegroom hang on either side of the looking-glass. Then there is Estelle the shepherdess, holding a crook bedecked with pink

ribbons; and Josephine wearing a coronet on her brow. A couplet reveals Josephine's secret:

> "The thoughts of pleasure hold her heart in thrall,
> And all her hopes are centred in the ball."

This kind of art is no more; photography has killed it. All around me there are about a score of portraits in little frames: people with their hair pasted down and eyes protruding from their heads. Young men and young women—cousins evidently—and little children, the very tiny ones with half-shut eyes and mouths agape. Peasants don't buy this sort of thing nowadays; they have their photographs taken instead. The only modern pictures on the walls of this room are the first communion certificates, signed by the curé, depicting a row of little boys and girls kneeling at the Holy Table, the benison of the Almighty descending upon them through a rift in the heavens. From my window here I get a view of the fish-ponds, the woods, and the castle. A hundred paces from where I am sitting is a goodly cluster of beeches which the lightest breeze stirs into music. The sun, in whose radiance they are bathed, scatters little splashes of light upon the path beneath. You can gather raspberries in the neighbouring woods, but you have to know where to look for them. The wild raspberry plant, with its leaves green above and white below,

nestles shyly along the fringes of the warm, sunny glades.

There are wild flowers in the woods that I love better than the blooms of cultivation. They are daintier in form, more delicate in perfume, and, unlike the roses that our gardeners rear, they are not called after distinguished military men; bachelor's buttons, rock-roses, coronillas, germanders, blue-bells, mirrors of Venus, lady-fingers, Solomon's seal, combs of Venus, larkspur, and so forth—such are their names.

On my left rises the grim stone pile of the Château de Pierrefonds. To be quite frank about it, the Château de Pierrefonds is now only a great big toy. In its pristine state it was indeed "a castle built passing strong to resist attack, and right well furnished and garnished of all things that belong to war." Unhappily, however, the detestable invention of gunpowder took place before it was quite finished. With haughty disdain it had withstood the earlier showers of stone and iron; but at the beginning of the seventeenth century the fire of thirty pieces of cannon soon made a breach in its walls. Its towers were rent asunder. To us, whom civilisation has familiarised with the guns of Herr Krupp, the towers of Pierrefonds present an artless, a childish appearance.

Flanking each tower is the figure of a knight,

and the towers themselves—there are eight of them —are dedicated respectively to Cæsar, King Arthur, Alexander, Godefroy de Bouillon, Joshua, Hector, Judas Maccabæus, and Duke Lewis of Orleans. These eight doughty champions, thus diverse in age and country, but all of high lineage and full valiant knights, wear similar costumes, being arrayed after the manner of early fifteenth-century men at arms.

In their frame of holly leaves they resemble the figures in an antique pack of cards. The master-sculptor who carved them cared not a whit for local colour. He made no bones about arraying Hector of Troy like Godefroy de Bouillon, and Godefroy de Bouillon like Duke Lewis of Orleans. In those days there was no Doctor Schliemann to go delving about in the plain where Troy once stood, looking for the arms of Priam's fifty sons. There were no archæologists then, and no one bothered his head to find out how men lived in bygone times. Now we must needs portray Hector wearing his greaves, and everyone, whether in legend or history, must be shown in costume strictly appropriate to his times. That is doubtless a great, a noble aim. I myself have been a humble follower of the masters in this respect, and I am still an enthusiastic admirer of those greatly gifted people who strive to make the past live again in Poetry and Art. It is, nevertheless, a question whether complete success is attainable in such an

enterprise, and whether our knowledge of the past enables us to recapture its form, its colour, its mode of life. I think it doubtful. We of the nineteenth century are supposed to possess a highly cultivated historic sense. I readily grant it. But still it is a sense peculiar to ourselves. The men who come after us will not have the same sense; they may have a better or a worse, that I cannot tell, nor is that the question; but they will inevitably possess a different one. They will take another—and, they will assuredly believe, a more accurate view of the past than ours. And the probability is that our revivals in poetry and painting will occasion them more surprise than admiration. "Schools" soon grow out of date.

One day I was going past Notre-Dame with an eminent philologist, when he stopped and pointed to the royal statues which adorn the main entrance.

"Those old sculptors," said he, "intended them for the Kings of Juda; but, in reality, they are kings of the thirteenth century, and that is why they interest us." A man can only portray with success himself or his contemporaries.

So it is with the sculptors of Pierrefonds. Arthur, here, was a true knight. Feeling that death was near, and being unwilling that his invincible sword should fall into hands unworthy to wield it, he bade his squire go and cast it into the sea. Now this

squire was a traitor, and reflecting that it was a good sword, and of great price, he hid it within a cleft of the rocks. Then he came again to the king, and told him that the sword lay whelmed beneath the sea. But with a scornful smile Arthur pointed to the faithful brand that had returned to his side, for that it would have no part in a deed of treachery.

But the tower that is dedicated to this knight, whose sword was so loyal, is a disloyal and wicked tower, for within it are cruel dungeons. Viollet-le-Duc describes them as follows: "Beneath the ground-floor is a vaulted chamber with an ogival roof, and under this again is a vault seven metres in depth with an oval roof. The only means of access into this vault is through an aperture in the upper part of the roof—that is to say, one has to descend by a ladder or knotted rope. In the centre of the floor-space of this circular vault is a well fourteen metres deep, the mouth of which, something over a metre in diameter, is immediately below the hole in the centre of the oval-shaped roof of the vault above. This vault, which is without light or air, save such as can enter through a narrow slit, is furnished with a convenience inserted in the thickness of the wall, which shows that it was intended for a human occupant; while the well sunk in the middle of the floor was probably an ever-gaping tomb."

The eight knights are placed beneath the machicolation, in niches fringed with foliage. This foliage forms one of the marvels of Gothic architecture from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. The sculptor of those days had only seen the flowers of his own woods and fields. The acanthus of the Greeks and the noble grace of the Corinthian volutes were unknown to him. But he knew how to enwreathe the capitals of his columns with holly, ivy, nettles, and thistles. He could make the wild strawberry blossom on his walls; he could adorn them with chaplets of oak. The niches of these warriors, high up as they are, are engarlanded with blossoms after this fashion, and if you examine them through a pair of opera-glasses you will see that each niche is adorned with different foliage.

Diversity reigned delightfully supreme in the decorative stone-work of the so-called Gothic ages. Thus Viollet-le-Duc, whose task it was to restore the ornamental motifs of the Château de Pierrefonds, was at great pains to introduce as much variety as possible. No frieze, not a single rose, has its fellow. This diversity lends an extreme attractiveness to pre-Renaissance buildings; nor did the Renaissance, in its prime, abandon this charming variety of decoration.

But the truth of the matter is that there are too many new stones at Pierrefonds. I am quite

satisfied in my own mind as to the archæological accuracy of the restoration work begun by Viollet-le-Duc in 1858, and subsequently completed from his designs. I am sure that the keep and the exterior defences look just as they looked in the olden days. But the genuine old stones, the ancient witnesses, are there no longer. It is the castle of Lewis of Orleans no more, but merely a copy, in relief, of the original manor. The ruins have been demolished, and that, in itself, is a species of vandalism.

CHAPTER II

THE LITTLE TOWN

DESROCHES (*examining the country through his spy-glass*). Well, as far as I can judge of it, with my limited range of vision, that is rather a pretty spot.

DELILLE. Didn't I tell you so! Look! that's the little town half-way up the slope.

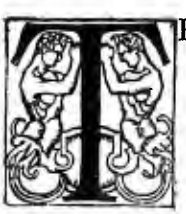
DESROCHES. It looks as though it were painted on the hillside.

DELILLE. And the river there, which flows by its walls!

DESROCHES. And then winds its way through that lovely meadow!

DELILLE. And that thick wood which shelters it from the chill northern blasts!

PICARD, *La Petite Ville*, Act i, scene 2.



HERE is a little town situate on the borders of Beauvaisis and Normandy in what of old was called the Pays du Vexin; the Seine, bordered with willows and poplars, flows gently at its feet, and it is crowned with woodlands. The slate roofs of this little town shimmer blue in the sunlight, and, high above them, rise a round tower and the three steeples of the old collegiate church.

For a long time the little town was warlike and strong. But now it has doffed its girdle of stone, and rests in silence and calm after its labours. It is a little town of Old France, and the ghosts of our forefathers still haunt its grey walls and linden avenues. Memories of vanished days come thronging there. It is sweet and venerable to look upon.

If you would learn its name, just glance at the arms emblazoned over the portals of its hospital—the hospital founded by Saint Louis himself: Three bunches of cress vert on a field argent, surmounted—for it was a royal burgh—by three golden fleurs-de-lis on a field azure.

The worthy folk of those olden times used readily to account for the three bunches of cress. "Once upon a time," so their story ran, "King Louis IX, having entered our city on a very hot day, was consumed with a great thirst. A salad of cress was put before him, which he found right cool and exceeding pleasant to the taste; and in payment thereof, he added three bunches of cress to the scutcheon of his loyal burgh."

You will not be surprised to learn that present-day scholars attach no credit to this tradition.

Certain thirteenth-century seals have come under their notice, and they know now that, at that date, the city arms were not those which we behold to-day. These latter date from the fourteenth

century. During the Hundred Years' War the little town, though it suffered great hardship, valiantly did its duty. On one occasion it came within an ace of being taken by surprise and falling into the hands of the English. But a native of the district, disguised as a peasant, and carrying a load of vegetables on his back, succeeded in making his way into the town. He gave warning to the defenders, who held themselves on the alert and repelled the foe. The learned men of those parts are of opinion that it was then that the three bunches of cress were added to the city arms. I fall in with the view, because I like to please them, and because the tale does credit to the little town. But it is very doubtful. Howbeit the emblem well becomes the place, for now its only pride is in its gardens and its fountains. Its scutcheon has a Latin motto, which, by an ingenious play upon words, tells you that, though the spring is not always blooming, the little town is ever flourishing:

Ver non semper viret, Vernon semper viret,

for the little town to which I have brought you is Vernon. I trust you will not regret having lingered to explore it for a little while. Every town of France, even the lowliest, is a gem inwrought upon the green mantle of our country. Nor, it seems to me, can we look upon one of those steeples

there, with their stone traceries all stained and defaced by Time, but our hearts must needs go out to those innumerable kinsfolk whom we have never known, and our love for France our Mother take on a deeper and more filial ardour.

Readers of *Rob Roy* (I know not if they be as numerous now as they used to be) will recall the scene in which Sir Walter Scott's romantic heroine, the beautiful and high-spirited Diana, shows her cousin the family portraits and the motto of the Scottish lords of Vernon, which was displayed in Gothic characters upon them.

"Do you not know," said Diana, "our motto—the Vernon motto—where

> "'Like the solemn vice, Iniquity,
> We moralise two meanings in one word?'"

And such, in fact, is the very motto of this little town. Maybe the old barons who followed Duke William to England bore it thither with them. It is a fine question for an archæologist to cudgel his brains about. For my part, I regard the theory as doubtful. In history one has to make up one's mind to be ignorant of many things. Be that as it may, as the antiquaries observe after every dissertation, the town of Vernon is mentioned for the first time in history on the occasion of the death of Saint Onoflette or Noflette, who departed

this life about the middle of the seventh century of the Christian era. The story of this saint is interesting. It has been recorded by an old legendary with an artlessness that I will essay to imitate as well as the difference in times will permit.

History of the Blessed Longis and the Blessed Onoflette

In the reign of Clotaire II there dwelt in Maine a priest of the name of Longis, who founded an abbey nigh unto Mamers. Now it befell that, having beheld a maiden of the countryside named Onoflette, who was young, and owed service to none, he conceived a great admiration for the virtues and signal piety which he discerned in her. Eager to snatch so precious a creature from the evils peculiar to the age, and from the perils of the world in general, he brought her within his abbey, and there caused her to take the veil of Christian virgins. After the manner of many other saints of those times, Longis possessed a strong and impetuous will. In the ardour of his zeal he had not thought to consult, nor even to inform, the parents of Onoflette concerning his intentions. These latter were exceeding wroth, and accused Longis of having seduced their daughter, who had hitherto always led a pure and virtuous life, and

of carrying on guilty relations with her in his abbey. They judged the saint's conduct by appearances, and merely by the light of reason. Viewed from this standpoint, it must be confessed that Longis' mode of procedure was calculated to rouse suspicion. And so the accusation which they brought against him was upheld by their neighbours and friends. The whole district rose up in indignation against the abbot. Longis was within an ace of being undone. Howbeit he despaired not; moreover, he had Onoflette herself to bear witness on his behalf, and, far from reproaching him for having misused her, she vouched for the innocence of her pious master, and tendered him her thanks for having guided her feet into the way of salvation. He went with her to Paris to justify his conduct. "God," says the chronicler, "made manifest their rectitude by the miracles which they wrought in the presence of the king and his nobles. They were acquitted and sent home, and the parents of Onoflette, covered with confusion, acknowledged the heinousness of their calumnies."

On their return to the monastery, Longis and Onoflette lived together a while longer in perfect tranquillity, exhorting each other to piety. But life is fleeting; Onoflette died at Vernon-sur-Seine when on a visit to that town. Longis, when he learned

of the death of his pious companion, came to seek the body, and interred it hard by his monastery, in a spot whereon a parish church has since been built.

The Church has numbered the Blessed Longis and the Blessed Onoflette among her saints.

In the days when they trod the way of salvation together in the loneliness of the woods, nymphs still inhabited the sacred springs, votive tablets were suspended, together with images, from the branches of the sacred oaks. The sign of the Cross and holy water had not availed to put all the lowly gods of the country folk to flight. It is full likely that many a little faun, in his rustic ignorance, and witting not of the glad gospel tidings, peeped through the branches at Onoflette and Longis, and taking them for a goatherd and a shepherdess, piped to them innocently as they went their way.

Many exorcisms were needed to drive away these little gods and goddesses. Even now, in the country round Vernon, there exist traces of the old pagan ritual. On the eve of the first Sunday in Lent the country folk go out into the fields at eventide and walk in procession beneath the trees, bearing lanthorns and chanting some ancient invocation. Faithful, though they know it not, to Ceres their mother, these good folk recall the mysteries of ancient days, and represent, in a symbolism that may even yet be recognised, the goddess who sought

her daughter by the lurid gleams of Ætna. I set this down on the authority of Monsieur Adolphe Meyer, the learned historian of the town of Vernon.

It is not always the grandest buildings that impress the mind most strongly. Sometimes our eyes and thoughts linger with strange persistence over some humble piece of masonry wrought by rough, untutored hands. In the old quarter of Vernon, near what was once the collegiate, but is now the parish, church, is a little forsaken street which leads down to the Seine. It is bordered with poor little crooked houses that look as if they had much ado to keep one another from tumbling down. Amid these hovels stands a house of stone, which is said to have been at one time the residence of the *contrôleur clerc d'eau*. It has two windows and a door. Above the door a humble mason of the days of King Henri IV or King Louis XIII has graven, beneath a sort of canopy, a boat manned by two people. One bears the insignia of crozier and mitre, and I have no hesitation in pronouncing him to be that Hugh who, in 1130, was Abbot of Rouen. The other, with long hair floating down over his shoulders, is Saint Adjutor himself. There were originally three figures, but the third has been obliterated by time. It was that of a poor fisherman, who was rowing the bishop and the saint in his boat. Any of the sailors about the place will readily

tell you the subject of this bas-relief. They have not forgotten that Saint Adjutor, in company with Bishop Hugh, went to fill up a pit in the river bed opposite the Priory of Saint Mary Magdalen. Above the pit the waters of the river gathered into a whirlpool, wherein vessels were caught and dragged to the bottom. Already many crews had met their doom over against the Priory of Saint Mary Magdalen, and the banks of the river began to be thronged by unhouseled souls. Saint Adjutor filled up the pit by casting therein the chains wherewith of yore the unbelievers had unjustly burdened him. A few links of iron! Truly little enough to fill up an abyss withal. But he cast into the waters not only his chains, but the sufferings of a righteous soul and the patience of a saint of God. No such wonders are wrought by charity nowadays. We have to use dredgers. This miracle was commemorated in verse, in the seventeenth century, in the woeful accents of a plaintive ballad. The great Saint Adjutor, as we have said, casts his chains into the cruel waters, which straightway grew smooth and tranquil.[1]

[1] " Oyez, lecteur, une merveille
Qui rarement a sa pareille ;
Le péril dès lors a cessé,
Le bruit des flots s'est apaisé.
Il n'est point de fleuve où l'on voie
La course de l'onde plus coie.

Saint Adjutor is venerated under the names Ajoutre and Astre. This Saint Adjutor, Ajoutre, or Astre must have been a very remarkable man. It is impossible, at the present day, to picture him to ourselves in his habit as he lived, but, judging from the deep impression he made on the popular imagination, Adjutor of Vernon was a strong and ardent spirit.

The History of Saint Adjutor

Descended from the henchmen of Rollo, son of Duke Jean and Duchesse Rosamonde de Blaru, Adjutor was brought up by Saint Bernard, Abbot of Tiron, in the strictest observances of the Christian religion. He appears to have imported into his adopted faith the same daring and imaginative spirit

Le nocher peut mener sa nef
Assurément par cette place
Dans une tranquille bonace
Sans redouter aucun méchef.

Un gouffre en la Seine voisine
Par ses flots tortueux ruine
Et les hommes et les bateaux,
Les coulant jusqu'au fond des eaux.
Mais Adjutor longtemps ne souffre
L'incommodité de ce gouffre.
Se sentant touché de douleur,
Hugues, son prélat, il appelle ;
Ils y vont en même nacelle
Pour mettre fin à ce malheur."

that inspired his forefathers when, with songs on their lips, they sailed the sea in their ships.

The story runs that he passed his youth in the woods, now joining eagerly in the chase, anon silent and wrapt in the ecstatic contemplation of a heavenly vision. In those days Peter the Hermit was preaching his crusade against the infidels, and Adjutor of Vernon took the Cross in 1095. Accompanied by two hundred men at arms he set out for the Holy Land, and went to and fro in Palestine harrying and doing battle. Two years later he came to Nicea and continued to wage war after the conquest of Jerusalem. Falling into an ambush in the neighbourhood of Tambire, he nevertheless hewed his way through the midst of the Saracens, who left a thousand dead upon the spot.

Howbeit the infidels recaptured the tomb of Jesus Christ. For seventeen years Adjutor of Vernon toiled and fought, and then he was made captive by the Turks and imprisoned in Jerusalem. He was kept in close bondage, but it is thought that he found consolation in the reflection that his body was held captive in the place that contained the tomb of the Son of God. And in his prison he prayed unceasingly.

And it came to pass that one night, as he lay asleep, he beheld Saint Mary Magdalen standing at his right hand, and at his left, the blessed Bernard

of Tiron, whose aid he had invoked. And they raised him up and bore him, in the space of a single night, from Jerusalem into the country that lay round about Vernon. Such journeys were not uncommon at that period. When they had come to the forest of Vernon, Saint Mary Magdalen and Saint Bernard of Tiron quitted Adjutor, saying:

"Behold the abiding place which we have chosen for thee."

And the knight recognised with joy the woods wherein he had spent his youth. And seeing, not far from where he lay, a young shepherd tending a flock of sheep on the hillside, he called him and bade him go to the Château of Blaru and make known to the Duchess Rosamonde that her son had come home again.

The shepherd did as he was bid. But Rosamonde did not believe that the message which the boy had brought her was true.

She made answer, saying:

"My son lies dead in Jerusalem, and it will never be mine to behold the day of his return."

And she tarried within the house.

The shepherd went back to him by whom he had been sent, and repeated the words that the Duchess had spoken.

"Get thee again to Blaru," said Adjutor, "and say

that the three bells of the church shall ring of their own accord to tell of my return."

And it came to pass that as soon as the shepherd had delivered this message to the Duchess, the bells began to ring. But Rosamonde shook her head and said:

"These bells ring not for the home-coming of my son."

The shepherd returned again to Adjutor, who sent him yet a third time to Blaru, saying:

"Go thou again and once more make known my home-coming, and if my mother believe not, the cock which is roasting on the spit in the castle kitchen shall crow three times."

And, lo, when the shepherd had delivered this message, the cock upon the spit began to crow.

When she heard it, Rosamonde at length knew that her child had come, and she went forth to the forest to embrace the son who had been so miraculously restored to her. But she had tarried too long. For God brooks not that His power and His mercy should be held in doubt. He had called His servant to His side.

When Rosamonde reached that place in the forest which the shepherd pointed out to her, Adjutor had just breathed his last, thus fulfilling the promise which Saint Mary Magdalen and Saint Bernard had declared unto him, saying:

"Behold the abiding place which we have chosen for thee."

And the fame of his holiness spread even as a perfume far and wide throughout the land. Rosamonde de Blaru took the veil, and, after her death, was buried with her son.

The tomb of Saint Adjutor exists to this day. You may see upon it two flutes placed saltire-wise. Such also are the emblems of the lords of Vernon. Did not the lovely Diana, whose memory we recalled just now, say to her cousin:

"Do you not know our cognizance, the pipes?"

Must we therefore conclude that not the motto only, but also the armorial bearings of the noble lords of Vernon were carried away from France by one of Duke William's henchmen? I know not what bond of kinship unites the great Saint Adjutor and the lovely Diana. It is not a matter that I need examine here. All that remains for me to explain is how it came about that Saint Adjutor, who quitted this world for a better the same day that he returned to Vernon, was subsequently able to cast his chains into the river in order to still the whirlpool. The difficulty is merely apparent. The Saint came back to earth expressly to work this miracle.

Now would you care for a cooler walk and a newer story? Come with me to the other side of

the little town—it will take but five minutes—and let us sit down in the shade of the tall trees—clipped to resemble a wall—that encircle the Parc de Bizi. Those trees were planted by a hero. The Maréchal de Belle-Isle, who had inherited his love of splendour from his grandfather Fouquet, superintended the laying out of this park at Bizi in his brief intervals of leisure. "When he was not at Metz," says Barbier, "he was to be found on his estate near Vernon, giving orders to an army of workmen—masons, gardeners, and decorators." When we remember the toils he went through, we shall not grudge him the luxuriousness of his abode. Just read over once again the story of that retreat from Prague, when the Maréchal, hemmed in by the enemy, made his way out of the city with fifteen thousand men, whom he rendered as it were invisible, and managed to bring into Egra, in seven days' march, during one of the hardest winters on record. Officers and men wrapped their cloaks around them, and lay down to rest in the snow. The old Maréchal, who suffered from the gout, slept in a carriage behind a wall of snow which they made to keep the wind away. It was a most delicate piece of business this retreat, and required the most skilful handling. But the merit of a retreat is rarely recognised save by professional soldiers. It never kindles popular enthusiasm. The

withdrawal from Prague added at once to the reputation and the unpopularity of the Maréchal de Belle-Isle. At that time this great warrior was the theme of many ditties. Some of the songs with which his fair fame was bespattered were at all events pretty conceits enough.[1]

That excellent man, the Duc de Penthièvre, lived at Bizi. The strawberry plants in the woods bear witness to his candour and his kindness of heart; for in 1777 we find the Duc writing as follows to his steward:

"They tell me that the people of Vernon are feeling aggrieved because they are not allowed to pick strawberries in the woods. You are going the right way to make me hated, and if that were to happen, nothing in the world could grieve me more."

I give this letter as it is quoted by Monsieur Adolphe Meyer in his history of Vernon. Surely none but a man of truly generous heart could have written in such a strain.

By a remarkable singularity the Duc de Pen-

[1] "Quand Belle-Isle est parti,
Une nuit,
De Prague à petit bruit
Il dit,
Voyant la lune :
Lumière de mes jours,
Astre de ma fortune,
Conduisez-moi toujours."

thièvre combined a faith in the Christian religion with the practice of the philosophic virtues. By birth he belonged to the old *régime*, but his mode of living won him the goodwill of the adherents of the new movement. As, moreover, he took no part in public affairs, his generosity gained for him, in the very height of the Revolution, the rare privilege of enjoying the affection and esteem of his former vassals. In return for the titles of which a decree of the National Assembly had deprived him, he was made Commandant of the Vernon contingent of the Garde Nationale. Three years afterwards the Corporation of the little town proceeded to Bizi and planted a tree to Liberty, and on it was inscribed "Hommage à la Vertu."

Nevertheless the unhappy man was all the time dying of grief. He only lived a few days after the terrible death of his daughter-in-law, the Princess de Lamballe.

Close to the park, at the far end of an ornamental avenue bordered on one side by the last houses of the town and on the other by vineyards and orchards, stands a granite pyramid, a sort of symmetrical menhir, of an aspect at once heroic and funereal. And a tomb in truth it is—a tomb of glorious memory. Upon it are emblazoned the arms of Vernon and Privas, with an inscription that reads as follows:

To the
Men of the Garde Mobile of Ardèche,
Vernon, 22–26 November, 1870.

The invaders were gaining ground. Evreux had just fallen into the hands of the Germans. Four companies of the second battalion of Ardèche, and the whole of the third battalion, making up altogether a force of fifteen hundred men, left Saint Pierre de Louvière on the 21st November at eleven o'clock at night. Their orders were to protect Vernon, which was expecting to be attacked on the following day. The train which conveyed them travelled at reduced speed with lights extinguished. It came to a halt about three in the morning, in the rain and darkness, some three miles in front of the town. The troops detrained immediately and took up a position on the heights of the forest of Bizi which overlook Vernon in the direction of Pacy, where the enemy had been posted in force since the previous night.

Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas, who was in command, having ascertained the lie of the forest from some of the inhabitants, placed sharp-shooters along every avenue, concealing them in the undergrowth and giving them strict orders not to fire till they were told. His intention was to allow the Prussians to pass unmolested through the wood so that he

might afterwards have them in his power and shut them up in Vernon. All arrangements had been made when, at daybreak, a great rumble of vehicles and repeated bugle-calls proclaimed that the enemy were at hand. It took them more than an hour to defile through the forest. When at length the head of their column reached the town, they were greeted with a round of musketry by the National Guard. This reception made them waver. One detachment only entered the town, the bulk of their forces remaining drawn up outside.

As the result of inquiries, they soon learned, from spies, that the French were occupying the forest. Realising the critical nature of their position, they began to concentrate all their efforts on making good their retreat. Their cavalry immediately went ahead to reconnoitre the forest tracks and to find out if there were any unoccupied by the enemy. After a prolonged search, they succeeded in discovering some unfrequented paths that were not guarded. Along these they hurried their artillery, while their infantry, proceeding along the high road, attempted to win through by main force. After an hour of very brisk firing, they broke up their ranks, and, scattering in all directions, made their way through the woods in the direction of Pacy. They lost, in the fight and in their disorderly retreat, a hundred and fifty men and several officers, and left

behind them a dozen waggons laden with food and ammunition.

For three days the enemy gave no signs of life. The Garde Mobile of Ardèche, who had remained behind at Bernay, came on to Vernon, where the three battalions were thus again united. On the morning of the 26th, the sixth company of the third battalion, which was keeping a sharp look-out about two hundred yards in front of the forest on the Ivry road at the hamlet of Cantemarche, was suddenly assailed by a column of the enemy eight hundred strong. Despite the rapidity of the onslaught and the superior numbers of the foe, the Garde Mobile gave a good account of themselves, but perceiving that the position was about to be turned, they withdrew as far as the edge of the wood. There they took shelter behind the railway embankment, and kept up their fire till their ammunition gave out. Then Captain Rouveure cried: "Give them the bayonet, boys!" and dashed forward. The same moment he fell mortally wounded. The little band flung themselves on the enemy, who broke and fell back. At that moment reinforcements, in the shape of two battalions, came upon the scene, and, under cover of the wood, opened a hot fire on the Germans. The latter brought several field-pieces into play, but about four o'clock they beat a retreat, leaving two hun-

dred dead on the field. The Garde Mobile had eight killed and a score or so wounded. Captain Rouveure's body remained in the hands of the Germans, who paid it the last honours. A detachment of cavalry, commanded by a superior officer, brought back the remains in a coffin covered with laurels.

When the news got abroad that Rouen had surrendered, the "Mobiles" of Ardèche received orders to evacuate the town of Vernon, which they had defended with such courage. Such are the memories which the monument at Bizi recalls to mind.

It has been my desire, while looking through the little town as one might look through a book, to piece together the stories told by two or three of its pages in stone; for what are our towns but books in very truth—books adorned with gracious pictures wherein we may discern the faces of our forefathers.

CHAPTER III

SAINT VALERY-SUR-SOMME

SAINT VALERY-SUR-SOMME,
Friday, 13th August.

ROM the room in which I am writing, one can see all along the bay of the Somme, with its sands stretching away to the horizon as far as the blue-grey lines of Crotoy and Hourdel. The sun, as it slopes westward, sets the fringes of the great dark clouds on fire. The tide is making, and, looking out over the deep, you can see the fishing smacks gliding homeward on the flood. Beneath my window there are some boats moored along the harbour. From their masts, nets, in place of sails, are hanging up to dry. Five or six fishermen, up to their middle in the shallow stream, are keeping a sharp look-out for the fish which the beaters are engaged in scaring by vigorously laying about them with switches. The fishermen are armed with pointed staves, with which they spear their prey with much address. Every time one of these weapons is lifted out of the

water, you may see the gleam of a sole quivering at the end of it.

The salt-laden wind flutters the papers on my table, and wafts to my nostrils the strong savour of the sea. Innumerable wild duck are swimming along the waterway, flinging into the air with all the power of their beaks their "quack quack" of satisfaction. The way they flap their wings, dive into the mud, and waddle along in friendly groups on the sand, shows how pleased they are. One has left his fellows and is enjoying blissful repose with his head tucked under his wing. He is happy in his mind. True, he will be eaten one of these days; but then one can't go on living for ever. Life is circumscribed by time. And, after all, the trouble is not so much in being eaten as in knowing you are going to be eaten—and he knows it not. We shall all be swallowed up one day, every one of us, and we know it: the wisest thing is to forget about it. Let us now take a stroll along the breakwater, what time the sea, which has already covered the sandbanks of Cayeux and Le Hourdel, comes flowing swiftly into the bay, bringing home the little fleet of shrimp boats. On our left are the ramparts, once washed by river and sea, their sandstone surface besprayed with a sort of golden rust. Above them rises the church with its five pointed gables, that were pierced in

the fifteenth century with great oriel windows; its slate roof, shaped like an upturned keel; its steeple, and its weathercock. In the eleventh century there stood another church there, which also had a weather vane. All through September, in the year 1066, William the Bastard came anxiously, morning after morning, to look at the weathercock on the steeple. His host, consisting of sixty-seven thousand men at arms, not to mention serving men, workmen, and purveyors, was awaiting orders close to the town. His fleet, which had already escaped shipwreck once, was moored in the bay. For two whole weeks a contrary wind from the north had forced this multitude of men and ships to remain in port. The Bastard, consumed with eagerness to wrest England from Harold and the Saxons, was chafing at a delay which might result in his fleet being damaged and his army melting away. To obtain a favourable wind he commanded that prayers should be recited in public, and gave orders that the shrine of Saint Valery should be borne in procession through the camp. Clearly that man of God loved not the Saxons, for immediately the wind changed, and the fleet was able to put to sea. Four hundred vessels under full sail and more than a thousand lesser transport craft put off from the shore at a given signal. The Duke's vessel led the van, with the banner that had been

sent by the Pope flying from her masthead, and a cross blazoned on her ensign. Her sails were of divers hues, and on several parts thereof were depicted the three lions of Normandy. At the prow was carved the bust of a child bearing a bow full drawn, with an arrow just ready to take flight.

It was on the 29th September that the departure took place. A week later William had conquered England.

A flight of steps winds up to the only surviving gate of the town. On either side of it stand its two dismantled towers, where little pink carnations bloom and shed their fragrance. On one of these towers, beneath a tangle of grasses and wild flowers, the machicolation, like a diadem, may yet be discerned. A goodwife grows cabbages at the foot of this ruin, and when the rough weather comes it rains big stones in her garden. Her little dwelling, built above old subterranean passages, is full of cracks, and looks as though it would be knocked over every time a piece of the tower comes rattling down. Nevertheless, the worthy soul admires William's gate; indeed, she loves it. "I know it'll kill me one of these days," she told me; "but it's a fine thing for all that."

Crossing the village street, with its low-browed thatched cottages gaily painted light blue, we reach

the extremity of Cape Cornu. There is a chapel there half hidden by a clump of elms that have weathered the storms for a hundred years. It is quite a modern structure in the pseudo-Renaissance style. But the walls of mingled stone and shingle give it the appearance of a draughtboard, and thus recall the buildings of old Normandy. Known as Saint Valery's or the Sailors' Chapel, it is built on the site of an older structure, and harbours the tomb of the Apostle of Vimeu.

It is a famous place of pilgrimage for seafaring men. Already five little model ships have been hung up in the vaulted roof of the new chapel by fishermen saved from shipwreck. These good fellows take their God to be a great, passionate, headstrong child like themselves. They know He is terrible in His wrath ; but they know that they must not bear Him malice on that account. They keep on the right side of Him by giving Him little presents. They bring toys for Him to play with. True, the toys are symbolical toys, and the little boys' boats represent the bark which Our Lord miraculously preserved from foundering ; but I am very much disposed to think that good Saint Valery has something to do with these humble gifts. The little boats are brought to please him, for in his earthly days he was a staunch friend to the fishermen of the Somme.

Cape Cornu is wild and grand, and haunted by many memories. Here, then, let us stay our steps; here in the shadow of those high elms whose leaves the sea wind stirs into music, by the sailors' chapel. From the far point that juts out yonder you may see, away to the left, the country about Caux; and, to the right, the bay of the Somme and the low-lying coast of Picardy; while in front is the wide, open sea. Let me recall in a few words the memory of that strong man of old, who left behind him in the country round so many traces of his earthly pilgrimage.

History of Saint Gualaric or Valery

Gualaric or Walaric, since named Valery, was no native of this sea-girt country, though he gave his name to two of its towns and to churches too numerous to mention. He was the son of poor peasants of Auvergne. In his childhood he was a shepherd, with nothing save his crook to call his own. But he was rich in sense, in wit, and in piety.

He early left his home to attach himself to the service of the holy Germain, the saintly Bishop of Auxerre. There he became a monk in the Abbey of Luxeuil, at that time under the wise governance of Saint Colomban of Ireland. Howbeit the brothers shook off the yoke of their pastor; and Saint

Colomban, driven out by his flock, went forth into exile; and with him, piety, modesty, and temperance likewise bade adieu to Luxeuil. Valery was sore stricken with grief, and he, too, said farewell to this harbour of salvation that was now become a treacherous reef; and he resolved to pass his days in solitude far from the haunts of evil-doers.

"I will betake myself," said he, "whithersoever it may please God to lead me."

After a few days had passed by he found himself on the banks of the Somme, and he followed the river's course until he reached the seashore. There he came to a halt, fordone with weariness, by the side of a spring, and he shook the dust from off his shoes. It was upon this dust that there afterwards arose the town of Saint Valery.

In those days a dense forest descended right down to the seashore. The hare made her home within its depths. It spread over marshy wastes haunted by plovers, woodcock, wild duck, and teal. Gulls laid their eggs on the bare ledges of the cliffs, the shrill cry of the heron and the melancholy call of the plover rose wailingly from the wan fringe of the salt marsh where the swan, the wild goose, and the grebe, driven down from the icy North, came to winter amid the reedy sandhills of the shore. Men, too—but in no great numbers—dwelt in these wild and desolate regions. Poor fisher-folk were they,

who plied their nets in the teeming estuary of the Somme. They were pagans, and worshipped the woods and the fountains. Vainly did Saint Quentin, Saint Mellon, Saint Firmin, Saint Loup, Saint Leu, and, later, Saint Berchund, Bishop of Amiens, come thither to teach them the truths of the Gospel. They clung to the faith that their forefathers had held before them. They believed in the deities of wood and fell; they held that all things had a soul.

These simple fishermen felt a thrill of sacred awe as they made their way into the deep forests with which, in those days, all the coast was girdled. Everywhere they beheld their rural deities. Beside the stream whereon the moon's ray lingered quiveringly they were for ever catching fleeting visions of nymphs, and fairies, and wondrous ladies. They worshipped them, and brought them garlands of flowers with trembling hands. They deemed that they did well to love them, since they were passing fair.

Without doubt the brook which babbled down the leafy hillside, where the pious Saint Valery ceased his wanderings, was one of those sacred streams to which these men of old made offering. It still flows on by the walls of the chapel on the seaward side. Just as in the olden days, it is cold and clear as crystal. But its song is hushed. It is no longer free as in the days of its rustic divinity.

It has been caught and imprisoned in a stone basin with a flight of steps leading up to it. In Saint Valery's day that stream was a nymph. No hand had dared restrain her as she glanced away beneath the willows. Like the rivulets of which there are so many in the valleys round about, the stream broadened out here and there into little lakes where, upborne upon a floating couch of green leaves, slumbered the pale blossom of the water-lily. It was there, in those woodland springs, that the last few nymphs took refuge when the bishops had driven them from their native haunts. These little country goddesses were hunted down without remorse. One of the clauses of the decrees of King Childebert enacts that "whosoever shall offer sacrifice to springs or trees or rocks shall be anathema."

Valery deemed this spot well suited to his purpose. He had won leave from the king of the Franks to build his dwelling wheresoever in his kingdom it might please him to abide. With his own hands he wrought himself a cell, and passed his days within it in prayer and meditation. Some disciples came to him that they might live his life and nourish their souls upon his pious example. They built them a cell near to his on the skirts of the forest, hard by a precipice, whose base is washed by the sea. Every year, so the story

runs, Bishop Berchund came and passed the holy season of Lent in this lonely place.

Valery, so far as we can gauge his moral nature from the crude and hesitating efforts of his pious historians to portray him, combined, in a marked degree, the attributes of strength and gentleness. Stories have come down to us which reveal in him a sweetness of soul rarely encountered in the lives of those rude apostles of the barbarous West. It is said of him, as later on it was said of Saint Francis of Assisi, that he bestowed, even upon dumb creatures, the loving pity of which his heart was full. The little birds used to come and eat from his hands.

"My children," said he to his companions, "let us harm them not, and let us suffer them to gather up the crumbs of our bread."

It was against the nymphs of the woods and streams that the holy man directed the full force of his ire. Yet these nymphs worked nobody any ill. I shrewdly suspect that the wives of the fishermen and the villagers used to go and pray to them in secret to send them fine children. But there was no harm in that. These nymphs and fairies and dames were fair to look upon, and instilled a little grace into the depths of the rustic heart. They were quite humble little deities, well suited to humble little people. Saint Valery took them to

be malicious demons, and he made up his mind to exterminate them. With that aim he abandoned the contemplative life so dear to his wounded heart, and went up and down the country preaching against the pagans, and bearing the tidings of the Gospel from village to village.

Walking one day not far from the town of Eu, he saw a tree from whose branches images of clay were suspended by fillets of red wool. They represented Love, Hercules, and the Mothers. These "Mothers" were greatly venerated in every part of Western Gaul. The potters were continually moulding figures of these gods and goddesses, and plenty of them may still be dug up along the coast between the Somme and the Loire. Sometimes they are in pairs, two Mothers seated side by side, each holding a child. Sometimes there is but one Mother, and the peasants who discover such an one when tilling their fields take it to be the Virgin Mary. But they are wrong. It is a pagan idol.

Now Saint Valery was vexed at the sight of these images, and said to himself in his heart:

"Lo! evil demons hang like noxious fruit from the branches of this tree!"

Then he lifted up the hatchet which he wore at his girdle, and with the aid of his companion, the monk Valdolenus, he hewed down the tree with the sacred images which it sheltered beneath its

branches. When the people of the place beheld the tree-god and all its many offerings prone upon the ground, with the sap oozing like blood from its mutilated trunk, they were stricken with grief and fear. And when Saint Valery cried to them, saying: "It is I who cast down the tree to which you paid false worship," they fell upon him, and threatened to lay him low, even as he had laid low the verdant sanctuary.

Then the apostle stretched forth his arms and said:

"If it be God's will that I should die, His will be done."

But whether they perceived in him something divine, or whether some other reason stayed their hands, they suffered him to depart in peace.

But he was fain to abide with them in order that he might teach them the Gospel. And in truth it was meet that he should give them a God to take the place of those whereof he had bereft them, for cruel are they who destroy the spirit of hope in the hearts of men. When he had achieved his pious conquest he betook himself again to the wilderness which he had chosen. The labours of his apostolate were ofttimes painful. "One day," says his biographer, "this man of God was returning on foot to his monastery from a place called Cayeux. It was winter, and it came to pass that,

the cold being exceeding great, he stopped to warm himself in the house of a certain priest. This latter and his companions, whom it behoved to treat so venerable a guest with great respect, began, instead, to hold converse with the justiciar of the district in language of an unseemly and offensive nature. Faithful to his custom of ever laying upon corrupt and unsightly sores the healing balsam of God's word, he sought to check them, saying:

"'My sons, have ye not read in the Gospel that, when the Day of Judgment comes, ye will be called to account for every idle word that ye have uttered?'

"But they, despising his warning, gave way the more to coarse and shameless speech. Whereat, shaking the dust from off his feet, he said:

"'I was fain, by reason of the cold, to warm my weary body by your fire. But your guilty conversation compels me, benumbed as I am, to go my way.'

"And he went forth from the house."

That story may perhaps sound insipid remote from the scene of its origin. But here, in the country where it came into being, and of which it preserves, as it were, the flavour, I find it full of relish, and I drink in with gusto its wild fragrance.

One day in the month of December, Gualaric,

who was also named Valery, being full of works and days, arose before matins from his couch of dry leaves, and led his disciples to an elm tree surrounded by brambles at the foot whereof he was wont to say his prayers. When he had come thither, he thrust two staves into the ground, and marking out a place the length of his body, he said:

"When, by God's will, I shall go forth from my exile in this world, it is there that I charge you to bury me."

In those days the holy men of Gaul were accustomed to choose their own place of burial. Saint Renan of Tréguier having omitted to arrange this detail before his death, his disciples placed his body on a wain drawn by oxen, which they suffered to roam away whither they listed, and they laid him in the earth at the spot where, of their own accord, the oxen came to a standstill.

Saint Valery died on the Sunday following the day on which he had marked out his resting-place. All was carried out according to his wish, and Bishop Berchund came to commit his body to the grave.

The history of a saint does not terminate with his death and burial. It is continued in a sequel recording the miracles wrought at his tomb. We have seen how William the Bastard caused the shrine of Saint Valery to be carried in procession in order that

he might obtain a favourable wind. Eighty years later there flourished a Count of Flanders called Arnould, who was surnamed the Pious. He had great faith in the virtues of saints, and professed particular veneration for the body of the blessed Valery. This he made abundantly clear, for he came with his army to lay siege to the town of Saint Valery, where he put the inhabitants to the sword and sacked the abbey in order to possess himself of the relics of the blessed one. He bore them away with him to his earldom, together with the bones of Saint Regnier, on which he had laid hands at the same time, and, so lively was his faith, he believed that he had thereby gained the protection of Heaven.

At that time Hugh Capet was Count of France. One day, when he had fallen asleep in a grotto, there appeared to him in a dream two figures clothed in white.

"I am the Abbot of Saint Valery," said one of them. "Before my death I dwelt by the margin of the sea. My bones and the bones of Saint Regnier, here present with me, were dragged from their tomb, and they are now held captive in an alien land. But the hour is come when they must be restored to the places of our earthly sojourn. When God shall have laid me in my former tomb I prophesy that you will be made king, and that your line will

wear the crown for more than seven hundred years."

He spoke, and vanished with his companion. Count Hugh called upon Arnould the Pious to give back the precious relics, in order that he might restore them to the Abbey of Saint Valery and so be made king.

The words of the saint were fulfilled. But some writers there are who believe that this prophecy was conceived after the event.

Thoroughly to complete this Gothic picture there are a number of other marvels I should have to relate. But it is high time for me to remember that I am not a hagiologist. If I have done my best here, beneath the shadow of the old elm trees of Cape Cornu, to outline the figure of the great Apostle of Vimeu, it is because he bears an essential resemblance to all the other old missioners who spread Christianity among the Gauls. Wherefore he deserves the careful study of all who are interested in our country's history.

Monks and pioneers were they, and their rugged hands and strenuous toil have left an abiding mark upon the land in which we live, and upon the character of its ancient inhabitants. They have left upon the soil of France an imprint that can never be effaced. It is not nothing to us that those old monks lived and laboured and had their being. We

owe them not a little. In the inalienable heritage of each of us there are treasures which they handed down to our fathers. They strove against the forces of barbarism with fiery zeal. They tilled the soil, they instructed our uncouth sires in the rudimentary arts of life, they filled their hearts with new and soaring hopes.

"But, alas!" I can hear you say, "they have slain the spirits of the woods and the mountains. The good Saint Valery has killed the nymphs of the running brook. That is a pity."

It would, indeed, be a great pity if it were so. But be of good cheer, for—let me breathe it in your ear—these pious gentry have not sent even the lowliest little god to perdition. Saint Valery has not killed the nymphs, and the gentle sprites that he drove forth from one tree did but betake themselves to another. The nymphs and the fairies hide themselves sometimes, but they die never. They defy the whole company of saints. I see, according to a big book I am reading, that when Saint Valery died, the people of the bay relapsed into idolatry. Their eyes had seen the dim ladies of the streams, and they had gone back to their early loves. As long as there are woods and meadows, as long as the mountains and the lakes and the rivers endure, and the white morning mists upgather and wreathe themselves above the running brooks, so long will

the nymphs and the dryads and the fairies live on. They are the beauty of the world, and will never perish.

But, see, the shadows of night are descending upon the housetops.

A peaceful charm, melancholy, yet full of sweetness, envelops all things animate and inanimate. Pale shapes are floating in the moonlight. They are the nymphs who are coming to weave their dances and sing their songs of love round the tomb of good Saint Valery.

SAINT VALERY-SUR-SOMME,
14th August.

It is a wild, rugged country here where we now are. The sea is a wannish drab in hue. Only at rare and fleeting moments is it tinged with blue, far out on the dim horizon. The whole coast is muffled with woods of sombre green. The skies are dun and rainy. The waters smile not, and the winds waft no caress. This bay, where the North wind brings in Norwegian barques laden with timber and raw iron, is not beloved of the foreign tourist, and that is why we hold it dear. There is the sea, and there are sailors here. You can watch all the stir and bustle of a little trading port and fishing centre. You can live with fishermen all around you. They are good, simple-hearted fellows. They live in the Courgain Quarter—Courgain being

aptly named according to a local saying, "Since they who dwell there gain but little." Courgain rises steeply up behind the rue de la Ferté, and to reach the summit is a stiffish climb. Cottages, which would look like toys if they were but cleaner, stand huddled one against another, doubtless so that they may not be carried away by the wind. In every doorway you may see pretty, smutty-faced children, and here and there in the sun an old man mending a trawling net, or a woman sewing in the window behind a pot of geraniums. The people of the place are in sore straits just now, so I am told. They are being ruined by foreign competitors, who dump huge quantities of fish on our markets. These good, simple folk have no other weapons for the battle of life than their boats and their nets. They are great big children, who know all about the wiles of fish, but nothing of the wiles of men. To see them is to feel for them and to love them. Life wears them away as Time wears away a stone, but it does not touch their hearts. Even in their old age they do not grow miserly. Everyone helps his neighbour. They are the only poor folk who do not shun one another. As I write an old native is trudging along beneath my window. You would take him for Père Corot. He is clean, and he wears a little gold earring in each ear. His skin has been tanned by the salt of

the sea; the weight of the trawl net has bent his back.

As I look at him a memory comes stealing, willy-nilly, into my thoughts, and I find myself repeating the epitaph that a Grecian poetess composed, while yet the Muses trod the earth, for the grave of a humble fisherman of Lesbos. It is made up of few words. The austere purity of its style proclaims its antique origin. I give a literal rendering of the funereal distich:

"Here is the tomb of Pelagon, the fisherman, and upon it are graven a lobster pot and a net, memorials of a life of toil."

Thus in her serene compassion speaks this Muse of Hellas, who weeps not, because tears would mar her beauty. Old Pelagon had cast his nets at the base of shining promontories. He had beheld the Old Man of the Sea, Proteus the Terrible, arise like a cloud from the bosom of the deep. Peradventure he had heard the voices of the Sirens singing their songs in the blue sea. There are no Sirens on the treacherous reefs of the Channel. The hoary Proteus haunts not the base of our beetling cliffs; but the old sea-dog who is tramping just now along the quay has seen the souls of shipwrecked folk hovering like sea-gulls on the crest of the waves. He has beheld on shore the celestial fires, and perchance Our Lady of Succour has appeared to

him in the ocean mist. Ah me! across what endless hardships has Heaven cast its smile upon him. To-day, no less than in Sappho's time, the barque and the fishing net are the monuments of a life of toil.

Yesterday a child of eleven was drowned in the bay. He belonged to Cayeux. Cayeux is a fishing port about nine miles from Saint Valery. It is exposed to the full force of the westerly and north-westerly winds, which at one time drove such quantities of sand into the streets that people used to sink in it up to their knees. Nowadays the shingle that has been banked up by the tides forms a natural sea-wall, and protects the dwellings and a portion of the land. It was there that the good Saint Valery, nearly dead with cold and fatigue, knocked at the door of the house where the priest and the judge were making merry by the fire. Nowadays life is full of hardship there for all, and the unfortunate family of whom I speak had a bitter experience of it. They had lost several children. One, by a most extraordinary mischance, was drowned in a wash-tub. When the father and mother came to settle down at Saint Valery, the only two that were left out of the nine that had been born to them were the boy whom they lost yesterday and an elder son who had been summoned to the colours. With a sort of settled, stubborn

gloom the mother, turning towards the future a gaze made woeful by the tragic memories of the past, kept murmuring every day in tones of abject terror:

"He will be drowned like the others; I know he will."

Such fatalities are rare at Saint Valery. The waters of the bay and the treacherous reefs claim at the most one or two victims in a twelvemonth. Nevertheless, the mournful and unhappy mother was constantly anticipating her son's death.

On Friday, at four o'clock in the afternoon, he had gone out in a boat by himself, although his parents had expressly forbidden him to do so. The sun shone brightly and the sea was calm, as he was drowned in full view of the house where he had been brought up and where his mother was awaiting his return. The boat and his clothes were washed ashore by the tide. For eight hours his parents stood gazing fixedly at the calm stretch of waters which covered the body of their son. At last, in the middle of the night, when the tide had ebbed, fifteen or twenty fishermen went down over the sands with lanterns to look for the corpse. They found it in a pit. One ear had already been devoured by crabs, and they had begun to eat away a cheek.

To-day they bore the little coffin, covered with a

white pall, into the old church that looks out over the sea. The women of Cayeux, with the parents of the dead child, walked at the head of the procession. They were wearing the black pelisse that once used to be common to all the women of Picardy and Flanders, and thus, as they toiled up the steep pathway to the church, they resembled the holy women whom the Flemish masters, taking as their models the types of their own cities, represented as grouped about the foot of the Cross.

These big pelisses were handed down, like heirlooms, from mother to daughter, and some perhaps have witnessed more than a century of lowly sorrows. Nowadays the young women of Saint Valery look down on the pelisse. On high days and holidays they wear hats in the latest Paris fashion, and imagine themselves "very smart" in mantles trimmed with jet, across which they complacently fold their red hands.

The procession passed in beneath the ancient porch, and the burial service began. Four little boys acted as pall-bearers. Behind stood the father and mother holding each other's arm. The man was not weeping now, but you could see how the tears had been streaming down his weather-beaten cheeks. His head was bowed, and he was sobbing convulsively. His sobs shook the grey beard that hung like a scarf beneath his chin; they shook his

high shoulders, and imparted a sort of unnatural smile to his mouth, ghastly to behold. All the time he was swaying and tottering like a drunken man, and he joined in the psalms and in the prayers in monotonous, moaning tones, measured and low, like one of those airs with which mothers croon their little ones to sleep. It was but a murmur, yet it filled the church. It was otherwise with the mother. Upright, motionless, silent, in her antique pelisse, her hood drawn down to the chin, she stood hoarding her grief apart. After the absolution the procession set out towards Cayeux. For it was there, with the salt winds streaming over him, that they wished their child to be laid to rest. Did they deem that the earth there, so harsh to the living, would be gentle to the dead; or was it rather that they held in their hearts a tender love for the stubborn soil that had borne them, and to which they were carrying all that was dearest to them in the world? We stood and watched the little band wind slowly out of sight along the rough stony road. Never in my life had I beheld a scene so grand. For, in truth, there is nothing in the world so grand as sorrow. In the town sorrow is hidden away, hugger-mugger, out of sight; but to-day I beheld it in the broad open sunlight, on a hill that looked like Calvary.

. . . . . .

This Sunday the streets are gay with bunting. It is the town fête. Great yellow posters announce that sailing matches will be held under the patronage of the Yacht Club de France. Boats from Saint Valery and Cayeux are to compete. Grand stands adorned with the arms of the rival towns have been erected on the quay. The townsfolk, in their best broadcloth, are grouped around the municipal big-wigs. At half-past eleven the firing of a gun proclaims the commencement of the races. A white cloud of smoke rises straight up into the motionless air from the discharged cannon. It looks as though there would not be wind enough to fill the sails. But gradually, while the yachts and clippers are manœuvring for position, a tidy "nor'-wester" springs up, and the fishing-boats of Saint Valery and Le Crotoy get into line in good sailing weather. They are fleet-footed craft. Every day they go out on the ebb to drag their trawls over the sandbanks which grow visible as the tide goes down, and form little yellow islets amid the green or pale-blue waters. They fish for grey prawns, which are to be found in abundance on the shoals which lie between the headland of Le Hourdel and the sandhills of Saint Quentin. The little craft fill the bay with life. They are, indeed, the soul, and therefore the joy, of it. The flood brings them back home again, and it is pleasant to spy them from afar with their sails

outspread—grey, white, and dark—against the sky-line as they return in a cluster like a flock of birds.

16th–18th August.

To-day it was the prize-giving at the girls' school. On coming out we were caught in a heavy shower. The dye from the wreaths of laurel and oak leaves was smeared all over the little maids' faces, and made them look horribly livid. Then they kissed their fond parents, and so passed on the stain to them. Everyone was coloured green.

There are two public girl schools at Saint Valery, managed by the Sisters of Providence. The Augustinians keep a free boarding-school in the town. There are no non-clerical girl schools in the place.

On the other hand, there is no Church school for boys. The two parish schools have recently been secularized. The Brothers did not open a free school. They withdrew from the town altogether, thus disappointing the secret hopes of the Town Council, who thought that, by importing a lay teacher, they would set up a fruitful spirit of emulation between the Council schools and the free schools.

As to the Compulsory Education Act, nothing practical has resulted from it. Hunger is a mighty force: what can the law do against it? How are

you going to prevent poor little rascals, who are famishing for food, from going and stealing potatoes instead of learning to read? I heard the Compulsory Education Bill debated in the Senate. It was a solemn affair, and a portentous piece of legislation was the outcome of it. But down here, I can see how difficult it is to enforce it in the case of poor little wretches who haven't got a pair of breeches to go to school in.

The magnanimous zeal which we display nowadays in the instruction of the young was not so foreign to the notions of our grandfathers as is commonly held to be the case. Of this fact I have recently come across a fresh piece of evidence in the manuscript register of the rules and regulations affecting the town of Saint Valery. It is now kept at the Town Hall, and I am indebted for my acquaintance with its contents to Monsieur Vanier, a member of the Council. In this register we may read a letter which Cardinal de Bourbon, Governor of Vimeu, wrote about the year 1536 to his "dear and well-beloved" the Mayor and Sheriffs of Saint Valery, regarding the schools of that town. He reminds them that he intends to retain the control of the schools which is his by right. He desires the schools to be provided with a teacher who shall be a worthy man and a good scholar. He makes no other demands. If the person nominated by the

sheriffs is competent, he accepts him: "For," he adds, "I am wondrously desirous that your children should be well instructed, since therein lies the welfare of your community."

This register, which I have now before me, and which embraces the first half of the sixteenth century, also contains, under date 1533, a very curious regulation regarding the sin of adultery. I will quote it at length. First of all, however, I must recall the fact that, in the sixteenth century, Saint Valery was a very considerable port. Despite the fact that the town had been laid in ruins more than a score of times in the wars, the bay was a source of profit. At this period the invention of the compass had given an added daring to those that went down to the sea in ships, and men were fired with a newborn enthusiasm for commercial enterprise. Then it was that wealth flowed abundantly to our shores, and it might be truly said that the seas were golden. When they grew rich the inhabitants of Saint Valery were eager to enjoy themselves, and they displayed a luxury unknown to the good folk who had in former days defended their stronghold against the English. The ladies wore materials and furs fetched from the Indies or America—magnificent silks and woollen stuffs. Much court was paid them, and they suffered their lovers to have their way. And thus, in this town, whose inhabitants are now so

simple, rugged, and modest, morals became very lax. It was for this reason that, in 1533, the municipality issued the following regulation. Though the old-fashioned language has a strong Picardy flavour about it, the reader, I think, will understand it without much trouble.

I reproduce faithfully the original text as it appears in the register, so courteously placed at my disposal by the authorities:

"In the interests of justice, both ecclesiastical and temporal, and for that our Lord Jesus Christ is daily outraged in this parish by divers crimes and great vices therein perpetrated, and chiefly by the sin of adultery flagrantly committed by married men and women, on account of which crimes and hideous sins we are menaced by the wrath of God, Monseigneur the Governor and the Baily and Mayor of this city have ordained it to be given out in the church and in public places that no married men or women shall henceforth commit adultery on pain of being immersed by means of a contrivance which shall be constructed and placed above one of the town reservoirs, wherein they shall be plunged from head to foot. And be it further known that the first time they shall be convicted of committing adultery or be found in such a place as shall lay them open to the suspicion thereof, they shall be plunged three times in the said reservoir, and pay

a fine of sixty Paris sous, to be given in the name of God to the poor and to such as denounce and lay information of such crimes. And for the second offence they shall be whipped at the cross roads in the town by the public hangman, and banished from the said town and parish, and their goods shall be confiscated, it being hoped that by means of such punishments the wrath of God may be allayed."

It may, perhaps, be well to state what this contrivance was upon which the victims of guilty love used to be placed. It was known as a *brinqueballe*, which, in the language of Picardy, is the handle by means of which the piston of a ship's pump is worked. The town reservoirs were large cisterns. Thus the magistrates of Saint Valery used to punish by ducking, those same sins which Dante saw chastised in Hell by blasts of scorching wind. The cistern in which the carnal sinners were ducked is still to be seen near the Porte Guillaume. It has recently been drained. The Council has decided to preserve it as an historical monument.

The local fair, held on the 15th August, has brought a few showmen here, and they are camping in the little Place des Pilotes. Some mesmerists and fortune-tellers have taken the horses out of their caravan, a caravan furnished with a bed and white bedclothes. The wild woman, too, has arrived. A great pictorial poster, which fills up all the hoard-

ing round the enclosure, shows her making a meal off the quivering flesh of a white man. In reality, the wild woman is a luckless girl who has been blackened all over like a boot, but who still retains, beneath the blacking, an expression of innocence and candour. Her eyes are blue and unalterably gentle. She is a living symbol of weakness, tranquil suffering, and resignation; and she it is who has to play the part of the female cannibal! There is an example for you of the topsy-turveydom of this world of ours.

The steam organ of the roundabout on the Place des Pilotes has been snorting the whole evening, mingling its cheap dance music with the sound of waves breaking on the shingle. The horses, bestridden by comely Parisian girls and tatterdemalion sailormen, keep on whirling round and round without intermission.

I have pondered long and deeply on the matter of merry-go-rounds. I should like to make a systematic study of them, only the magnitude of the task deters me. At the very outset I find myself confronted with a great difficulty. If one makes a serious attempt to define the various aches and pains that flesh is heir to, one may reasonably hope to achieve some measure of success. When we say, for example, that a pain is sharp or dull, shooting or stabbing, we can make ourselves tolerably well understood.

But when we come to describe our pleasurable sensations in words, we are hopelessly at a loss. Even the feelings of well-being which result from the normal performance of our bodily functions are not susceptible of accurate definition. Merely to call them keen or sweet is to tell one nothing. Such hackneyed, well-worn terms as delight or transport are vague and shadowy. It would appear, therefore, that pleasure in the physical sense is a less definite thing than pain. For this reason I despair of ever being able, by mere verbal description, to give any very clear idea of the pleasure to be derived from riding on a roundabout. It is none the less certain that the pleasure is great. As the horses glide round, shrieks of ecstasy pierce through the blare of steam trumpets and trombones. And when the machine has revolved a time or two 'tis naught but swimming eyes, moist lips, and dizzy brains! The young women have the sort of expression you see on the faces of Bacchantes in antique sculptures. Less inured to rapture, the little children, sitting bolt upright, with flushed cheeks, remain silent and solemn beneath the spell of a strange god. I am not speaking of people that get qualmish; there are such folk, I know, but they are exceptional. I am dealing with the general run of people. Big and little, their sensations are infinitely and vaguely delicious.

On the roundabout, the switchback, and the see-saw they are shaken, jolted, thrilled; their whole being is set a-chime; their circulation is quickened, the pulses of life beat faster. They sigh and they pant; invisible caresses, mysteriously stirring their inmost being, send a quiver through them, and they know the meaning of bliss.

The roundabout will last as long as mankind endures, because it responds to a deep-rooted instinct of childhood and youth, the desire for movement, the need for headlong speed, the secret longing to be borne away on the wings of delight, which is characteristic of all childish and virginal hours. We of riper years regard these machines with apprehension. We are all on thorns lest the slightest shock should stir some dormant symptom into activity. But in the divine roundabout age every bump calls forth a rapture.

SAINT VALERY, *22nd August.*

To-day I have been looking out of my window at a humble little festival that took place alongside the quay. It was the blessing of a boat, a little fishing smack. The French flag was flying at the masthead. On board was a table covered with a white cloth, on which were set a cake, a bottle of wine, and some glasses. A priest, preceded by a beadle, went on board the boat to give it his bless-

ing. A cantor and a choir boy took their places behind him, followed by the skipper and his wife. The latter were attired in their Sunday best. There was an air of awkward simplicity and artless gravity about them. Bronzed and hardened by labour, the rugged *naïveté* of their attitude recalled the statues of the remote ages. The little choir boy presented a dish to the priest, from which the latter took a handful of salt and wheat, and scattered it about the boat that he might sow therein the seeds of strength and abundance. Then he took a sprig of box, in token of the branch which the dove bore to the Ark, and, dipping it in holy water, sprinkled the boat. Next, calling the craft by name, he bestowed his blessing upon her.

Then the cantor intoned the *Te Deum*. Next he chanted the hundred and sixth psalm and the *Ave Maris Stella*. When he had finished, the fisherman's wife cut the cake, which had been blessed at the same time as the boat. She poured out some wine in the glasses, and offered food and drink to the priest, as well as to everyone present. It is usual when big boats are christened to break a bottle of wine on the bow.

It is a custom that is not observed by the owners of little fishing craft. They say that it is better to drink the wine than to throw it away. I asked an

old sailor to tell me the meaning of this bottle-breaking ceremony. He answered with a smile that the boat glides more easily into the sea when it has had a good dowsing. Then, resuming his habitual gravity, he added :

"It's a bad sign when the bottle doesn't break. Ten years ago I was present at the blessing of a big ship. The bottle slid down and never broke. The boat sank on her maiden voyage."

And why do they break a bottle of wine before the ship is launched? Why, for the same reason that Polycrates threw his ring into the sea: to pay toll to Nemesis. We say to Nemesis: "I will give you this and you must be satisfied with it. Take my wine, but take no more from me." That is why the Jews, loyal to ancient usage, break a cup when they get married. And the broken bottle is but the trick of a child or a savage, the artifice of Man—poor, simple soul—endeavouring to hoodwink Fate.

EU, *23rd August.*

From the summit of the hill of Saint Laurent we look down on the town of Eu, peacefully nestling in the bosom of the hills. How full of charm the little place lies, with its gabled roofs, its winding streets, and the wooden spire of its beautiful church. We gaze upon it as in a trance of delight. A bird's-eye view of a pretty town is ever a lovely and a

touching sight whereon the spirit loves to dwell. Human thoughts mount up into the air with the smoke from the chimneys—thoughts that are joyful, and thoughts that are sad—and they mingle together and fill me with a sort of smiling wistfulness that is sweeter than joy.

Those houses—thus run one's thoughts—those roofs that gleam so tiny in the sunlight, there, that you can blot them completely from your vision by just stretching out your hand; those houses have enshrined generations of love and hate, of joy and suffering. Dread secrets are in their keeping; they are deeply versed in the lore of Life and Death. They could tell us tales that would bring laughter to our lips and tears to our eyes if only stones could speak. But stones can speak plainly enough to those who have ears to hear them, and thus murmurs the little town to those who gaze down upon it from the hilltop:

"Look you, I am old, but I am beautiful. My pious children have adorned my robe with towers and steeples, gables and belfries. I am a kindly mother; I teach them to labour; I instruct them in all the arts of peace. My children grow up within my sheltering arms, and when their tasks are done they go, one by one, and sleep at my feet under the grass there, where the sheep are grazing. They pass, but I abide to keep their

memory green. I am their remembrancer. Therefore they owe me all, for man is man only because he remembers. My garment has been rent, my bosom pierced by the foe. I have been stricken, as men deemed, to death. Yet I have lived on because I have not ceased to hope.

"Learn, then, from me that sacred way of hope that saves our land from ruin. Let your thoughts dwell in me that so they may reach out beyond yourselves. Behold this fountain, these almshouses, this market-place, which your forefathers handed down to their sons. Labour for your children, as your ancestors laboured for you. Not one stone of mine but brings you a boon and reminds you of a duty. Look on my cathedral, on my guild-hall, on my hospital, and revere the Past. But bethink you likewise of the Future. Your sons will know what gems you, in your turn, have inwrought upon my robe of stone."

But while the town has been thus whispering in my ear, our horses have brought us down the steep hillside, and our brake crosses the High Street amid silence and solitude. You would think that the town of Eu had been asleep for a hundred years. The kitchen fire is out at the hotel where we decide to put up, and the unfortunate landlord is visibly put about at our request for luncheon. And indeed Eu has few attractions for visitors,

now that the Château and the Park are shut up. You can no longer wander at will beneath the beeches that were planted for the delectation of the Dukes of Guise. The Park used to be open to the public on Thursdays and Saturdays, but no one is allowed to enter now. The Château is no longer open to visitors. One has to be content with a glimpse of the façade through the court-yard railings. This façade, which is built of brick and stone, owes its imposing appearance merely to the loftiness of its roof. It is expressionless, heavy, and vulgar, for which qualities it is indebted to Fontaine, who restored the Château for the Duc d'Orleans in 1821.

Fontaine rarely showed much respect for the works of the old master masons. In his opinion the façades of the Château d'Eu were a jumble, and, as he himself declared, he put them to rights. He performed his task so thoroughly that now the Château looks like a barrack.

Our tastes have undergone a great change since the days of Percier and Fontaine. A château is never old enough for us now. But still the architect has no less opportunity of putting his dread art into operation. He used to demolish in order to make places look new; now he demolishes in order to make them look old. Nowadays we restore buildings to their original aspect. Nay,

we go one better. We restore them to what *ought* to have been their original aspect.

We may ask whether Viollet-le-Duc and his disciples have not worked greater havoc by system and design than was wrought throughout the centuries by princes and people filled with animosity and contempt for what they considered the barbarity of the past.

It is a question whether our mediæval churches have not sustained just as much injury from the misplaced zeal of our modern architects as they suffered from the long years of neglect and indifference, which, at any rate, allowed them to grow old in peace. Viollet-le-Duc behaved in a manner no less than ruthless when he went about restoring a château or a cathedral to some original plan that had been modified in the course of successive ages, or which, more often still, had never been followed out at all. Such attempts were cruel in their effects. He did not hesitate to sweep away work that was venerable and charming; and, as in the case of our Notre Dame de Paris, he turned a living cathedral into a mere inorganic abstraction. Such an enterprise is horrifying to anyone possessed of a sympathetic appreciation of nature and of life. An ancient building rarely exhibits one and the same style of architecture throughout all its parts. It has lived, and, in proportion as it has lived, it

has suffered change. For change is the essence of life. Every age has left its mark upon it. It is a book wherein each generation has written a page, and not one of those pages must be tampered with. They are not all in the same writing, because they are not all inscribed by the same hand. It is false science and bad taste to endeavour to reduce them all to a single type. Every style has a different message, but they are all equally fraught with truth.

There are more harmonies in art than are dreamt of in the philosophy of our restorers. Here, maybe, on the lateral façade of a church, between the tall mitres of two ancient arches in tierce-point, you may see an elegant Renaissance portico in the style of Vitruvius and slender angels apparelled in airy tunics. That makes a fine harmony. Or here, beneath a cornice of strawberry leaves and nettles, a little Louis XV doorway displays its frivolous grotto-work and cockle-shells to which age has given an appearance of austerity. There, again, you have a fine piece of harmony. Or here, once more, a magnificent fourteenth-century nave is gracefully spanned by a charming rood-loft of the age of the Valois. In a branch of this transept, where from an ancient painted window the multi-coloured light comes flooding down like a rain of precious stones, an altar of the decadence rears its

twisted columns of red marble engarlanded with the gilded tendrils of the vine. These are all harmonies. And what, pray, can be more harmonious than those tombs, of every style and every age, with their multifarious imagery and symbolism, that lie beneath one of those vaulted roofs which take from the science of geometry, whence they proceed, the beauty of Absolute Perfection. I remember seeing on one of the side aisles of Notre Dame de Bordeaux, a buttress which, in bulk and general disposition, differed but little from the others of more ancient date that surrounded it. Yet in style and ornamentation it was quite singular. It had none of those pinnacles, none of those little turrets, none of those long blind arcades which lent grace and lightness to the buttresses around it. It was decorated—the one in question—in two orders revived from the antique, with medallions and vases. Such was the conception of a contemporary of Pierre Chambiges and Jean Goujon, who happened to be in charge of the fabric of Notre Dame, when one of the original arches gave way. This workman, who had more simplicity in his composition than our present-day architects, never dreamt, as they would have done, of working in a style that was dead and gone. He made no learned attempts at imitation. He followed his own bent, and the spirit of his time. And therein

he was well advised. He was hardly capable of working on the same lines as the fourteenth-century masons. If he had possessed more knowledge, he would merely have produced a meaningless and conjectural imitation. Fortunately his ignorance compelled him to rely on his own inventiveness. He conceived a sort of miniature temple or tomb, a little masterpiece thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the French Renaissance. Thus, he added an exquisite detail to the Cathedral without marring the effect of the whole.

This unknown mason worked on truer lines than Viollet-le-Duc and his school. It is a wonder that one of our highly erudite present-day architects has not pulled down this Renaissance buttress to make room for one of fourteenth-century design. The passion for uniformity has led our architects into committing acts of outrageous vandalism. I discovered at Bordeaux itself beneath a *porte cochère* two decorated capitals doing duty as spur-posts. I was given to understand that they came from the cloisters of X——, and that the architect who had been entrusted with the task of restoration had them removed because one belonged to the eleventh century, and the other to the thirteenth, which, forsooth, was not to be borne with, seeing that the cloisters themselves belonged to the twelfth century, and everything had to be strictly in keeping.

For this reason the architect substituted two twelfth-century capitals of his own design. I don't much care about a piece of twelfth-century work being executed in the nineteenth. It is what we call a sham, and all shams are detestable.

Adepts at destruction, the disciples of Viollet-le-Duc were not content with demolishing what did not belong to the period of their adoption: they must needs replace the old time-stained stones by brand new white ones, without purpose or pretext. They substituted new copies for old originals. That is another thing I am at odds with them about. It is painful for me to witness the destruction of even the smallest stone in an ancient building. Even if some poor wretch rough-carved it with rude and clumsy hand, it was wrought to a finish by the greatest of all sculptors—Time! Time employs nor mallet nor chisel; his tools are the sun, the moonlight, and the north wind. He brings the handiwork of the craftsman to exquisite perfection. What he adds is alike indefinable and beyond all price.

A little while before he died, Didron, who loved old stones, wrote in a friend's album the following sage but neglected advice: "Where old buildings are concerned, it is better to strengthen than to repair, better to repair than to restore, and better to restore than to embellish. In no case must anything be added to or curtailed."

That is well said, and if our architects would confine themselves to strengthening old buildings instead of renovating them, they would deserve the gratitude of everyone who cares for the relics of the past and the monuments of history.

LE TRÉPORT, *23rd August.*

We are enchanted at the beauty of the scene. Before us lies Mers: Mers and its white cliffs. To our right are upland lawns upon whose slopes sheep and oxen are grazing. Leftward is the sea whereon the ships go gliding by, their sails caught up in festoons. At our feet is the jetty thronged with bathers, men and women, clad in motley hues. Bathing caps, red, white, or blue, gay-coloured frocks and straw hats shimmer in the sunlight. The whole scene is a-flutter with gaiety. Suddenly a great shout goes up, and hats are tossed into the air. A torpedo boat, which is leaving the harbour, passes through the lock, putting out to sea on her way to Boulogne. Three of them go by, and each time there is the same display of enthusiasm. Three times the shouts and huzzas are repeated; three times there is a frantic waving of hats, handkerchiefs, and parasols.

Torpedo boats are popular. No doubt people like them because they have a formidable aspect and titillate the gentle love of carnage that purrs placidly

in the depths of every bourgeois breast. In reality there is nothing attractive about them. They are like whales, but such whales as never were—whales clad in armour, spouting black smoke instead of water.

Once, when he saw a torpedo boat lying at anchor in the Seine off the Quai d'Orsay, Monsieur Renan said he wished they would set scientists and philosophers to command such craft, instead of sailors; for philosophers could meditate on the Eternal Verities until the time came for them to be blown into the air. The existence of such remarkable men would have reconciled the irreconcilable—have squared the circle. Contemplative warriors, they would have satisfied the ideal by their lives and the real by their deaths. It was an excellent notion, but rather difficult to get into the head of a Minister of Marine. I am also somewhat afraid that the philosophers would not have displayed any excessive anxiety to stow themselves, Jonah-wise, in the bellies of these fish-like craft.

CHAPTER IV

NOTRE DAME DE LIESSE

ERE in this corner of Laonnais there are no broad stretches of open country; but there is something gracious and kindly about the fall of the hills, and the region is richly wooded. The little white road which runs along by my door grows fragrant with the scent of thyme as it dips down through fields of clover, oats, and beet, towards the lush meadows and the wood where Little Red Riding Hood still goes gathering nuts.

It is pleasant of a morning to follow this narrow winding lane, if one holds it joy and glory enough to wander where the queen of the meadows dwells in simple majesty, and to inhale the breath of the honeysuckle. Yesterday, in the middle of this foot-path, I found a little hedgehog lying motionless, rolled up into a ball. He had been injured. I put him in my pocket and carried him back to the house, where a drop of milk brought him back to life again. He poked out his little black snout, which looked as though it had been carved out of a truffle. He

opened his eyes and looked at me, and I was weak enough to regard myself as the Good Samaritan. This morning my friend was disporting himself in the garden, sniffing the moist earth, and all the quills on his back were glistening in the sun. Thus, to come across a hedgehog or a spray or two of wild thyme on the fringe of a wood, to spell out some old epitaph in the village churchyard—such are the distractions which go to fill up the day of a lonely dweller in the country.

We have a Roman camp here, and a little mountain that Gargantua must have let fall from his basket one day. But, loveliest of all, is a very tall and perfectly round beech tree, which the peasants assure me bears nuts of the most delectable flavour. The fairy-haunted beech of Domremy, upon whose branches the village maids were wont to hang garlands and chaplets of flowers, was not fairer or more venerable. I am sorry those days are no more, when men worshipped trees and streams. Had I lived in those times I should have come with my little statues of baked clay and reverently tied them to the branches with woollen fillets; or, maybe, I should have even nailed a picture to the trunk with a votive tablet inscribed with verses in the manner of Ausonius. This beech, which is renowned throughout the countryside, stands on the high ground between Saint Thomas and Saint Erme,

whose church looks so wistful and so charming with its tapering slate steeple, its rustic roof, its rain-worn Renaissance porch, and its weather-vane—a finely wrought figure of the great Saint Anthony and his pig. In the bare ruined nave, on a Roman capital, a bird, pecking at a bunch of grapes, bears solitary witness to the days when the church of Saint Erme rose on high in white majesty above a faithful people. From the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries the churches of Soissons, Rheims, and Laon flourished in high splendour in Christian Gaul; and whoso loves to dwell in the past will find this country of Laon richly fraught with sweet and far-off memories. There the stones, overgrown with moss and gilliflowers, have many an antique tale to tell. Three miles from here, on the Soissons road, is Corbeny, whither the monarchs of France used to come after their coronation to "touch" for the king's evil. Nine miles to the north, over the Picardy border, is Notre Dame de Liesse, a favourite place of pilgrimage in the days of old.

In the first volume of *Belleforest's Cosmography*, published in 1575, we read as follows:

"Not far distant from Laon is Lyance, or Lyesse, so greatly renowned for the sacred fane of the glorious Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, the ancient place of pilgrimage of our kings, where God works great miracles for the love and through

the merits of her whom He chose to be His Mother."

To get from here to Liesse you take a chalky road across a dry, barren plain, dotted with old windmills stretching out gaunt arms, and broken here and there by clusters of birch. The stunted oats are bowed down by the wind. While the driver, pointing with his whip to the flat, dreary horizon, is recounting the story of the miller who hanged himself in his mill and the tax-gatherer who was murdered by the roadside, we see on our left, through a fringe of trees, the Château de Marchais, built in the reign of Charles IX by Cardinal de Lorraine. Barely two miles farther on we come to three elms, which cast their shade over a little chapel called the Trois Chevaliers; and then, with scarcely an interval, our carriage wheels are rattling over the cobbles of a lonely village street bordered by low houses. This is Notre Dame de Liesse, once so full of life, but now long since deserted and forlorn. Our Lady of Liesse, like many and many another Holy Virgin of Old France, has suffered grievous wrong at the hands of Our Lady of Lourdes. The beautiful Lady of Lourdes, with her blue scarf, attracts all the pilgrims to that watering-place of hers. Everybody is full of her. I knew a pious dame, however, who lamented the passing of the old shrines. "There is no denying it," she used to say to me,

" the Virgin of Lourdes is obliging, willing, alert, assiduous, nay, obsequious. She will do anything to help : she heals the sick, helps young people to get through their examinations, arranges marriages, and sells chocolate. Between ourselves, I consider her a little bit of a busybody."

The Virgin of Liesse has not got such a good head for business. She has been left behind in the race. That is immediately apparent when one enters the sleepy little town. I am told that the place will wake up next month when the great pilgrimages come on. But I can see well enough that, though once the resort of kings, it now only attracts, even on high and festal days, a few worthy dames from the neighbourhood of Rheims, Laon, and Saint Quentin. Its glory has departed. Everything has its day, and a time will come when the fame of Notre Dame de Lourdes, too, will begin to grow dim. That is a reflection that should comfort Notre Dame de Liesse for her irremediable decline. The dust, the slowly gathering dust, is softly descending upon the little shops by the church where, behind dim window panes, medallions, images, rosaries, and scapulars are exposed to the view. In the fourteenth century, medals of tin or lead were on sale beneath the awnings of these little houses, and good folk used to stitch them on to their low-brimmed hats. Louis XI followed the general

example, and among the images he wore on his bonnet you may be sure that some came from Notre Dame de Liesse, to whom the pious monarch paid singular devotion.

Nowadays the most curious things in these shops are the little hermetically sealed bottles filled with water, in which the emblems of the Passion are seen floating attached to hollow glass balls by thin glass filaments. In them you may behold the cross, the nails, the sponge, the spear, the reed sceptre, the crown of thorns, the holy countenance, and the sun which veiled itself, and the moon which shone forth, when the mystery was consummated. These little bits of coloured glass have all the *naïveté* of children's playthings. They are amusing when one thinks there are souls so unsophisticated as to wonder at so crude a marvel. The church, of which some fifteenth-century portions still remain, is not a large one. The main doorway, surmounted by a broad arched window flanked by two turrets, has rather an attractive appearance, and any lover of old buildings would admire the carving on the buttresses on either side of the window. There are two helmets, expressive as faces, with their little pointed crowns, their noses like birds' beaks, their mocking curl of the lip, and their enormous head and shoulders. But these are mere trifles, and it is evident we are in a frivolous holiday mood.

On entering the church, one's attention is arrested by a fine Renaissance rood-loft spanning the nave with shapely arch of white stone and black marble. On the balustrade of this rood-loft are four painted statues in the hideous restoration style, representing three knights with magnificent plumes and a lovely damsel arrayed in Turkish costume.

All four are very ridiculous, and look as though they were playing Zaïre before the Duchesse d'Angoulême. I will tell you in a minute or two who the three knights and the young Mohammedan woman are. For the moment let it suffice that it was they who brought back from Egypt the miraculous image which has ever since been an object of veneration in the church we are now examining.

To get a view of the little Virgin of Liesse as she sits in the choir above the altar it is necessary to pass beyond the rood-loft. She is a black virgin. I have always entertained a curious predilection for these black statues, which are all of very ancient date. They have capes like lamp-shades. They are short and squat. That is because they are seated, and yet dressed as if they were standing at full length. There we have a piece of touching indifference towards the human form. The Greeks also had their black idols. Like ours, they were statues of wood, rudely carved and reputed to possess miraculous qualities. They attributed their

origin to Dædalus, and they venerated these rude, time-stained images. They also arrayed them in costly veils. There is more likeness between the different cults than one would suppose. If by some magical process the old peasant woman whom I see here mumbling her prayers under her woollen hood were suddenly transported to Pessinus, and found herself in the sanctuary there, restored and given back to its ancient mysteries, it would be without any excessive feeling of surprise that she would complete, at the foot of the Good Mother Goddess, the prayers she had begun to recite before the Virgin. But we must tell the whole story.

The real Black Virgin of Liesse was burnt in 1793, and the statue which replaced it is, to my taste, neither artless enough nor old enough. It is stated that some of the wood of the old statue was rescued from the flames and incorporated in the new, and this may be some consolation to the devout, who regard the particular wood as possessing more virtues than the timber of Noah's Ark. But who will restore the little idol dressed in a lamp-shade to those who hold, like the Bishop Synesius, that the things of eld are all worthy of veneration?

It is at the far end of the church to the left, in the Louis XIII sacristy, that the "treasury"—now sadly impoverished—of Notre Dame de Liesse is kept. There are silver-gilt hearts, watches, and

chains, some of those big silver watches called turnips, a clock, walking-sticks and crutches, a few old crosses of honour, a captain's gorget, and two pairs of epaulettes.

In one corner of the sacristy I was strangely moved to find one of those hermetically sealed bottles, of which I made mention just now, with the little glass emblems floating about inside it. Doubtless the good dame who presented it to the Black Virgin said to her: "This is for your little boy, madame." And in truth Notre Dame de Liesse has an infant Jesus on her knees standing up, with his little arms outstretched. But in this poor treasury, over which the spider spins its web, we should look in vain now for the heart of gold brought thither by the Abbess of Jouarre; the cities modelled in silver presented by Bourges, Rheims, Mézières, Amiens, Laon, and St. Quentin; the ship given by the municipality of Dieppe; the silver arm of Captain de Hale; the ship of Henrietta of France, Queen of England, and the Queen of Poland's golden nipple. These precious gifts have disappeared. Louis XIV had them melted down in 1690, and sent the remnants of the treasury of Notre Dame de Liesse to the Mint. The safety of the country was at stake. Another such crisis arose in 1792. Similar needs required similar deeds.

It was more particularly from her acts of healing

that the Black Virgin of Laonnais derived her riches. She also drove out devils. The story goes that a woman of Vervins, named Nicole, who gave every sign of being possessed of the devil, was taken to Liesse, where her condition became much calmer. But we are assured by Canon Villette, who flourished about the end of the seventeenth century, that her complete cure was not effected till later, and that it was brought about in the cathedral church of Laon by the efforts of the bishop. Beelzebub appeared to Monseigneur and revealed something it must have pained him to confess.

"The Virgin Mary," he told the bishop in confidence, "has just deprived me of the assistance of twenty-six of my companions by driving them out of this woman's body."

Notre Dame de Liesse restored to the Sieur de Couci his two lost children. It was she who, when her aid was implored by a thief upon the scaffold, came, and with her arms that had enfolded the infant Jesus, supported the unhappy wretch during the three days that he remained hanging from the gallows. But I have a great notion that this same miracle, celebrated in rhyme by the troubadours, is also attributed to Our Lady of Chartres. The Virgin of Liesse aided prisoners to escape, and freely devoted her power to interfering with the execution of justice. I do not blame her—quite

the contrary; I praise her, for I hold mercy to be a finer quality than justice. For four or five centuries she was besieged by clients. Pilgrims from all parts of the kingdom implored her, with hands upraised in prayer, not to slumber while they begged her aid. But now she sleeps in peace in her deserted sanctuary. Let us not mar her repose, but rather revere in her the faith, the hope, and the charity of all those many souls who fared before us over this earth on which we, too, are journeying.

Coming from the direction of the Château de Marchais, you pass, on the right-hand side of the road leading to Liesse, three elms grouped about a railed-in chapel. They are called "The Three Chevaliers," in memory of the three sons of the Lady of Eppes, who brought home to Picardy from Egypt the miraculous image which was afterwards honoured in the land of Liance, since called the Land of Liesse.

The following is the story of the three knights of Eppes and the fair Ismeria:

The Story of the Three Knights of Eppes and the Fair Ismeria

In those days Fulk, Count of Anjou, Touraine, and Mayenne, King of Jerusalem, took by assault Cæsarea Philippi, which was the ancient city of

Dan, and situated at one of the extremities of his kingdom. He rebuilt the castle of Beersheba, which was at the other extremity, and thus set up again in its entirety the kingdom of David and of Solomon, which, according to the Scriptures, reached from Dan to Beersheba.

The custody of the Castle of Beersheba was entrusted to the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, they having been raised to the dignity of a military order some thirty years before, in the reign of Baldwin I. Now, among their number were three brothers of the illustrious house of Eppes in Picardy, whereof the eldest was called the Knight of Eppes, the second the Knight of Marchais, and the youngest the Knight of the White Armour. Madame d'Eppes, their mother, was possessed of lands both fair and broad round about Laon. But her sons had taken upon them the pilgrim's cross, and borne into the land made holy by the blood of Jesus the banner of Eppes with its golden eaglets. And, because their prudence and their courage were well known, Fulk of Anjou had decided to place them in charge of the Castle of Beersheba, which was distant sixteen miles from Ascalon, and ceaselessly threatened by the Saracens.

In truth Ascalon, a former city of the Philistines, was in the hands of the Egyptian Caliph, who sent thither four times a year, by land or by sea, arms,

victuals, and fresh troops. The people of this city were numerous and right warlike. Every male child from the day of its birth received from the Caliph's treasury the pay of a soldier on campaign. The garrison, which consisted of very fierce soldiers, made frequent sorties.

One day, when the three sons of Madame d'Eppes were riding at some distance from the Castle of Beersheba, they were surprised by a troop of Saracen horsemen, and, despite their obstinate resistance, were made prisoners and taken to Cairo.

The Caliph was then in that city. Hearing that the three Christian prisoners were of great beauty, he was fain to see them, and commanded them to be brought into the garden, where he was taking the air beneath the roses beside murmuring fountains. The sons of Madame d'Eppes towered a whole head above the turbans of their guards. Their shoulders were very broad, and the Caliph acknowledged that they had been faithfully described to him. Desirous of discovering whether their beauty was equalled by their wit, he put several questions to them, whereto they replied with such wisdom and modesty that he was charmed thereat. But he gave no sign of his satisfaction. Nay, he affected to dismiss the prisoners with disdain, and gave orders that they should be bound in chains and thrown into a gloomy dungeon.

His purpose was to bring them, by harsh treatment, to abjure the religion of Christ and embrace the worship of the idol Mahound, to whom he, in common with all the Saracens, did homage. Therefore he caused the three knights to be bound with chains and thrown into a dungeon, over which flowed the waters of the Nile.

Then he caused them to be informed, by one of his viziers, that he would give them a palace with gardens all about it, priceless armour, Arab steeds ready caparisoned, and slave girls, skilled players of the guitar, if they would consent to adore the idol Mahound.

Certain travellers who have been questioned on the matter affirm that the Saracen infidels set up no graven images in the likeness of Mahound. If they speak truly, we must understand that the Caliph promised these things to the knights on condition that they obeyed the law of Mahound, which detracts nothing from the veracity of the story.

When the vizier had declared what things the Caliph promised, and on what conditions, the Knight of Eppes thought of the gardens with their living waters, and sighed; the Knight of Marchais thought of the beautiful slaves, and fell into a reverie; the Knight of the White Armour thought of the Arab steed and the blades of Damascus, and a great cry burst forth from his

breast like a flame. But they, all three, rejected the Caliph's presents.

Vainly did the keeper of the prison—an old man abounding in discourse—recount the most moving of Arabian apologues to bring them to renounce the Christian faith. They did not suffer themselves to be seduced by his ingenious tales, nor were they moved by the example of a Norman baron who, having become one of Mahound's worshippers, lived at Smyrna on candied fruits, with a dozen wives, whom he sold when they ceased to be pleasing in his sight.

From all the reports of their constancy that were brought to him the Caliph saw full well that neither threats, nor prayers, nor promises of wealth and sensuous delights would ever bring the three sons of Madame d'Eppes to embrace the Saracen religion. He therefore flattered himself that he would win them over by means of logic. He sent the most learned of Arabian doctors to visit them in their dungeon, who every day put before them the subtlest of arguments. These learned men were acquainted with Aristotle; they excelled in mathematics, in medicine, and in astronomy. The three sons of Madame d'Eppes knew nought of astronomy or medicine, mathematics or the works of Aristotle; but they knew their Pater Noster, and several beautiful prayers by heart. Wherefore the Arabs were

unable to convince them, and withdrew covered with confusion.

The Caliph, who was of a stubborn disposition, did not acknowledge defeat in spite of the failure of Aristotle and the Doctors. He had recourse to an artifice from which he counted on obtaining the most satisfactory results. Know, then, that this same Caliph had a daughter—young, and of very graceful figure—who was skilled in music, and a more subtle dialectician than the Doctors. She was called Ismeria. Her father bade her array herself in her richest apparel, anoint herself with fragrant oils, and visit the three knights in their dungeon.

"Go, my daughter," said he; "display all your graces, employ all your charms in order to win over these Christians."

So fired was he with religious zeal, that he charged his daughter to sacrifice that which she prized most dearly if such a sacrifice would redound to the advantage of Mahound.

Certain writers, recording this story, have regarded these injunctions of the Caliph as exaggerated. But Canon Willete points out that they are such as might be expected from an idolater. Thus, he says, the daughters of Midian and Moab, acting upon the hateful counsels of the false prophet Balaam, were sent to the children of Israel to pervert them and cause them to fall into idolatry. Thus the daughters

of Ammon wrought such havoc in the heart of King Solomon that he fell to adoring the gods of their people.

And so the Princess Ismeria came into the presence of the three sons of Madame d'Eppes. She spoke; and her lips were more dangerous than her discourse. They looked with admiration on so lovely a creature, and they feared her far more than they had feared the vizier and the doctors; and, in order that she should not change their hearts, they resolved to change hers.

"Teach her the truth, for she is worthy to hear it," said the Knight of Eppes to his brothers. "Though we be less adroit in speech than in handling the sword, yet may we discover fitting arguments with the aid of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who said to His Apostles: 'If ye have to give testimony concerning Me, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for I Myself will put in your mouths words full of wisdom.'"

The two brothers approved of what the eldest had said, and forthwith they strove, all three, to instruct the Caliph's daughter in the Christian faith.

They expounded its doctrines, the miracles, and the prophecies. They spoke to her especially of the Virgin Mary, to whom they paid particular veneration; and they told her of the miracles she had

wrought amongst all those who did her honour—particularly in the country about Laon. The things which they related concerning the Queen of Heaven appeared so wonderful to the maiden Ismeria, that she inquired whether she could see an image of the Virgin as she was represented in Christian temples. The three knights made answer that, in their prison, they had no such image, but that if some wood were brought to them they would essay to fashion an image after the manner of the worthy wood-carvers of their own land.

They spoke thus, being carried away by the zeal within their hearts. But when, in obedience to the commands of the Princess Ismeria, a log of wood was brought to them, together with a mallet and chisel, they found themselves greatly embarrassed. The art of fashioning an image that shall appear to have breath and life is only acquired by long practice. They were unable even to make a beginning on the wood. It should be stated that it was the trunk of one of those trees which come from the garden of Eden, being borne down into Egypt upon the waters of the Nile.

The three sons of Madame d'Eppes fell asleep by the log of wood or ever they had succeeded even in hewing it roughly into shape.

When they awoke they were sore amazed to see that their task was finished, and that the image

of the Virgin was shining in the dungeon with a soft and wondrous radiance.

Before their eyes was Our Blessed Lady, seated on a throne, holding her Divine Child in her arms. Never, from Laon to Soissons, had so fine a piece of carving been seen by the three sons of Madame d'Eppes. The image had been wrought from the wood that the Princess Ismeria had caused to be brought to them, and the wood was black, in token of the darkness which still enwrapt the soul of the Caliph's daughter. But it was encircled by a heavenly radiance, as a sign that light would dispel those deadly shadows. And it is meet to reflect that this wood, which had come from the place of Eve's sojourn, had been blackened by the sin of the first woman, but that the countenance of the Holy Virgin was radiant, because the sin of Eve had been atoned for by her to whom the angel cried, "Ave!" Such ideas, though they do not readily occur to men of the present day, were swiftly apparent to those religious folk who were wont to pass their lives in meditation, in the cloister, or the wilderness.

At the sight of this marvellous image the three brothers cried aloud with one voice, and each demanded of the other two how they had succeeded in accomplishing so mighty a task in a single night. But all swore with a mighty oath that they had borne no part therein. And, truly, it was hardly

to be thought that any one of them would have been skilful enough to complete so difficult a task with such despatch.

It is therefore probable that the image was carved by the angels, or, as is still more likely, by the Blessed Virgin Mary herself, to whom the three sons of Madame d'Eppes paid special devotion, and whose aid they had invoked on this occasion. When the Princess Ismeria returned to the prison and saw the Virgin, dark and radiant, she wept and fell on her knees in adoration. And on a sudden she was set free from the false religion of Mahomet, and converted to the faith of Jesus Christ. And the three sons of Madame d'Eppes, divining that from this image would come their deliverance, called it their Lady of Liesse—that is to say, of Joy.

Meanwhile the Caliph demanded every day if the conversion of the three knights was being brought to an auspicious conclusion, and the Princess Ismeria would make answer that there still remained some progress to be made in that direction. She gave her replies in such wise as to gain leave to return to the knights' prison. But she had already made up her mind to compass their escape and to fly with them.

When all had been made ready for carrying out this design, the Caliph's daughter gathered together all the precious stones and jewellery she could find

in the palace, and made her way out in the darkness by a privy garden gate.

Favourably to judge of the Princess's conduct, we must bear in mind that her father was a Saracen and an infidel; and we must remember that the jewels she carried off were afterwards to provide for the erection of the shrine of Our Lady of Liesse.

Laden with these jewels, Ismeria went to set free the prisoners, and led them to the banks of the Nile, where a boatman was in readiness to row them, all four, to the other side of the river. There they fell asleep. On waking, the three knights saw the cathedral of Laon on the mountain, and all the country round about Laon. They had been miraculously conveyed thither during the night, together with the Princess Ismeria.

The Black Virgin was with them. It was she who had brought them. At the place where she first touched the earth there gushed forth a spring which heals of the fever.

The knights were glad to behold once more the smoke rising from their roof-tree, and their lady mother, whose hair was quite grey, and who wept with joy to see them. Having been informed concerning the fair Saracen whom they had brought with them, the Lady of Eppes was fain to be a mother to her, and to hold her above the baptismal font.

But when the Princess Ismeria went to look for her Black Virgin beside the spring, it was no longer to be found. The statue had gone, of its own accord, to a spot two hundred paces away. Ismeria found it, and was fain to gather it up in her arms; but she could not so much as raise it from the ground. The Virgin, by thus making herself so heavy, was showing that she wished her church to be built on that site. To that work the Caliph's jewels were devoted. Ismeria received the rites of baptism.

Each of the three knights took to himself a wife, and lived in piety for the remainder of his days. The Princess Ismeria retired into a convent, where her life was a pattern of all the virtues. As we have already said, her image—carved and painted—is still to be seen in the Church of Notre Dame de Liesse, above the rood-loft. The Black Virgin, after working numerous miracles, was burnt by the Patriots in 1793—all save a single fragment, which was miraculously preserved.

There could be no more pitiable sight than the miraculous spring, now all closed in with stone-work. Hard by, a little house has been erected in imitation of the Santa Casa at Loretto. It is approached by an avenue bordered with fir trees and tall poplars planted alternately. Stretched at full length by the spring an old man waits for

the female devotees, who come at ever longer and longer intervals, to hold out their Madonna-bottles, which he fills for a sou with miraculous water. Of infinite sadness are the dying agonies of the gods.

CHAPTER V

BRITTANY

La Pointe du Raz, Finistère,
23rd July.

E have left the town of Plogoff and its sardine fishers behind us on the Audierne road. And now, instead of green hedgerows and overhanging trees, we have low granite walls dividing barren, untilled fields. Within one of these enclosures stands the slab of a mouldering dolmen, a mute and aged witness of immemorial antiquity. It is long since its heavy fall sent a tremor through the earth around it. Little black gnomes, elves, and imps—that come out so soon as the herdsman's horn has called home the kine to the byre—dance in the moonlight, and compel the wayfarer to enter their charmed circle ; they it is who inhabit this rude palace. Every Breton peasant knows that the dolmens are where the goblins dwell. They all know, too, that the menhirs at Carnac are the heathen giants whom Saint Cornély turned into stone.

To the left of us, the Chapel of Saint Collédoc rears its tower of fretted masonry. Saint Collédoc lived in the days of King Arthur. Doubtless his name did not escape the notice of Canon Trévoux, who spent his guileless life in compiling a catalogue of Breton saints.

I was acquainted with Canon Trévoux when I was a child, and it is likely enough that I am now the only one left in the world of those who knew him. His image lingers yet a little while in my memory ere it takes its final plunge into the waters of oblivion. It is strange that I should come to think of this old priest out here on the Audierne road. But I cannot help it. There are people who have the power of controlling their impressions and their recollections. I admire and envy them; but I cannot imitate them. At all times uninvited guests—guests whom I cannot dismiss—come, some with smiling, some with gloomy, mien, and seat themselves unbidden round the table of my thoughts. And now, thirty years after his departure from this world, there comes Canon Trévoux, with his three-cornered hat on his head, and his snuff-box in his hand, making his way into my astonished brain. And right welcome he is! He was a cheerful and kindly soul, and his cheeks glowed with so cherubic a pink that you might have thought that one of those little chubby-faced angels that soared in the chancel above his canonical stall

had mixed the colours to paint them withal. He had the quietest tastes, and, as long journeys over the moorlands and by the seashore sorted ill with his immense corpulence, it was in the second-hand bookstalls on the Quai Voltaire that he sought his Breton saints. He went from the Pont Notre-Dame to the Pont Royal every day that God made —provided God made it fine enough. For the good Canon liked not rain or fog, and of all God's works he loved those best in which He most clearly manifested His benevolence. Howbeit, one day, when he was going—as his custom was—seeking out some Breton saint who had been forgotten by a thankless generation, he was overtaken by a sudden storm near the Samaritaine, and caught and cuffed, as he himself put it, by a frightful squall. He even suffered the loss of his old umbrella, which the wind snatched from him and whirled into the Seine. It was one of the most terrible trials of his earthly career. Every time he thought of it, you could see the smile begin to fade from his lips and the colour from his cheeks.

Canon Trévoux departed this life some time after this event, leaving behind him a history of the Saints of Brittany, which bears witness to his innocence of heart and his simplicity of mind. It is a book which, I am ashamed to confess, I have never adequately studied. As soon as I get back to Paris I have made

up my mind, if I can put my hands on a good copy of it, to look up the history of Saint Collédoc, whose chapel we have left far behind us, the only part of it now visible against the horizon being its fretted steeple, with the blue sky flooding through its foiled spaces. Saint Collidor, or Collédoc, was Bishop of Cambria when he came over from Wales into Armorica. Probably he crossed the ocean in a stone trough, a mode of transit commonly employed by British saints in those days. Landing at Plogoff, he set up as a hermit in the barren moorland, and there he dwelt, around him the sea-pinks and the dwarf rose bushes, and the little immortelles, which scarcely lift their heads above the soil; and above him the sky laden with masses of heavy cloud, as you may see in Bible pictures, and furrowed by the swift flight of the sea-birds—some of them the souls of the departed. There he praised the Lord and gave himself up to meditation, and sometimes, when the divine ecstasy was upon him, saw deep into the mystery of things both visible and invisible. Thus it is not surprising that, by some hidden agency, he became aware of what was passing in the world from which he dwelt apart. Certain it is that he learned, or ever the tidings reached the people of Audierne and Plogoff, of the bloody battle of Camlan and of the death of Arthur, whose magic brand had not availed to ward off the blows of some traitorous knight. No

less mysterious is the means whereby Saint Collidor learned of the love which Sir Launcelot of the Lake bore the fair Queen Guinevere, King Arthur's spouse. And Launcelot—this, too, Saint Collédoc wist full well—was the flower of all knights. He had been nursed upon the knees of a fairy, and the fairy had bestowed a charm upon him which abode with him ever. And therefore he was meet to be loved, and Guinevere gave him of her love.

But Saint Collédoc, who had meditated much in solitude, knew things whereof they who dwell in the world are ignorant. He knew that human love is a vain and perishable thing, and that they who set their hopes on the creature rather than on the Creator are swiftly disillusioned. For these reasons, and because he deemed that if Guinevere and Launcelot should come to the fulfilment of their desires, it would be a grievous offence before God, he resolved, with Heaven's aid, to prevent so great a calamity. Wherefore he took his staff and went to seek out Guinevere in her palace. And when he had spoken with her some time in secret, he prevailed upon her, there and then, to renounce the love of Launcelot of the Lake. He fired her with an urgent longing to embrace the religious life, and so, at length, in all the glory of youth, beauty, worldly happiness, and rich apparel, still warm with the glow of earthly love, he led her to Jesus Christ,

who is not wont to behold fair penitents come to Him in such goodly case.

What did he say to her? A little book which I have just purchased by the roadside of a bard—blind as Homer himself and profoundly drunk with rum—a little book of *gwerz* and *sonn*, has a number of stories of the saints in it; but it does not record the words whereby the Hermit Collédoc wrought this change in the heart of Guinevere. Ah! Monsieur Trévoux, what did he tell her? You who knew so well the minutest details of the lives of the Breton saints, could you have told us about it when you were alive and used to stroll placidly in the sunshine along the brave Quai Voltaire, peace in your heart, and two or three old books thrust into every pocket of your padded surtout? Did you know what words he used, and have you set it down in that great work of yours on hagiology?

Alas! how should you have known, seeing that the interview of the queen and the saint was secret. You will tell me that Collédoc drew a picture of the hideousness and deformity of the sins of the flesh. But that is not enough, Monsieur Trévoux. You have no idea what it means to put yourself between a woman and her love. You are hurled down, trampled upon, and crushed. Oh yes! Saint Collédoc, you say, doubtless threatened Guinevere with the divine wrath and eternal damnation; he

showed her the yawning abyss of Hell. But even that is not enough, Monsieur Trévoux. Hell does not daunt a woman in love, nor has Paradise the smallest charm for her. Of a truth, I should vastly like to know what Saint Collédoc of Plogoff said to Queen Guinevere to sunder her from Launcelot of the Lake, her loved one and her lover. To bring such a thing to pass, mark you, it must have needed words more potent than those runes known only to the Norsemen of old, whereby they could call forth the ocean from his bed and crumble the earth into powder; for Love, Monsieur Trévoux, is stronger than Death. Howbeit, true it is that the gentle queen hearkened to the hermit, and betook herself to a nunnery. The story forms the plaintive burden of many an old Breton ballad.

But we shall soon be at the land's end. We have left behind the region where bloom the gorse and the broom, and we can feel the western wind as it sweeps across the barren fields. Here is Lescoff, with its church tower and its menhirs. A few paces farther on and we shall reach the Pointe du Raz. And, see, to the right, we are already coming within view of a wan shore vexed by billows that whiten and seethe over hidden reefs. That is the Bay of the Dead.

Here, on the moorland which juts out between two lines of coast studded with reefs, the land comes

to an end. At the extremity of the narrow path upon which we are entering the wide sea tumbles in foam, and even where we stand the salt spray wraps us round. Before us the ocean, beyond whose verge the sun is sinking to rest in a couch of flame, spreads far and wide its splendid sheet of waters, pierced here and there by black rocks wreathed with foam; and down among the billows the Ile de Sein lies sleeping, dark and low. It is the Sacred Isle of the Seven Slumbers, where it is said the Prophetic Virgins used to dwell. But did these wondrous beings live save in the imagination of seafaring folk? Peradventure, sailors, gazing from afar, mistook the gulls perched on the rocks in the sunlight for priestesses arrayed in their white robes. The tradition that tells of these virgins is dim as a dream. Search has been made beneath the scanty soil that lies in the granite hollows where, to furnish food for the fisher-folk, a few meagre ears of barley struggle for existence; but not a stone of any building has ever been unearthed. Nothing has been discovered save a few medallions shaped like little cups. They have an image of a god or a hero, with wavy hair braided with pearls, on their convex side, and on their concave side the figure of a horse with a man's head. How could anyone imagine a college of priestesses on this low-lying, barren, wave-beaten reef, which in stormy weather is sometimes covered by

the sea from end to end! But perchance the Ile de Sein was larger once upon a time, and less bleak than it is to-day. Perchance the ocean which frets its shores unceasingly has swallowed up a part of the island, and with it the temple and the sacred grove of the virgins.

It is here that the ocean is terrible, here that it shows its might. The countless rocks, over which its billows foam and seethe, appear like the ruined remnants of a shore that lies engulfed, with its antique cities and all their folk beneath the waves. Just now the sea is quiet, and heaves in its sleep a vast and tranquil sigh. Only those oily trails which streak its grey-green surface tell where treacherous currents lurk. The old god, reclining drowsily upon the corpse of many a fair Atlantis, is in a good humour to-day, and waxes merry as he basks in the golden light of the sun. Yet even in repose he gives some hint of his strength. The waves which break upon the rocks forty feet below us shroud the cliff in mist and scatter their salt spray upon our faces. After each onslaught of the billows the rocks emerge again, and down every one of their sparkling facets the salt sea tinkles in little silvery cascades.

To the left of us the lonely outline of the Bay of Audierne fleets away into the distance till it meets the grim rocks of Penmarch. To our right,

the coast, which bristles with sharp crags and jagged reefs, makes an inward curve to form the Bay of the Dead. Beyond is the Cap de la Chèvre, a smouldering bastion of crimson fire, and, still more remote, the shores of Brest and the Isles of Ouessant grow blue in the distance, and melt into the fainter azure of the sky.

The aspect of the ocean and the cliffs is continually changing. The waves are now white, now green, now violet; and the rocks, which a while ago were iridescent with glittering veins of mica, are now of an inky blackness. The darkness comes with swift wings upon us as the last flakes of fire that had fallen on to the sea fade and are extinguished. Only a broad belt of orange marks the place where the sun has gone down. We can now scarcely discern the granite walls which—some upright, some prone—shut in the Bay of the Dead. Clear, through the silence of the night, cleaving the dull roar of the breakers, comes the melancholy call of the curlew. An almost intolerable sense of sadness weighs upon the hour, and everything—the rocks, the barren moorland, the sea, and the stretches of wan sand along the bay—is eloquent of desolation. Only the heavens above, where the first stars are growing bright, shed their benison of charm and gentleness upon us. This Breton sky possesses both depth and lightness. Oftentimes

veiled by banks of mist which come and go in a moment, almost always covered with thick clouds which resemble mountains and give it the appearance of an aerial world, it sometimes vouchsafes a sudden glimpse of azure deeps that lure with the fascination of the infinite. Just now I am in the mood to understand why the Bretons are enamoured of Death. They love it, and the soul of the Celt is often drawn towards it. But they fear it, too, for Death is abhorred of all living things.

Death hovers over these shores, and it is death, passing by overhead on the sea-wind, that fans the hair on our brows. The whole of this irregular gulf, extending from the Ile d'Ouessant to the Ile de Sein, commonly called l'Iroise, is the terror of seafaring men. Shipwrecks are common there. The Bec du Raz, which is frequented by all the shipping going oceanwards from the Channel, is particularly dangerous, on account of the sudden gusts which blow in from the open sea, as well as of hidden reefs, strong currents, and formidable "bores" or tidal waves, which hurl themselves at the cliffs. The Breton fishermen, as they cross the Raz, sing the following prayer:

"O God, come to my aid; my bark is so small, and the sea is so big."

The bodies of the shipwrecked mariners who

perish in the waters of l'Iroise are drifted by the tide into the Bay of the Dead. It is because it thus faithfully lays the remains of the drowned upon its sands—sands white as bones ground to powder—that this bay, so hospitable to the dead, has earned its lugubrious title. According to one tradition, those Gaulish priests, or rather monks, the Druids, were placed on shipboard after death, in order to be ensepulchred in the Ile de Sein. Other traditions, gathered together by the poet Brizeux, make this dolorous gulf the trysting-place of the faithful departed who desired to rest in the Isle of the Seven Slumbers.[1]

Tradition also has it that upon this shore souls in torment wander to and fro weeping while the skeletons of the shipwrecked knock at the doors of the fishermen, demanding sepulture. It is a belief firmly held by the peasants that during the night of the 2nd November, the day set apart by the Church for the commemoration of the faithful departed, the spirits of the shipwrecked gather in dense clouds on the margin of the bay, whence rises a dolorous wailing. Then it is, folk say, that the

[1] "Autrefois, un esprit venait, d'une voix forte
Appeler, chaque nuit, un pêcheur sur sa porte.
Arrivé dans la baie, on trouvait un bateau
Si lourd et si chargé de morts qu'il faisait eau.
Et pourtant il fallait, malgré vent et marée,
Le mener jusqu'à Sein, jusqu'à l'île sacrée..."

dead revisit the earth more numerous than the leaves that fall from the trees in autumn, in closer array than the blades of grass that spring up in the fields.

As we were passing along the desolate rock-bound shore the wind began to rise, and rain and darkness came down upon us. We made our way to the little hamlet of Kerherneau, in order to gain shelter and dry our clothes at the inn. There, in the little low parlour where hairy-visaged men, wearing the old-fashioned *bragonbras* or breeks, were drinking their pale cider or fiery tafia, seated in an ingle by the hearth brightened by a handful or two of blazing broom and heather, my thoughts wandered back to the shores whose plaintive voices still murmured in my ear, and to that Sacred Isle of the Seven Slumbers which the ocean envelops with foam whiter and more cold than the robes of the prophetic virgins and the spirits of the dead.

The owls are hooting from the roof; at my side long-haired men sit grave and silent, with a bowl of cider or a glass of *eau de vie* before them.

While waiting for the landlady to bring in the supper, I take from my pocket the only book I have brought with me to these misty confines of the earth. It is a song—or rather a string of tales in rhythmic language—pieced together with child-

like seriousness by bards who could not write for listeners who could not read. I open it at the Eleventh Book, which is the Book of the Dead, called by men of old the Νέκυια.

The Νέκυια has come down to us heavily encumbered with additions made by the minstrels who used to sing at the feasts. It is patched and pieced with fragments various in age and character. Among the most notable interpolations made by these ancient players of the phorminx is a list of the paramours of the gods, which appears to be taken from some catalogue compiled in the religious age of Hesiod and his poetic descendants. But, besides this, they have added a picture of the torments suffered by the enemies of the gods in hell; and nothing could be more at variance with the ideas concerning death which, in their ingenuousness, the early poets of the Homeric cycle entertained. There is no Hellenist at hand to guide me through the maze of these accretions, and the only scholiasts about me in this Breton fishermen's inn, by the shores of this sombre bay, are the owls hooting overhead and the gulls roosting on the rocky shore. I need none other, for they tell of the desolation of night and the terrors of Death.

When the Νέκυια opens, Odysseus of many counsels had safely steered his ship across the ocean

which sunders the world of the living from the abode of the dead. He has landed on the Isle of the Cimmerians, whereon the sun never turns his countenance from the hour of his rising till the hour of his going down. He has set foot on the yielding soil of the shore that is wrapt in the gloom of eternal night; he has fared onward beneath the tall poplar trees and barren willows of Persephone, even unto the dank House of Hades. There, hard by the rock, where meet the two rivers of death, in the fields of asphodel, he has dug a pit with his sword, and into it he has poured libations of mead and wine to the ghosts of those who have descended beneath the earth. It is no mere idle curiosity that has brought him hither into this world of silence where none but the dead have ever passed before him. Here in the Isle of the Cimmerians he is going to call up the wandering spirits of the dead. Thither has he come, counselled thereto by the witch Circe, to inquire of the ghost of Tiresias the seer by what means he may, at length, win home to Ithaca. For the old chieftain who has looked upon the Cicones, the Læstrygones, and the Sirens; who has shared the couch of goddesses and enchantresses, is consumed with a longing to behold, at length, his island home, his wife and son once more.

Tiresias, who wandered among the dead, bearing

in his hand his augural staff, was a remarkable personage, and one can readily understand why it was that Odysseus went even to the Isle of the Cimmerians to ask counsel of him. It is true that the figure of Tiresias is not drawn with any great distinctness in the Odyssey. He bears a resemblance to the wizards in the Arabian Nights and to all the sorcerers of our popular tales. The renown he enjoyed among the Greeks of old was similar to that of Merlin the wizard among the Bretons, and as soon as the imagination of the Greeks began to cast off its swaddling-clothes, the bards sang countless tales concerning the ancient soothsayer. If we are to credit them, he was turned into a woman for having separated two amorous serpents with his wand; but afterwards resumed his original shape. Nevertheless, the recollection of his metamorphosis gave him a singular insight into a number of delicate matters. He was blind, but he understood the language of birds; he could read the future. He lived on, full of wisdom, seven times man's allotted span; and the burden of his years and wisdom lay infinitely heavy upon him. Once, in a noble lament, he gave utterance to his sadness:

"O Zeus! my father and my king!" cried the old soothsayer; "wherefore didst thou not grant me a briefer life and my share of human ignorance? Verily it was no boon to me that thou didst prolong

my days, even through seven generations of mortal men."

To give an added touch of tragedy to the figure of Tiresias, the poets depict him as retaining among the dead the knowledge that was so bitter to him in life. Needless to say, the Νέκυια exhibits no trace of so profound a melancholy. The bard of remote antiquity, who invented the greater part of the Eleventh Book, recked as little as Old Mother Goose herself of the sadness that is born of knowledge and meditation. He held that the dead are dead in very truth. "Alas!" says Achilles, "there are spirits and phantoms in the House of Hades, but they are bereft of all feeling." Such was the plain and simple creed of those heroic times. And our wandering singer, Tiresias, for all that he had been a wizard upon earth, shared in the underworld the insensibility that is the common heritage of all the dead. He sees not, neither does he hear.

But Ulysses, who had been instructed in necromancy by the witch Circe, knew a means whereby he could restore to the dead—at all events for a while—the powers of thought and speech. He knew that they revive by drinking warm blood. Therefore, he took the sheep and slit their throats over the trench which he had dug, and straightway the spirits of the dead gathered themselves from

out of Erebus. Brides and youths unwed, old men of many and evil days, and tender maidens with grief yet fresh at heart; and many there were wounded with bronze-shod spears, men slain in fight with their bloody mail about them; and they flocked about the trench with a mighty wailing cry.

And Ulysses, who had voyaged over the grey seas, and had seen so many sights, so dread as to set the hairs of one's head on end, was sore afraid. And with his sword he thrust back the ghosts which, like a cloud of flies, had begun to gather round about the slaughtered sheep and sacrificial blood; and, beholding his mother in the swarm of spirits, even her he drove off with the rest. For he wished that Tiresias the soothsayer should be the first to drink. He loved his mother, but he was eager to have his fortune told. Besides, when we remember that the bard was adhering very closely to some popular tale, we need not be surprised, if we have the smallest acquaintance with folklore, at the naive artlessness of the singer or at the callousness of the hero. Tiresias was not the first to speak after all, but Elpenor, who spoke without having drunk the blood; and it is open to us to believe that he was brought on the scene by some later bard, who was not over particular about observing the rites of ancient necromancy. But we must also bear in mind the peculiarity of Elpenor's position. He

has as yet no place in the House of Hades. He is one of those who, though dead, have not yet been buried, and who wander forlorn about the abodes of the living, and come by night to ask of those whom they have left behind them in this world for a little earth wherewith to cover their hapless bones. He is a soul in torment. He had borne Ulysses company on his voyages, and he was still beside him on the Island of Ææa. Finding himself by night on the flat roof of Circe's dwelling, he slipped therefrom by mischance and broke his neck in his fall. No one mourned for him, for he was clumsy, and a drunkard withal. Ulysses, who had left his companion where he had fallen, was very much astounded to see him among the Cimmerians, and he told him of his surprise.

"How," said he, "hast thou come beneath the darkness and the shadow? Thou hast come fleeter on foot than I in my black ship."

Aristarchus considered the question a foolish one. M. Alexis Pierron, who has edited the works of Homer, says it is artless but certainly not foolish. It may have been embarrassing, for Elpenor makes no reply. But with a moan he implores Ulysses to grant him the rites of sepulture.

"When thou returnest to the Isle Ææan leave me not unwept and unburied; nay, burn me with mine armour, and pile me a barrow on the shore of

the grey sea, and plant upon the barrow mine oar wherewith I rowed in the days of my life, while yet I was among my fellows."

Such is the plaint which the shade of Elpenor breathes out at the feet of Ulysses. So long as he remains unburied, Elpenor, who has no longer any place upon the earth, has none likewise in Hades; but must needs wander in pitiable case between the living and the dead. Possibly this is why he speaks without having drunk of the blood. But I am inclined to suspect an interpolation. This book of the dead is as full of patches as a piece of tapestry depicting the story of Alexander, which, on every public holiday for four hundred years, has been hung out on the gable-end of a house in Bruges. It is therefore very diverting and very venerable.

The first shade that the hero suffers to draw nigh to the trench, in order that it may drink of the blood and recover the power to feel and to speak, is that of Tiresias the soothsayer, who, so soon as he has drunk thereof, gives utterance to a prophecy the first part of which has reference to the voyage of the hero; but its conclusion—culled doubtless from some ballad of immemorial antiquity—relates to quaint and naive traditions quite foreign to the Odyssey and diametrically opposed to the essential spirit of the poem. For the doom of Odysseus,

beloved of the virgin Athene, is to be the doom of the impious and the accursed; his destiny that of such sinners as Cain and Ahasuerus. And if the soothsayer hints obscurely at a final remission, the menaces which he utters—menaces which find their counterpart in legends that have been preserved to us—give the character of a reprobate to the hero whom the Homeric tales have made the exemplar of the perfect Hellene. Here, again, the old tapestry has been patched with a fragment of another tapestry of yet greater antiquity and darker import.

After hearing this prophecy, Ulysses is fain, without further delay, to question his mother's shade, and it appears from an inquiry he addresses to Tiresias that if he has not yet called forth his dead beloved, it is because he knew not how. If that be the case, we have wrongfully accused of callousness this rude pirate king, so dear to the mariners and fishermen of Hellas, this buccaneer who wandered far and wide over the barren sea. But we have seen how, initiated into the magic arts by Circe the witch, he had summoned up his mother's ghost, though such had not been his purpose, and we shall take it that he was deceiving Tiresias. He was a liar, and the goddess who loved him once said to him: "I love thee because thou art a cunning liar." That he was ignorant, in fact, seems inconceivable after the lessons which Circe had given him in the art of

ghost-raising. And we saw just now how accurate was the recollection he retained of her precepts. Or must we take it that here again we are confronted with yet another patch on the tapestry?

Obscurity is the prevailing note of this marvellous poesy of wide-eyed, wonder-stricken children. But this very obscurity lends it a charm, an added touch of mystery and delight. And when the venerable mother of Ulysses, the aged Anticleia, drinks of the dark blood and speaks to her son, broad and deep is the wave of emotion which overwhelms us, and we are thrilled with such a sense of beauty that we recognise perforce that from its infancy the Hellenic genius possessed an instinct for harmony and a knowledge of that truth which transcends the truth of science—the truth whereof only the poet and the artist hold the key.

"My child, how didst thou come beneath the darkness and the shadow, thou that art a living man? Grievous is the sight of these things to the living. . . . It was not the archer-goddess of the keen sight who slew me with her shafts, nor did any sickness come upon me such as, chiefly with a sad wasting, draws the spirit from the limbs. Nay, it was my sore longing for thee, and the memory of thy loving kindness, that reft me of sweet life."

So spake she, and her child would fain have folded her in his arms. Thrice he sprang towards

her, eager to embrace her; thrice she flitted from his hands, even as a phantom or a dream. Then, his heart rent with sharp grief, he cried unto her:

"Mother mine, wherefore dost thou not abide with me who am eager to clasp thee, that even in the House of Hades, folded in each other's arms, we may have our fill of chill lament?"

Then said his venerable mother to him:

"Ah me! my child; it is even on this wise with mortals when they die: The sinews bind no more the flesh and the bones, but the force of the fire consumes them so soon as the spirit leaves the white bones, and the spirit, like a dream, flies forth and hovers near."

Words of infinite sweetness these, and steeped in the milk of human kindness. They stole into the mind of some old bard of remote antiquity who lived by the shores of the wine-dark sea in days when men knew not the art of riding or of cooking their meat by boiling. He had seen neither painting nor sculpture. The only altars which he knew were the rough-hewn slabs of stone reared in some sacred grove. He was forever busy with the task of finding sustenance for his body. Among men whose sole thoughts were of eating, drinking, and making war in order to ravish women and carry off brazen tripods, the life he led was more full of hardship than a fiddler's in some village in

Auvergne. But for all that, he wooed from his untutored soul a music which will find an echo in every generous heart so long as the world shall last.

"My child, the archer-goddess of the keen sight slew me not with one of her shafts, nor did any sickness come upon me which takes away the life from the limbs with a sad wasting; but my longing for thee it was, and the memory of thy loving kindness, that reft me of sweet life."

Thus this old phorminx player sang his melodious sorrow, and even then showed himself a true son of Hellas by his instinct for beauty—beauty, the only human thing that never misleads, since beauty, nought save beauty, is of man and man alone.

And now I close this ancient song-book of the Ionian bards, and open the window of my rustic room. Out there in the darkness I look again on the Bay of the Dead. A few moments ago I was with Ulysses of old, and lo! from that antique world this present world in which I live and breathe differs scarcely at all. In matters of sentiment the world of the Eleventh Book of Homer is at no great distance from the *gwerz* of the bards of Breiz Izel. All ancient beliefs resemble one another in their simplicity. There is little of Christianity in the world-old legends of the dead that linger on in Christian Brittany. The belief in a future life is as vague and nebulous there as it is in the

Homeric epic. The Armorican, like the ancient Greek, holds that the dead survive in a sort of languid, fragmentary existence. The two races also hold that if a body be not restored to the bosom of mother earth, its shade wanders disconsolately to and fro begging for sepulture. The ghost of Elpenor implores a tomb of Ulysses; the bones of the shipwrecked mariners of l'Iroise come and tap at the doors of the fishermen's cottages. In the Celtic, as in the Hellenic, world the dead have a land of their own—sundered from ours by the ocean—an island misty and dim, where they dwell in countless numbers. For the Greeks, it is the Isle of the Cimmerians; for the Bretons, it is nearer to the mainland, the hallowed Isle of the Seven Slumbers. And among the Greeks of the heroic age, as among the Celtic races, the tombs take on the same form.[1]

Why, at Carnac, I have seen the very tomb of Elpenor: the oar alone was lacking, and the archæologists, in the course of their excavations, have

[1] In his learned and methodical treatise on *La Religion des Gaulois*, Monsieur Alexandre Bertrand seems to have demonstrated beyond all doubt that the dolmens were not of Celtic origin. But here we are hardly dealing with a matter of ethnology; our aim is merely to give a general view of the cult of the dead as practised in Brittany, where several branches of the human family have been superimposed one on another. And here, again, Monsieur Alexandre Bertrand has a judicious comment to offer: "Religions," he observes, "in the process of development gather up new elements which give them fresh life and change

brought to light the armour and the bones which slumbered there. Such is the barrow of Saint Michel, which is reared upon the shore by the margin of the grey sea.

But here comes my hostess to tell me supper is ready. A golden omelette gleams on the table, and the scent of mutton seasoned with thyme pervades the room. There, then, I bid adieu to Homer and my musings. But don't run away with the idea that the Celts were Pelasgians and that people used to speak Greek in Quimper just as they did at Mycenæ.

CARNAC (MORBIHAN), *4th August.*

From the summit of the funeral pile dedicated to Saint Michel we look down over two mournful plains: one the land, the other the sea. Westwards, as far as the horizon's bow of azure hue, stretches the ocean. Leftwards are the dark fleeting lines of the shores of Locmariaquer, where from time immemorial a barbarian chief has lain asleep under a shapeless tomb of unhewn stone; and, more

their form without ever completely depriving them of their original characteristics." These remarks are particularly applicable to such places as Gaul, where the population is made up of several successive and different "strata," so to speak, of invaders and immigrants, each having their own form of worship and their own special divinities, which they doubtless endeavoured to introduce into the national religion, or, failing that, at least to preserve as family or tribal observances (*loc. cit.* p. 215).

distant still, dim and shadowy in the mist, is seen Saint Gildas' Point, where Abelard was threatened with death by ignorant monks, who hated music and philosophy. To the right the melancholy peninsula of Quiberon juts out into the sea, athwart which, on the ocean side, lies Belle Ile, looming like an immense breakwater.

But if you turn about, so as to put Quiberon on your left, you can see the wide, treeless waste stretching away as far as the pine woods, which fret the skyline with their ridges of sombre blue. Across this plain, to which the heather imparts a hue of mournful rose, the shadows of the great clouds move in solemn, slow procession. It is Carnac, the Land of Rocks.

An army of menhirs stand there in ordered array. In front of you rise the alignments of Menec, and a little to the right those of Kermario. The stones of Kerlescan which lie in this direction are hidden by a piece of rising ground. Two thousand of those uncouth giants are in existence still, each standing upright or fallen prone within its proper rank. It is supposed that there were once more than ten thousand of them.

What manner of men were they who reared them on the plain? None can tell. Their age and their purpose are alike unknown. In their rude majesty they stand as mute remembrancers of races long

ago extinct. There is something vaguely funereal about them, something which suggests the thought that uncouth men, chieftains of savage tribes, lie slumbering beneath their mighty mass. But an examination of the soil has revealed nothing in the nature of a tomb.

Monsieur de Mortillet is of opinion that these alignments are the records of a people who lived in these regions before the advent of the Celtic tribes; a people whose custom it was to rear a stone for every event they desired to commemorate. This theory would make the plain of Carnac a sort of book wherein the wars and alliances, the mighty exploits of the chase, the voyages in hollow tree-trunks, and the genealogies of their chief men were commemorated by huge masses of unhewn rock.

The inhabitants of Carnac ascribe a very different and much more marvellous origin to these stones. They tell that once upon a time Saint Cornély was being pursued across the plain by an army of pagans. Now, as everybody knows, the pagans were giants. The servant of God hurried to the shore in the hope of putting out to sea to escape from the great peril in which he was placed. But vessel there was none. Turning, therefore, and facing the unbelieving horde, he stretched forth his hands towards them, and they were straightway turned into stone.

To this day these stones are known as "Saint Cornély's Soldiers."

This Saint Cornély is a distinctly original personage, and I am sorry I did not consult Canon Trévoux regarding him—the worthy Canon who used to study the saints of Brittany with such engaging candour. He would have told me some marvellous things about him: how, among other things, this same Saint Cornély was none other than that Pope Cornelius who received the fisherman's ring in the year of Our Lord 251, and was beset, even in the chair of Saint Peter, by manifold tribulations. The hagiologists have it so, and I am sure Monsieur Trévoux believed it. Monsieur Trévoux believed everything, and this happy disposition was writ large upon his countenance. He was a man of goodwill, and therefore he enjoyed peace upon earth. I trust that peace is now with him in heaven. It is pleasant to think that Saint Cornély is identical with Pope Cornelius; but it must be confessed that, when he got to Brittany, he became a very thoroughgoing Breton. He took on the spirit and customs of the peasants of Carnac, who chose him to be their patron and to intercede for them with God. He forgot all about the grim Novatian who marred the peace of his pontificate so cruelly. I saw him just now over one of the porches of his parish church. There he stands, carved and painted, in his pontifical robes,

between two oxen that are poking out their docile muzzles towards him. He was a saint perfectly adapted to a pastoral country. His feast falls on the 13th September, and—though Monsieur Trévoux would never have mentioned it—as this date coincides with the autumnal equinox, the feast of the saint must have taken the place of some old rustic pagan festival. It may be regarded as certain that his name predestined Saint Cornély to succeed the ancient tutelary deity of horned cattle. I am sorry I cannot stay on at Carnac for the festival, for it is a splendid Pardon. Pilgrims come from all over Brittany to kiss the bones of the saint, which are enclosed in a golden reliquary ablaze with jewels. With their hats under their arms, and their rosaries in their hands, they file in procession to the well, which is close to the church, covered by a pyramidion surmounted by a ball and cross. There they kneel down and taste the water, which beggars present to them in stone pitchers. They then wash their hands and faces, and raise their arms above their heads. Having accomplished these ancient rites, they return to the church to lay their oblations before the protector of cattle.

The water of the well is also sprinkled over the heads of cattle which have been cured by the intercession of Saint Cornély. So favourably disposed is the Saint to cattle that beasts are sometimes

brought to him in procession by night. Like the rustic deity whose place he has taken, he receives victims. Offerings of cows are made to him, but the cows are not slain. The church authorities also sell the halters that have been used to lead the victims to the altar. And there is a popular belief that beasts so haltered never die of disease. These herdsmen, being both poor and greedy, must needs employ a celestial veterinary.

The tumulus upon which you are now standing affords a further proof of Breton piety. The apostles of Armorica hallowed the barrow by building a chapel to Saint Michael the Archangel upon its summit, and the saint hurls or restrains the thunderbolt, and makes merry in his high place. Sailors' wives come to the chapel to pray the Archangel to save their husbands from the perils of the deep. Every year, during the night of the 23rd June, the young men of the countryside kindle, with a mighty shouting, the bonfire of Saint Jean, to which other fires, from all the neighbouring heights, respond. And there is reason to believe that the custom dates back to ages lost in the twilight of fable.

Those little knolls which you can see down there, now that the sun, already low in the sky, prolongs their shadows, are the Bossenno—mounds dotted about among the rocks of the ocean. Beneath them

is said to be a monastery of red monks; and these monks, so the story goes, committed abominations so monstrous and so vile that neither earth nor sea could endure them longer; thus the monastery perished in a single night, devoured by the flames. Even now, the place where the red monks lie buried bears an evil name. When the shades of evening fall, tongues of fire are seen upon the rocks, and voices are heard speaking a language unknown to Christians. Researches have been carried out among the Bossenno, and Mr. Miln, an English archæologist, has been there with his pick, and discovered walls which do in fact show traces of having been destroyed by fire. But they are not the walls of a monastery; the Bossenno cover the site of a Roman villa, built upon what was then the uttermost extremity of the known world. It has its walls of brick and stone, its rooms painted in glowing colours, its home farm, its baths, and its temple: in short, it tallies precisely with Columella's description of a Roman villa. Here, on these layers of stucco with their garlands and fretted tracery, and on these shell-encrusted ceilings, the art of Pompeii is seen once more.

During the first centuries of the Christian era, the Romans—like the English of to-day—spread their civilisation over every portion of the known world. They bore with them on their wanderings

their Lares and their Penates. In the chapel of this villa little statues of baked clay have been unearthed, which had been placed there by pious hands. They are statues of Aphrodite Anadyomene and "Deæ Matres." The latter are arrayed in long tunics, and are seated in big wickerwork armchairs. They have a little child in their arms, and present a marked likeness to the Madonnas of Christian art. Those that were found at Carnac have been placed in a cottage—which does duty for a museum—at some distance from the village. Others of the same kind have met with a very different fortune. They were taken for images of the Virgin, and, being regarded as miraculous, attracted pilgrims to the shrine in which they were laid after they were dug out of the earth.

Such is all we can discover as we stand looking down from the summit of Saint Michael's barrow. The barrow is man's handiwork, and is made of heaped stones and sea mud. In the course of his excavations, Monsieur René Galles has discovered the dolmen which had served as the burial-place of some chieftain. His bones were brought to light, partially consumed by the flames of the funeral pyre, with his arms of jasper and fibrolite, and his necklets of red jasper. There are certain indications which have led some people to think that he has a companion in death beneath this

mountain—a companion whose dust has hitherto remained invisible.

It was even thus that Achilles desired that his ashes should lie mingled with the ashes of Patroclus beneath the same funeral mound. The ghost of Patroclus itself had come to beg this of him, at night, while he lay asleep. "I ask thee," it said, "and forget it not, that my bones be not sundered from thine, Achilles. We grew up together in thy father's hall. . . . Let our bones be laid in the same golden urn." For this reason Achilles commanded that, in the first place, only a low barrow should be piled for his friend. "When I am dead," he added, "raise ye for him and for me a tomb both lofty and spacious, ye that are left."

The tomb, over whose grasses sprayed with the wet salt winds we are treading, is lofty and spacious, like the tomb of Achilles and Patroclus. The warriors who lie at full length within it, their arms of war beside them, were doubtless chiefs of high renown among their people. But they had no Homer to record their name.

Here where we stand a barbarian maid, with a fairer skin than Polyxena's, was sacrificed even as the daughter of Priam; and her wounded spirit took flight under the lowering sky betwixt the moorland and the ocean.

SAINTE ANNE D'AURAY,
28th July.

It was "Pardon" Day. I need not explain that Pardon is the name given to the patronal festival of a church or chapel. Indulgences are gained by the pilgrims who attend it, as a reward for certain acts of devotion and offerings made to the patron saint. In their exalted sphere the saints of Brittany have yet retained their rustic simplicity. They accept gifts in kind. But their dues must be paid in accordance with usage and custom. Notre-Dame de Relec, for example, will have nothing but white fowls. Sainte Anne, her mother, is not so particular: she accepts anything, and her crown is made of the jewels of the ladies of Lorient and Quimper.

It is one short league from the station to Sainte Anne. The road over the moor to the village was thronged with pilgrims when we were there. The white head-dresses of the peasant women gleamed, like the wings of the sea-birds, in the sunlight. The men, wearing buff jackets and broad hats with a black ribbon hanging down over the brim, pursued their way in silence, leaning on their dogwood sticks. And the whole way along, the road was lined by a double row of beggars.

Some of them—old and blind, with long white hair and beards, and one hand resting on a child's

head—bore in their desolate majesty a resemblance to the last of the bards. A little farther on, a woman sat groaning and lifting up an arm towards the blue sky that overhung the moorland tract. It was an arm so mutilated, so fleshless, so mangled; an arm that terminated so weirdly in a hand bereft of all but two fingers, that you might have taken it for the antler of a stag dripping with the blood of the hounds that it had gored and gashed.

In another place stood a gaunt human form, whose upper extremity was a tumefied mass of blood-tinged flesh, which one could only recognise as a face because it occupied the place where the face ought to be. And then, side by side, leaning one against another, were a row of "innocents." All had the same vacant look, the same fixed smile, the same perpetual trembling of the limbs, and there was a sort of family likeness between them, for they were brothers and sisters; and perhaps, as they stood there one supporting another, they may have been dimly conscious of the fact. One of them, a tall young man with a curly beard, was attired in a woman's dress. He gazed at you with great, wide eyes that sent a shudder through you. You felt that every image of the outer world sank into those eyes only to be swallowed up and lost. And there, in his grey gown of antique shape, a figure more weird than comic, he presented the

appearance of a statue carved by some old sculptor, and animated by a shadowy, mysterious power, as one reads in the tales of old. These beggars are one of the beauties of Brittany, one of the symphonies of that land of moor and rock.

The road, thronged with pilgrims and lined with beggars, leads to the Grande Place, in which is situated the Church of Sainte Anne. The Place is filled with a great crowd of country-folk. People from every parish in Morbihan are there, as well as from the patriarchal islands of Houat and Hoedic. Pilgrims have flocked in from Tréguier, Leonnois, and Cornouaille. The men all have sprigs of broom or heather in their hats. But the days of the old Celtic costume have gone by, and the peasants have discarded the old-fashioned breeches, the puffed *bragonbras* as they were called. All of them—even those that hail from Finistère—wear black trousers, just like Senator Soubigou. Happily the women have retained the national head-dress. Their white coifs, some of them turned up in the form of a cockle-shell on the crown of their heads, others hanging over their shoulders, lend to these gatherings a charm as gentle as it is melancholy and profound. There are "cornets" from Vannes, starched "biggins" from Auray, close-fitting caps that conceal the tresses of the daughters of Quimperlé, winged bonnets from Pont Aven, lace coifs

from Rosporden, diadems of gold and purple cloth from Pont l'Abbé, lappets like outspread sails from Saint Thegonec, "bavolets" from Landerneau; and all these various types of headgear, types that have endured for generation upon generation, cast about the features of their present-day wearers the sombre melancholy of the past. A few years, and these faces will be withered and grown old, the soil over which they are now bending will wrap them round; but above them all the antique head-dresses retain their old unchanging form. Handed down thus from mother to daughter, they bring their lesson with them; they teach that the generations come and go eternally, and that continuity and stability belong to the race alone. So, from the fold of a piece of linen there is borne in upon the mind a notion of time extending far beyond the limits of man's life upon earth.

Robed in black, with their cheeks and necks hidden from view, the Morbihan women look very much like nuns. Their principal beauty is in their gentleness of mien. Sitting on their heels, in the attitude which is customary with them, they possess a sort of tranquil, indolent grace that is not a little touching. Wearing the same kind of headgear and dress as their mothers, the little girls are charming, doubtless because the austerity of their attire brings into stronger relief the joyous freshness of their little

faces. There is nothing so pretty as these little white-capped children of seven or eight. They are amusing themselves by wrestling with one another on the green. It is their racial instincts at work; for, as we know, they are the daughters of valiant fighters.

The church of Sainte Anne is quite new. Time has not yet dimmed its splendours. Its architect, Monsieur de Perthes, is a clever man, I daresay. But time alone possesses the secret of the deeper harmonies. The square in which it stands is bordered with little shops, where the women go to buy medals, rosaries, tapers, hymn-books in French and Breton, and coloured prints from Epinal.

I did not see the procession go by, so I do not know whether it has the same *naïveté* it used to possess in the old days; but I saw the banners. They seemed to me to be too new and too grand.

At one time sailors used to take part in the procession, bearing fragments of the vessel on which they had been sailing when saved from shipwreck. Then, too, there would be convalescents trailing the winding-sheets which had been made ready for them but which their recovery had rendered useless; and men who had escaped from fire would be seen carrying the rope or the ladder which had brought them into safety. The mariners of Arzon were especially conspicuous. They were the descendants of the forty-two sailors who, in 1673, during the

war with the Dutch, had devoted themselves to the service of Sainte Anne, and were saved from Ruyter's guns. Headed by the silver processional cross of their parish they marched along, bearing on their shoulders a model of an old three-decker with all her flags flying. They passed on, chanting a lament which told how, on the 7th June 1673, when the fight was at its hottest and the shot was driving like hail among their ships, not a solitary man of Arzon received so much as a scratch. They sang how an Arzonnois happened to change places with another man, and no sooner had he done so than a ball came and carried away the latter's head, while one of the shoulders and both eyes of the Arzonnois, who had had such a narrow escape, were bespattered with the brains of the luckless victim. It was—so runs the rhyme—solely to the protection of the holy grandmother of Jesus that they owed their escape from the peril that beset them.

The verses in question are not, strictly speaking, an example of folk rhymes; they were composed by some worthy rector who had a sound knowledge of French syntax. The tune to which they are set is gloomy enough to make you weep.[1]

[1] "Nous avons été de bande
Quarante et deux Arzonnois
A la guerre de Hollande,
Pour le plus grand de nos rois.
. . . . . .

Opposite the church is a fine double flight of stone steps. It is modelled on the *Scala Santa* at Rome, the steps of which are covered all the year round with an "apron" of wood. At Auray, as at Rome, those who ascend the steps ascend them on their knees. A nine years' indulgence is granted for each step thus mounted. I saw about a hundred women engaged in this salutary exercise; but I am

Ce fut de juin le septième
  Mil six cent septante et trois,
Que le combat fut extrême
  De nous et des Hollandois.

Les boulets comme la grêle
  Passaient parmi nos vaisseaux,
Brisant mâts, cordages, voile
  Et mettant tout en lambeaux.

La merveille est toute sûre
  Que pas un homme d'Arzon
Ne reçut la moindre injure
  Du mousquet ni du canon.

Un d'Arzon changeant de place,
  Un boulet vint à passer,
Brisant de celui la face
  Qui venait de s'y placer.

L'Arzonnois, la sauvant belle,
  Eut l'épaule et les deux yeux
Tout couverts de la cervelle
  De ce pauvre malheureux.

De Jésus la sainte aïeule
  Par un bienfait singulier,
Nous connaissons que vous seule
  Nous gardiez en ce danger."

obliged to add that most of them cheated. I plainly saw them put their *feet* on the steps. The flesh is weak. Moreover, the notion of tricking Saint Peter would naturally occur to the feminine mind.

The staircase belongs to the Louis XIII period, as do also the cloisters that flank the church. The cult of Sainte Anne d'Auray does not date back further than the seventeenth century. It owes its origin to the visions that came to a poor farmer of Keranna, called Yves Nicolazic.

This worthy was visited by hallucinations both of sight and hearing. Sometimes he used to behold a lighted taper, and as he went home at night the taper would move along at his side burning steadily without flickering in the wind. One summer eve, as he was taking his oxen to water at a brook, he saw a beautiful lady apparelled in a robe of dazzling white. This lady came to visit him again and again in his dwelling, and in his barn.

One day she said to him: "Yves Nicolazic, be not afraid, I am Anne, the mother of Mary. Go and tell your rector that in the place called le Bocenno there stood long ago, ere yet any village was there, a chapel consecrated in my name. It was the first in all the country round, and lo, for nine hundred and eighty years and six months it has lain in ruins. It is my desire that it should be rebuilt as soon as may be, and that you should see to it.

It is God's will that honour should be paid to me there."

There was nothing exceptional about farmer Nicolazic's visions. Before him, Joan of Arc; after him, the blacksmith of Salon, who was brought before Louis XIV; and, more recently, Martin de Gallardon, the ploughman, had similar hallucinations, and were enjoined by a heavenly visitant to discharge a special behest. Joan, the blacksmith, Martin, and the farmer of Keranna, all alike began by turning a deaf ear to the voice from Heaven, protesting their weakness, their ignorance, and the magnitude of the task imposed upon them. But the lady of the rivulet would take no denial. Her tone grew more and more imperious. Signs and wonders were seen on every side. There were sudden flashes of light, and stars would fall in showers. When one comes to look a little more closely at these victims of hallucinations, who believed themselves charged with a mission, one is struck with the resemblance—I may even say the identity — that exists between their psychical conditions and the actions resulting from them. Nicolazic, obsessed with a fixed idea, betook himself to the rector of Plumeret, who gave him a very cold reception, and roughly bade him go back and look after his crops and his cattle. But the visionary did not lose heart, and in the end overcame every obstacle. Nicolazic was a simple man;

he could neither read nor write, and he could speak nothing but Breton.

We cannot doubt his sincerity any more than we can doubt the sincerity of Joan of Arc, the blacksmith of Salon, or of Martin de Gallardon. But it is likely enough that he was assisted in his undertaking by people less ingenuous. I have not had time to read up his history in the original documents, and I only know of it through the writings of modern hagiologists, whose edifying and sanctimonious style baffles all criticism. But it seems to me quite evident that the poor man was made an unconscious tool of by Monsieur de Kerlogen, a landowner who had already given a site for the chapel. One can understand why it was that the Breton Catholics were at that time so anxious to encourage seers, and to make a great parade of miraculous signs and portents. The progress of the reformers had scared them, and their fears were still unallayed. It was in 1625, and at that very moment, Soubise—on whom the Calvinist army of La Rochelle had bestowed the command of Poitou, Brittany, and Anjou—was resuming the offensive, and had captured a royal squadron at the estuary of the Blavet. Something had to be done to rekindle the ancient faith, something big and startling. Nicolazic and his visions had dawned on the scene at a highly opportune moment. They were made the most of.

We were saying just now that seers who receive a mandate from an angel or a saint all follow the same line of conduct: they all give a *sign*. Joan, when she donned her armour, sent to Notre-Dame de Fierbois for a certain sword marked with five crosses, which was in point of fact discovered there. Subsequent traditions stated that it was sealed up in the wall of the church.

Yves Nicolazic also came with his sign. Guided by a taper borne by an invisible hand the worthy man descended into a ditch, scraped the soil, and drew therefrom a statue representing Sainte Anne. The place where this image was unearthed was called Ker-Anna, and it is possible—as the name appears to indicate—that it was the site of a chapel dedicated to the mother of the Virgin. But that this chapel had lain in ruins for nine hundred and eighty years and six months, as the White Lady stated, is totally incredible. In the sixth century neither Sainte Anne nor her daughter could boast any shrines or statues. So if this White Lady were Sainte Anne herself it cannot be gainsaid that Sainte Anne was unacquainted with her own history. This difficulty does not trouble the Bretons whom I see at the Pardon here.

Notwithstanding the glory that is hers at Auray, for all that in her statues she wears the closed crown that religious art had hitherto set upon the brow of

Mary alone, Sainte Anne has no place in sacred legend. The Gospels make no mention of her. It is, I think, from Saint Epiphanus that we first learn of the long barrenness which crushed her with a sense of shame. At the Feast of the Tabernacles the priest rejected her offering. She was living withdrawn from the world in her house at Nazareth when, though already past the childbearing age, she brought Mary into the world.

The pilgrims that come to Auray sing a hymn to the tune of "Amaryllis vous êtes blanche," in which Anne laments her barrenness and implores Heaven to vouchsafe her a child, promising if her prayer is heard to dedicate her offspring to God.[1]

But what matters it after all if this gathering at Auray, which unites such a multitude of men in one common faith, has its origin in the hallucinations of an illiterate and afflicted peasant? The Breton does not possess an inquiring mind. It is not given to

[1] "—Mon Dieu, mon tout que j'aime et que j'adore,
Ayez pitié de ma stérilité!
Depuis vingt ans elle me déshonore,
Couronnez-la par la fécondité.
Je vous promets, grand Dieu, plus de cœur que de bouche,
De vous offrir le fruit de notre couche.

Je n'ose plus hanter aucune amie.
Je ne reçois que mépris et qu'affront.
Otez, Seigneur, la tache d'infamie
Que fait monter la honte sur mon front,
Jetez un seul regard sur votre humble servante
Qui, soumise à vos lois et pleure et se lamente."

him to criticise, and really one cannot find fault with him. The critical habit of mind is the outcome of conditions too rare and too special ever to exercise an effective influence over the religious beliefs of mankind at large. Such beliefs are entirely beyond the control of the intellect. They may be inept and absurd without detracting from the potency of their spiritual influence. The usual notion is that they bring consolation. Upon reflection, however, it may appear that it is fear rather than pleasure that men win from them. The religion of the Bretons seems to me particularly mournful. At the best they do not appear to draw more joy from it than from their little cutty pipes and their pint of *eau de vie*. These stubborn, untutored, silent men are like the Redskins, and one cannot help thinking, as one looks at them, of the day to come when, drinking and smoking and murmuring a hymn, they will fall asleep in death with their gaze fixed on the barren stretches of moorland and sea.

NOTE

In the French edition of this book a section appears under the title "My Mother's Tales." It opens thus:

"'I am quite devoid of imagination,' my mother would say.

"This she averred because she fancied that the only outlet for imagination was the devising of romances. She was entirely unaware that she was the possessor of a rare and bewitching variety of imagination which cannot find expression in mere phrases. My mother was a busy housewife, wholly absorbed in her domestic cares. Her imagination could vivify and transform the most commonplace household utensil. She had the gift of imparting life and speech to the stove and the saucepan, the knife and the fork, the towel and the iron; she was, in fact, in her inmost self a born spinner of fables. She made up stories for my amusement, and as she was convinced that she could not invent anything for herself she made them about the little pictures I treasured.

"Here are some of her efforts. I have preserved her style to the best of my ability, for it was excellent."

Then follow five short tales for children, supposed to have been narrated by Madame Nozière to Pierre. These are not here reproduced, as they form part of the collection of stories which as "Child Life in Town and Country" are appended to the volume of this series entitled "The Merrie Tales of Jacques Tournebroche."